



UNIVERSITY  
AT ALBANY  
State University of New York

# Realizing Their Ambitions





# Realizing Their Ambitions

University at Albany alumni are known internationally for their contributions to business, media, entertainment, law, philanthropy, the arts, fashion, and a host of other fields. Over the past several years, many of them have been highlighted in the pages of *UAlbany* and the *School of Business Magazine*. Here, we are pleased to present a sampling of reprinted articles featuring the outstanding achievements of a number of our alumni. We are proud of them – and of all of our graduates – who are indeed realizing their ambitions.

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Steven Fund, B.S.'84

# Marketing Wizard

Mention the name “Intel” and chances are what first comes to mind is “chipmaker.” But that’s changing fast, and the person facilitating the swift transformation of the company’s image is Steven Fund, who was named senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Intel in 2014.

*By Claudia Ricci, Ph.D.'96*



Eric Millette

**F**und has been something of a marketing wizard at the computer company, and today, the sky's the limit, literally, as Intel has become synonymous with spectacular displays of drone technology. Maybe you saw the splashy light show behind Lady Gaga's halftime performance at the 2016 Super Bowl. Three hundred of Intel's "Shooting Star" drones were choreographed to form a mammoth American flag floating in the air.

More recently, 300 of the company's drones helped celebrate the launch of "Wonder Woman" by creating her insignia – along with other images from the movie – in lights over the city of Los Angeles.

Drone spectacles – which promise to make fireworks obsolete – aren't the only tool in Fund's brand-boosting arsenal. Under his direction, Intel has developed ad campaigns that rely on celebrities and are aimed at making Intel synonymous with youth, music, sports, and entertainment. The company's impressive roster of celebrities includes Serena Williams, Jim Parsons, Michael Phelps, Tom Brady, and LeBron James.

Using a high-visibility spokesperson puts the company squarely in the public eye, and keeps it there, helping to build the brand. "Celebrities break through the clutter," Fund says. "When people see Jim Parsons, they immediately think of Parsons in connection to Intel."

The ultimate goal of all of this refreshing new marketing – accompanied, of course, by impressive technological advances by

Intel – is to flip the notion that Intel is just a chipmaker.

"We're trying to communicate that we're no longer just a PC-computing company," Fund explains. "We want people to connect Intel to any 'smart' or cloud-networked technology. Most people don't know this, but literally, the world runs on Intel."

A native of New York City, Fund majored in business at the University at Albany with a management information systems concentration. (MIS teaches students how to use information to improve a company's operations.) "I started out with a technical background. It gave me a good foundation for the role I have today at Intel," notes Fund.

He got his first job – as a technical-support specialist at ABC Television Network – through UAlbany's placement office. In that position, he helped the news division use PC-based systems to track expenses, equipment, and other operations.

After leaving ABC, Fund earned a master's in business at New York University, focusing on strategic and quantitative analysis. He was hired out of NYU by the highly regarded management-consulting firm McKinsey & Co., where he was exposed to marketing. "I really liked it. It combined strategy, creativity, and analytics."

Fund also was keenly talented. Before landing at Intel, he held a series of marketing and brand-management jobs at some of the world's most prestigious companies, including PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, and Staples.

In the three years since Fund joined Intel, the company has shown dramatic improvement in several key areas, including:

- sales, which were \$55.9 billion in 2014. Today, full-year sales total close to \$62 billion.
- the total market value of the company, which was \$128 billion three years ago. That figure exceeds \$200 billion today.

Fund, who supervises 500 employees directly and another 200 worldwide, has won numerous awards and accolades for his work. Each year, *Ad Age*, a marketing and advertising journal, names an "A list" of top-notch performers in marketing. Intel made the list in 2016.

Other recognition includes the Global Marketer of the Year Award from *PRWeek*, an Adweek Brand Genius Award, and inclusion on *Forbes'* "50 Most Influential CMOs in the World" list.

What advice does Fund have for UAlbany students?

"I think technology is the most exciting field today," he observes. But the bottom line is to follow your instincts: "Explore a range of subjects and then concentrate on what you're most passionate about."

**Adds Fund: "I've built on my experience at SUNY. It helped me to get where I wanted to go. I equate my career to building a house. Albany was the foundation. The walls were Procter & Gamble, PepsiCo, and Staples. And now, Intel is the roof!"**



Intel Shooting Star™ drones, above, perform during the Warner Bros. Home Entertainment and Intel presentation "Wonder Woman in the Sky" at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles last Sept. 14.

Lebron James and Jim Parsons appear in a holiday promotion on Intel's home page.

# Hertz

Kathryn Marinello, B.S.'78

## Driven to Succeed

*By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93*



Paul Morris

### **Kathryn Marinello loves cars.**

“They’re incredibly personal,” she explained. “That’s what makes them cool.”

In fact, Marinello’s first big purchase was a Volkswagen Bug that cost her \$500, which she had earned by working hourly jobs as a teenager. She still remembers the car with great affection. “I had that car a long time,” she said with a laugh.

Marinello later drove that same VW Bug to UAlbany, where she formed the foundation for a highly successful career in banking, business services, vehicle leasing and technology – a foundation that would one day place her

in the driver’s seat at The Hertz Corporation, one of the largest vehicle-rental companies in the world.

Marinello was appointed president and chief executive officer of the global rental giant in January 2017. No. 296 on the Fortune 500 list, Hertz has approximately 9,700 locations worldwide staffed by over 40,000 employees – and a fleet of more than 600,000 vehicles.

She is in rare company: Marinello is one of only 32 women currently at the helm of a Fortune 500 company. Though this number is at a historic high, Marinello acknowledged the slow pace of change relative to leadership opportunities for women.

Marinello is encouraged by the quality of female leadership that she sees at other major companies, and she is proud to be one of the women to take on such a role. “We can make a difference and inspire other women,” she said.

The CEO opportunity initially came to Marinello through Carl Icahn, the prominent Wall Street investor and Hertz’s leading shareholder. Icahn thought that Marinello’s leadership experience at companies such as General Electric, Ares Management LLC and Ceridian Corporation, and as a board member at General Motors – coupled with her background in analytics, consumer marketing and fleet logistics – would make her a strong candidate to lead a 21st-century vehicle-rental company. As a lifelong fan of cars, Marinello leapt at the chance to lead what she considers “a phenomenal brand – one of the best-known companies in the world.”

The nearly 100-year-old Hertz brand is facing some challenges these days. The vehicle-rental industry as a whole is grappling with changing economics, as rising fleet costs are making profitability more difficult to achieve for rental companies. At the same time, the emerging rideshare industry, including services such as Uber and Lyft, is giving consumers new alternatives to renting a car.

Marinello understands that a customer-first, mobility-first strategic focus is key to overcoming challenges and driving preference in the rental car industry – and, under her leadership, Hertz is already taking steps to achieve these goals. The company is upgrading its entire fleet of vehicles by make, model and trim package, while transforming its IT infrastructure. Marinello is also overseeing an effort to enhance the Hertz brand strategy, while strengthening the profiles for sister brands Dollar and Thrifty.

Finally, the company is improving the customer experience through service initiatives like the rollout of Hertz Ultimate Choice, a policy change that enables customers to choose their own cars at pickup (versus generically selecting a car class such as “full size”). “It’s a win-win,” explained Marinello. “Our customers are happier, and it’s easier and more efficient for our employees.”

Marinello is passionate about building and sustaining a strong employee-retention and satisfaction program – such as offering stronger career paths and modernizing facilities and work environments. “If you have happy employees, they’re going to do their jobs better and provide a better customer experience,” she explained.

Marinello enjoys meeting and speaking with employees at Hertz’s different locations. “Our people work incredibly hard,” she noted. “I value everyone equally – from the people who wash and detail cars to our vice presidents –

because they all play an important role.”

The former UAlbany psychology major is keenly aware of people’s perceptions and motivations, and she credits her *alma mater* with fostering these skills. Though she also has an M.B.A. from Hofstra University, Marinello noted, “I use my UAlbany psychology degree every day!”

When asked to make her own Hertz Ultimate Choice (as in, “What car would you drive if you could drive any car?”), the auto aficionado and mother of three did not hesitate to give an answer.

“It would be a Chevy Stingray,” said Marinello, referring to the iconic Corvette model – which she currently owns. “I’m a Chevy girl and proud of it!”

**The former UAlbany psychology major is keenly aware of people’s perceptions and motivations, and she credits her *alma mater* with fostering these skills.**



Paul Morris



## Robert Loughan never slows down.

Through the Loughan Group Inc., his capital-investment firm, he helps identify and nurture businesses with growth potential. He founded Incrowd, a social-commerce platform he recently sold to Veriown (where he is an executive board member). He owns Thistle Hill Winery, an award-winning organic winery and vineyard in Mudgee, Australia. He is president of Zoetic Global, working to bring Internet-connected solar-power systems to populations in remote locations. Collaborating with a friend who works at NASA, he co-founded Flawless Photonics – a startup focused on manufacturing in space. He recently sold his ownership position in Baldface Lodge, an iconic ski resort in British Columbia.

On top of all that, Loughan is helping to manage his sons' Hollywood careers – 15-year-old twins Max and Jack are executive producers for a science-based TV series with a major network. He also serves as an adviser for Max's energy startup, which is developing a patent-pending ionic-energy system.

So what drives this self-described serial entrepreneur and proud UAlbany alum? An unquenchable desire to break paradigms and create success.

"I love to have a hand at bringing new technologies and business models to the world – big ideas that are disruptive and far reaching," explained Loughan. "I have a healthy disregard for conventional wisdom."

Robert Loughan, B.A.'87

# High-Octane Entrepreneur

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93

Loughan is best known for co-founding Octane Software, the world's first cloud-based customer-relationship management (CRM) application, which sold – at the very peak of the dot-com boom in May 2000 – for more than \$3.2 billion. He would later create the first-ever mobile CRM solution, which also grew at industry-record speed.

From his humble beginnings in rural Granville, N.Y., to his enormous success as a globe-trotting business maverick, Loughan's career arc is a story of vision, risk-taking, tenacity, and hard work.

"It's about being at the right place at the right time, but it's also about being willing to capitalize on your opportunities," said Loughan. "If you are going to do something never done before, there is only shooting for the fence."

Though he would become one of the nation's most successful and influential technology entrepreneurs, Loughan ironically never even intended to enter that industry. He had planned to attend law school in Michigan after earning his UAlbany degree in political science, but he lacked the funding to pay for tuition. Looking for a way to earn money quickly, Loughan deferred his law-school admission and applied for work at a growing Boston, Mass., software company – where he hustled his way into a job.

Clearly unqualified for the available positions ("I wasn't even sure how to turn on a computer!" joked Loughan), he did not get a job offer. Loughan, however, would not take "no" for an answer. That

evening, he waited for the company's president in the parking garage. When the executive finally arrived, Loughan confronted him and told him, "You just made the worst mistake of your life!"

Though he acknowledged that he "probably scared the man half to death," Loughan received a call from the firm the following day: They offered him the job.

That same moxie would later lead Loughan and several colleagues to develop the then-revolutionary concept for a cloud CRM platform. They had pitched the idea to their employer at the time, but received no interest. Certain that they were on the verge of a big idea, they decided to pursue the product on their own – working in their basements and garages to form what would ultimately become Octane Software. A few years later, Octane was sold in one of the largest non-public acquisitions in the history of the software industry.

Remember the software executive Loughan had confronted in the parking lot? He was one of Octane's first investors – providing \$7 million in seed money, and declaring it the best investment he ever made. "I guess he was right," noted Loughan.

Though he has achieved remarkable success, Loughan acknowledged that not all of his at-bats have been hits. He believes that every experience, even the failures, has been valuable for him. "I learn from the wins," said Loughan. "I learn even more from the losses."

Loughan attributes his success to his ability to identify opportunities and his willingness to take risks – something he acknowledges is "not for the faint of heart." He also credits his determination to always out-work the competition. He said that he learned this valuable lesson as a student at UAlbany.

"In college, I learned that you have to work for everything ... you get what you earn," said Loughan, who greatly appreciated the challenging and competitive environment at his *alma mater*. "Without UAlbany, I wouldn't be where I am today."

He believes that his UAlbany education helped instill a "hungrier" mindset, which gave him an edge over graduates from perhaps more prestigious institutions. "I have hired and fired many people from Ivy League schools," said Loughan. "I prefer employees who are ready to work hard."

These days, Loughan is particularly inspired by two young people close to home: Max and Jack. Following in their father's footsteps, both young men are already taking college classes from universities that include Stanford and MIT, while pursuing their own entrepreneurial goals.

"For them, it's about more than making money – they want to make the world a better place," said Loughan. "They want to make their own mark."

Just like their father, they never slow down.



# NewsSense

Charges of “fake news” notwithstanding, it’s important to remember that journalistic integrity is still the standard for most reporters – including the three University at Albany alumni profiled here.

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Stephanie Landsman, B.A.’97 | **CNBC Producer** BY CAROL OLECHOWSKI

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**CNBC producer Stephanie Landsman began thinking about a career in journalism even before enrolling at the University at Albany. “I was news editor of the Clarkstown High School North newspaper and news director of its radio station,” recalls the New City, N.Y., native.**

Landsman’s academic experience underscored her conviction that she was on the right career path – and that she’d chosen the perfect school to propel her toward her professional goal. Its location in New York’s capital, paired with her interest in politics, made UAlbany an attractive option. In addition, “I was aware that the University had a strong track record in placing students in government internships,” says Landsman, who interned at the state attorney general’s Bureau of Consumer Frauds & Protection as a mediator and in New York State Sen. Joseph Holland’s office, “doing public relations.” She also completed an internship at WTEN, the ABC television affiliate in Albany. “The stories I helped reporters and producers cover often took me to the state capitol, too.”

Landsman further honed her journalistic credentials by signing up to work as a news anchor and reporter at WCDB-FM “pretty much the day I started at the University.” As news director, she supervised staff and anchored daily newscasts. Through her work with the WCDB news department, Landsman notes, “I had the opportunity to cover President

Bill Clinton’s trip to UAlbany, Vice President Al Gore’s speaking appearance at UAlbany, and Giants training camp. The experience supported my belief that journalism would be a great fit as a career path.”

An English major with minors in journalism and history, Landsman “particularly enjoyed any course that Professor William Rainbolt of the journalism department taught. Professor Richard Hamm’s history classes were also among my favorites. Both showed passion and expertise in their fields of study. They always kept their classes engaged,” says Landsman, who received UAlbany’s Ronald R. Shafer Memorial Award, presented annually to an outstanding graduating senior in the journalism program.

When Landsman sought career advice, “Professor Rainbolt gave me great direction, and I consider him one of my first mentors. He advised me on internships and applications to graduate schools for broadcast journalism.” Landsman went on to earn an M.S. in that field from the Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University.

In 1999, Landsman was hired at CNBC to cover general news updates but later transitioned to business news. “I didn’t work on Wall Street, and I never interned at CNBC while at school. But I enjoyed the business-news content, read everything I could to learn more, and absorbed a lot from just being in the newsroom. Often, business news is closely tied to general news – especially on the political level. There is so much legislation, for example, that comes out of Capitol Hill and affects Wall Street and Main Street. It wasn’t unrealistic for me to try to pursue opportunities to cover business full-time,” she observes.

“At CNBC, I am currently managing, shaping and executing editorial planning for the 5 p.m. [ET] business news show ‘Fast Money.’ I also regularly produce content for the CNBC Digital shows ‘Trading Nation’ and ‘Futures Now.’ I write and produce news and features for both TV and CNBC.com.

“My role at CNBC gives me access to many of the most intelligent people on Wall Street and in politics, as well as in my field,” adds the producer. “I’m continually evolving at the network, particularly as digital becomes a bigger part of the way people consume news.”

Landsman is grateful to the University for “giving me a solid foundation for writing and opening the door to valuable internships.” In fact, internships are among “the most valuable tools for students,” she believes. “Not only do internships help students network; they will also help determine which career could be the best fit.”



Courtesy of CNN

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## Ryan Nobles, M.P.A.’05

# Journalistic Standout

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BY CLAUDIA RICCI, PH.D.’96

**In the fierce competition for TV news jobs, it helps to have something in your background to make you stand out. For CNN’s Washington correspondent, Ryan Nobles, it’s the graduate work he completed in the master’s program in public administration at Rockefeller College.**

**T**he degree, earned in 2005, “has made me marketable,” he notes. “I have had this level of expertise that few others have.”

Nobles says his background in statistics has helped him in understanding polls. And when President Donald Trump released the federal budget earlier this year, Nobles brought to bear his understanding of cost-benefit analysis and depreciation.

“That’s the kind of material I learned at SUNY,” he says.

A native of a tiny town in western New York State, Nobles majored in communications at The College at Brockport and rounded out his education by getting heavily involved with WBSU, the campus radio station.



David Grogan/CNBC



In his first television job, in Utica, Nobles started as a sports broadcaster but soon was promoted to news anchor and political reporter. He took a break from journalism in 2002 to run for the New York State Assembly. He lost, but the experience gave him “incredible insight” into the electoral process. “I learned so much about how the system works. I lean on that experience to this day.”

While a graduate student at UAlbany, Nobles also worked full time for WTEN, the ABC affiliate. “During the day I was covering the state legislature, and at night I was learning about how government operated.”

He recalls former Schenectady County Manager Robert McEvoy as one of the best professors he had at Rockefeller College. “He’d challenge us, asking tough questions about how elected officials make difficult decisions. He really opened my eyes to how important government is.”

While working for the NBC affiliate in Richmond, Va., Nobles covered the presidential elections in 2008 and 2012. His one-on-one interview with Barack Obama won him a local Emmy award. Nobles’ political reporting has also won high praise from *The Washington Post* and *Politico*.

At CNN, where he has worked since 2014, he covers a host of stories, including those about Trump. While he wasn’t alive for Watergate, Nobles is excited to work with Carl Bernstein. “The idea that I get to travel in the same orbits as Bernstein is a pretty surreal experience.”

Nobles’ advice for young journalists: “I tell them they don’t need a graduate degree in journalism.” Instead, he suggests they find a niche by studying or working in a particular field, thereby developing a valuable specialty.

Nobles, 40, lives in Virginia with his wife, Karey. They have four children, ages 7 and under.



Courtesy of CNN



**Joelle Garguilo,**  
B.S.'03

# Multimedia Dynamo

BY CLAUDIA RICCI, PH.D.'96

**Y**ou wouldn't expect a student who earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration at UAlbany to end up in a career as a multimedia broadcast journalist at a major television network.



Well, meet Joelle Garguilo, a dynamo in the modern world of multimedia journalism. She holds two jobs in Manhattan: one with NBC News' "Weekend Today" show and the other with WNBC's "New York Live."

In addition to producing segments for these shows, Garguilo is often on air, sometimes as an anchor. She shoots her own segments, and she's her own editor.

"I wear a lot of hats," Garguilo laughs.

She learned something vitally important as a UAlbany student: "Business school gives you the discipline you need going forward. You can't just roll through the business school. You have to work really hard, and that work ethic stays with you."

Garguilo came to UAlbany as an accounting major, but junior year she switched to a concentration in marketing and finance.

After graduation, she finished her accounting degree at Hofstra University. Garguilo spent a year at a small firm, then landed a job at KPMG, one of the Big Four accounting firms. There, she audited Fortune 500 companies, including Mercedes-Benz and Omnicom. After two years, she decided not to pursue partnership at KPMG, so she went on the job market. Garguilo interviewed at seven

firms and, within three days, she had seven job offers. She chose New Line Cinema and went to work in the finance department, which was run by women.

While Garguilo worked in the business world, she secretly wanted to become a journalist. When New Line folded, she decided to pursue her dream. Garguilo took a journalism class at NYU and enrolled in the New York Film Academy, where she learned the nuts and bolts of the trade. Soon she had produced a "reel," a kind of broadcast-industry video résumé.

Garguilo's first job at NBC was with NBC News Mobile. While there, she began contributing to WNBC and "Weekend Today." Garguilo now works on the broadcast side of NBC News. Today, she says, the business is shifting back to mobile as young people rely more and more on Smartphones for news and entertainment.

Despite her hectic career, Garguilo says that mothering her 2-year old daughter is her top priority. "It's kind of crazy," she reflects. "You have to be a smart businesswoman to succeed" at juggling the competing demands of modern life.

Looking back at her University days, Garguilo says a favorite faculty member was Professor of Biological Sciences Dan Wulff; she took two classes in nutrition and biology with him. "He really hit a chord with me. In a big school, it was nice to have a teacher who really cared. He cared so much that you knew the material," Garguilo recalls.

When Garguilo married in 2009, all her bridesmaids were UAlbany grads. Dan Wulff attended the wedding, too!

Yvonne Garcia, B.A.'95

# High-Profile Role Model

By Carol Olechowski

**A**s a teenager, Yvonne Garcia wanted to be trilingual. “That’s why I took languages at the University at Albany,” says the senior vice president and global head of Client Solutions, Investment Manager Services Group at State Street Corporation in Boston.



At Albany, where she majored in Spanish and minored in French, Garcia found “a very diverse group of students.” The Queens, N.Y., native adds, “That’s really what, in my mind, is required to be successful – to surround yourself with people from all different backgrounds, skill sets, and interests.” Her roommates on both the uptown campus and Alumni Quad included an education major, a theatre major, and other students whose academic pursuits differed from her own. “It was really nice to be surrounded by them.”

Garcia’s facility with languages, and her experience living with people of other backgrounds, expanded her post-graduate options. She earned an M.B.A. in finance and marketing at Boston University. Later, Garcia was Liberty Mutual’s Agency Corporation director of Marketing and Distribution Strategy, then vice president of Bank of America’s China Construction Bank Strategic Assistance. In the latter capacity, her work took her to China, Hong Kong, London, and Paris.

At State Street, Garcia still travels “a lot” since “my team is global.” She notes: “My group works with asset managers, asset owners, and insurance companies, helping them define their future state-operating model to enable them to innovate and

transform. We help them make the right investment decisions and manage data more effectively.”

A Six Sigma Black Belt – a certification awarded by ASQ to people committed to corporate, organizational, and community quality – Garcia is also a busy volunteer. She serves as national chairwoman of ALPFA (the Association of Latino Professionals for America), an organization she joined around 2001. “We work with Latino professionals and students, helping guide them through their academic and professional journey. We also partner with Fortune 1000 companies, helping them to acquire and retain diverse talent and to develop that talent professionally,” explains Garcia, adding that ALPFA has 83,000 members, 41 professional chapters, and 155 student chapters in the United States.

In her work with young people, Garcia emphasizes the importance of education and its “strong correlation to power and freedom.” She says: “I always encourage individuals to go to school. You can be very smart, but if you don’t have the diploma to show, it can be challenging and limiting.”

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**One thing Garcia tries to impress upon students and young professionals is that they must “really understand the value you bring to who you are. At a very young age, you should know your worth, but also have the courage to act on it.”**

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Garcia also volunteers with a number of other organizations, including Milagros para Niños (Miracles for Children), a group she co-founded at Boston Children’s Hospital in 2009 to raise funds to support the medical needs of underserved Latino children. ALPFA and The Children’s Trust, a non-profit formed to end child abuse in Massachusetts, have honored Garcia for her commitment to children, the Latino community, and women. In 2015, she received the Women of Influence Award from the *Boston Business Journal*.

Her high-profile work with ALPFA and State Street Corporation casts Garcia as a role model. At the University at Albany, she looked up to Johnny Webster, then a faculty member in the former Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies. “He was my Spanish professor, and he also mentored me. He guided me through the M.B.A. application process,” Garcia recalls.

Garcia is the mom of a 16-year-old daughter, Izzy, “who’s looking at colleges now,” and a 10-year-old son, Max. “He’s my baby,” she says.



# JERRY MILLER, B.A.'98

## Turning Point

By Stephen Shoemaker, B.A.'02

**S**napchat has been one of the most talked-about apps of the last few years, and the conversation earlier this year focused on the company's initial stock offering when it went public in March. Those who only paid casual attention, though, may equate the app with early chatter about some of the questionable and risqué ways its earliest adopters – teenagers – were making use of it.

"When you typed 'Snapchat' into a Google search two or three years ago, those were the first couple of things that might come up. And I've seen the company evolve and go through a couple evolutions now," said Jerry Miller, director of Business Recruiting at what is now Snap, Inc.

With a user base that has expanded into older demographics, its adoption among corporate and college social-media and marketing teams, and a foray into hardware with its Spectacles product, the company has come of age.

"We are without a doubt a camera company now," said Miller. And it's a camera company that allows its users to explore and cultivate their creativity in a more private way among their friends, without the obsessive polish that comes when posting to the significantly more public feeds of Facebook and Instagram.

"There's no pressure with our platform. You get to be who you are," Miller commented.

Miller, who joined the company after lending his skills in talent recruitment to LinkedIn and contributing to that company's success, cites his own coming-of-age moment as a student at the University at Albany, where he majored in sociology and minored in psychology.

In need of 24 credits to graduate, he sought special permission from Sung Bok Kim, then dean of Undergraduate Studies, to take on a semester with a very heavy course load. Fortunately, Kim saw that Miller was up for the challenge. Miller admitted that it was perhaps the first time he really buckled down in his academics.

"That was probably the most important conversation I had in college," he added. "It was the turning point, the time when I stopped being a kid, took responsibility and became an adult. And that responsibility just carried on with me through life."

Jerry Miller smiles for a photo in his office at Snap, Inc.



Left: A user can doodle on a photo and add text before sending the snap to friends.

Above: The puppy-dog lens allows a user to add puppy characteristics to a photo. Snap is always updating its lenses.

# A Collaborative Focus

**L.J. BROCK, B.S.'95**



**A**t first blush, a global financial firm might seem an odd inclusion in a list of such companies as Facebook, Amazon, Google, and other tech titans. But for L.J. Brock, chief People officer at the hedge fund Citadel and Citadel Securities, a global market-making firm, they're all in the same league.

It's not because Brock, who graduated from UAlbany with a degree in business administration, joined Citadel last spring after eight years of recruiting talent at Red Hat, the open-source software giant. It's because the firm's commitment to transforming financial markets through cutting-edge technology and innovation has it tapping into the same pool of potential employees as those other firms.

"It's a question of how we stack up to the best employers in the world, in any sector. Because the talent that we pursue has many options," Brock said.

He added that his approach to human resources has always been twofold. The first element is to recruit for the success of the business.

"I always felt like the function that helps source and retain the best people has one of the biggest impacts on the business," Brock said of his career in recruitment. "If you do a great job at that, your business is probably going to be successful."

The second component is to create an environment that allows employees to succeed, grow and innovate. Citadel's commitment to fostering this culture of meritocracy was one of the key aspects that appealed to Brock when he considered joining the firm.



When he looks back at his time at the University at Albany, Brock recalls that his coursework emphasized collaboration, and he observed that friends at other colleges seemed to be missing that component in their own educational experiences. As someone who started as a commuter student, he said that the collaborative focus helped him meet people, make friends and work well in a team setting.

"It taught me to really collaborate and work well with different people and different styles, and to understand what other team members' strengths were, and what mine were," said Brock. "That's played out really well for me throughout my career."

## ADVANCING DIVERSITY

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A. '93

# ERIKA IRISH BROWN, B.S. '91



Roger Archer, Phatts Photos

“As a woman and as a person of color, the topic of diversity is near and dear to me,” explained Erika Irish Brown, a senior vice president with Bank of America.

Brown recruits diverse executives for the Fortune 50 banking giant. She helped to develop the position a few years ago – and that’s in addition to helping all of Bank of America’s executive-search efforts. In her view, fostering diverse hiring practices is key to success in today’s business world.

“There is a strong business case for diversity,” said Brown. “If you’re not diverse, you’re not getting the best and brightest talent.”

Noting shifting demographics nationwide and the general globalization of business, Brown believes that top companies now require a workforce with expansive cultural competence to meet the needs and expectations of clients and employees. She added that a diverse workforce offers other advantages, too, such as a broader, more innovative approach to problem solving.

The UAlbany graduate is particularly passionate about this subject because she was afforded a unique Wall Street internship opportunity at the start of her career. Brown then spent the next 15 years working in investment banking at such prestigious employers as Lehman Brothers, the U.S. Treasury and Morgan Stanley. When she shifted her focus to diversity initiatives in 2009, Brown found a way to “pay it forward.”

“I was fortunate to have opportunities made available to me,” said Brown. “I want to create opportunities for others.”

**Brown credits her UAlbany experience with giving her a strong educational foundation. While earning her undergraduate degree, Brown was “really involved” – taking an active role in student associations and volunteer organizations.**

“UAlbany helped me grow my leadership skills and confidence,” said Brown. “It prepared me to succeed in competitive environments.”

*Update: Erika Irish Brown joined Bloomberg, the global business and financial information and news leader, in 2015 as the global head of Diversity & Inclusion.*



James M. Patterson/Valley News

HANY FARID, M.S. '92

# FATHER OF DIGITAL FORENSICS

By Rebecca Perkins Hanissian

**H**any Farid is a party host's dream guest. He can engage in substantive conversation with the introverted Egyptologist, the basement-dwelling technophile, the neighborhood neurosurgeon – even the insufferable armchair geophysicist and eccentric ecologist.

Farid's interests and impact are exceptionally broad. But where he goes deep is in his work to combat the digital proliferation of extremist propaganda and child pornography. Deemed the "father of digital forensics," Farid collaborates in this work with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; the Counter Extremism Project; the White House; the United Nations, and such tech giants as Microsoft, Facebook and Google.

Recently, Farid was named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors. He also published his first book, *Photo Forensics*, which is likely to become the bible of the field he pioneered at his day job as Dartmouth College's Albert

Bradley 1915 Third Century Professor of Computer Science.

The secret to Farid's broad, cross-disciplinary success, it seems, is the synergy between his persistent curiosity and his eclectic intellectual skill set. Both are attributable, in part, to his time at UAlbany.

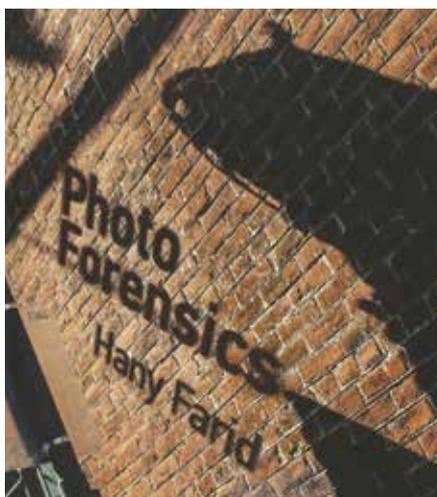
"It's about taking a toolset built to do X and using it to do Y," said Peter S. Shenkin, Farid's longtime mentor. "Hany can look at a problem and say, 'Wait a minute; I have the tools to do this.'"

Farid insists there was nothing strategic about his eclectic training – computer science, applied mathematics, electrical engineering, and brain and cognitive science – or the tools with which it has equipped him. "It was just, 'This seems cool,'" he said. "Science has become so 'siloed' over the years; we're all so highly specialized. But I've always liked to live at the intersection of fields. That's where the action is. I like thinking about problems."

In 2007, Farid began thinking about the problem of the digital proliferation of child pornography. Working with an engineer from Microsoft, he developed technology, called PhotoDNA, able to extract a "signature" from an image. A signature, also called a "hash," is a string of numbers embodying the characteristics of a digital image. The signature is distinct to a specific image and stable over the lifetime of the image, even as it's modified, allowing for elimination of the image in all its forms, and thus preventing redistribution and revictimization.

Farid applied his expanded toolset to an equally ugly and technically similar problem. Believing that a parallel approach could cripple online extremism, he developed a database of known content to extract signatures and eliminate content.

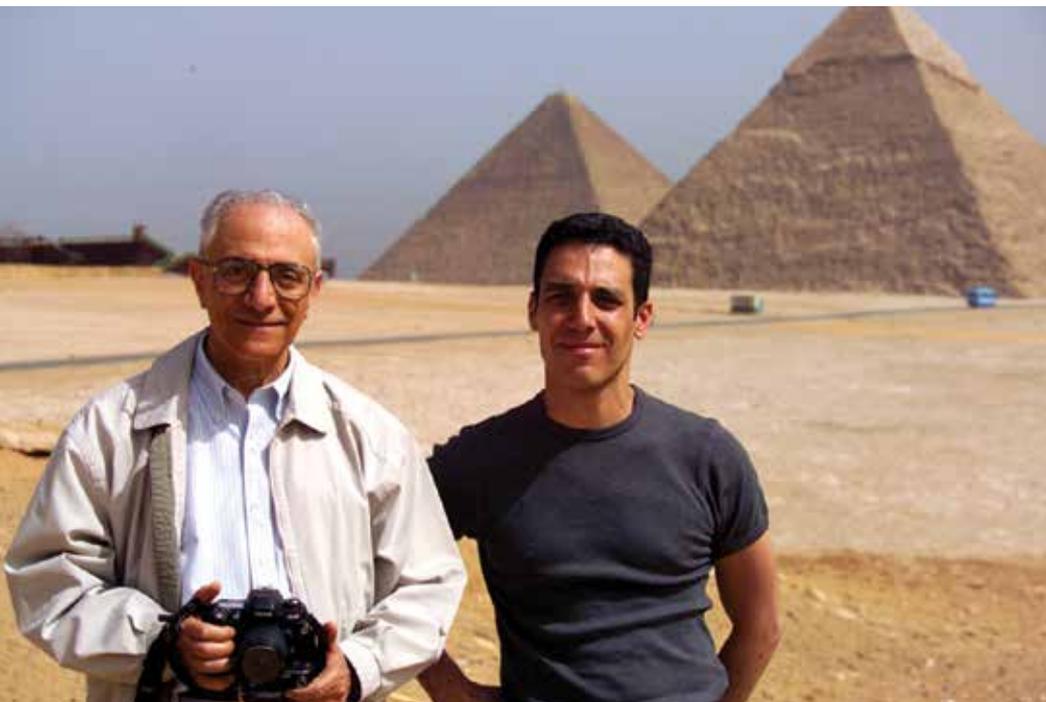
Though the game is essentially the same, the engineering challenges with extremist propaganda are greater than with child pornography, insofar as the



James M. Patterson/Valley News

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, SHOW THE WEB PAGE FOR THE PHOTODNA TECHNOLOGY FARID DEVELOPED; THE PROFESSOR WORKING WITH A STUDENT AT DARTMOUTH; AND THE COVER OF FARID'S BOOK *PHOTO FORENSICS*, PUBLISHED IN 2016.

IT WAS IN THE LAB AT UALBANY THAT FARID CAUGHT THE RESEARCH BUG, AWAKENING  
A CURIOSITY HE CONTINUES TO PURSUE INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY.



HANY FARID, RIGHT, AND HIS FATHER, SAMIR, ARE PICTURED IN EGYPT, WHERE HANY WROTE AN ALGORITHM ALLOWING FOR UNDISTORTED PANORAMIC IMAGES OF THE CURVED INTERIORS OF ANCIENT TOMBS. THE FARIDS PUBLISHED THEIR WORK IN *UNFOLDING SENNEJEM'S TOMB* (2001). SAMIR FARID IS AN AVOCATIONAL EGYPTOLOGIST.

former often includes audio and video content. Over the past year, Farid and his team have developed the next generation of signature technology: the robust hashing algorithm, capable of extracting signatures from video and audio.

“For years, we grappled with how to win the defining challenge of this generation – against violent extremists,” said Mark Wallace, CEO of the Counter Extremism Project and former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. “As social-media companies and government programs floundered, Hany’s vision guided us toward a solution.”

Google, Facebook and Twitter, among other social-media companies, have deployed Farid’s hashing technologies, resulting in the elimination of copious content.

Farid was born to Egyptian parents in Germany but spent most of his childhood in Rochester, N.Y., where he was, admittedly, a mediocre student. Following a brief and “boring” stint as a programmer, the University of Rochester graduate enrolled in the computer-science program at UAlbany. Jacquelyn Fetrow, then an assistant professor of biology, recognized that Shenkin – at the time a Barnard College chemistry professor working with the University through a consortium – could discuss computer science and computation with Farid, so she introduced the two. “Jackie was good at identifying good people and connecting them,” said Shenkin, who went on to

serve as the main adviser for Farid’s thesis on computational biology.

Shenkin remembers Farid as “incredibly energetic and hard working. We’d write, run and debug programs until 2 or 3 in the morning, and start again at 8 a.m. with bagels. We worked shoulder to shoulder. It was a joyful working relationship.”

It was in the lab at UAlbany that Farid caught the research bug, awakening a curiosity he continues to pursue into uncharted territory. Shenkin, who remains a pivotal influence in Farid’s life, recalled the “defining moment” when a program they’d designed spit out the correct answer, among nearly endless possibilities: “Hany thought it was the coolest thing.”

Inspired, Farid went on to earn a doctorate in computer science from the University of Pennsylvania and complete a post-doctoral fellowship in brain and cognitive sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He later relocated to Hanover, N.H., to teach at Dartmouth.

Working on issues and projects he’s excited about is “an incredible luxury,” said Farid. “Part of it is hard work, part of it is genetics, and part of it is I work with amazing people. But, honestly, a lot of it is luck. I think it’s important to be honest about successes in life. Every day, I just feel lucky.”

# Grounds FOR SUCCESS

By Carol Olechowski



**Michael Brown, B.A.'04**

# DEATH WISH COFFEE CO.

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RLD'S  
ONGEST



Mark McCarty

## If there's anything Michael Brown savors as much as a cup of Death Wish Coffee, it must be the success his company has achieved in just six short years.

**B**rown started Death Wish in 2011 as a “side project” to his first venture, Saratoga Coffee Traders. The Waterford, N.Y., native was “living behind my mom’s garage” when he came up with the blend, which combined beans grown in India with some other varieties he had on hand.

Brown dubbed his new product “Death Wish Coffee” and chose packaging that featured a skull-and-crossbones image he thought would pique consumer interest. Each bag noted that the contents were USDA-certified 100-percent organic and Free Trade.

“I didn’t have a business plan at the time,” acknowledges Brown, who majored in economics and minored in business administration at UAlbany. “I sold one bag one month, then two the next month. Eventually, I had enough sales coming in to hire one of my baristas to work with me.” The two pulled together a mailing list

and put out the word about Death Wish on social media.

Brown caught a lucky break in 2013, when ABC’s “Good Morning America” called to request an interview. Impressed, the “GMA” team followed up the next day with another on-air visit to the shop, and “sales skyrocketed,” Brown remembers.

Business got another boost after a 30-second commercial for Death Wish aired during Super Bowl 2016. Intuit QuickBooks Small Business Big Game Competition sponsored the spot, “Storm’s a-Brewin.”

Approximately 90 percent of Death Wish sales are made online. A fulfillment center near Philadelphia ships the orders; Brown is looking to start a second in Reno, Nev., to reduce the costs of shipping to the western U.S. Death Wish Coffee is also distributed through Amazon.com



**Death Wish, the self-proclaimed “world’s strongest coffee,” packs 427 milligrams of caffeine into each 8-ounce cup.**

**Coffee lovers who appreciate a strong brew can order online at [www.deathwishcoffee.com](http://www.deathwishcoffee.com) and select from the following:**

### FLAVORS

Death Wish Coffee  
Death Wish Cauldron  
Aged Pumpkin Coffee

Valhalla Java  
Odinforce Blend

### VARIETIES

ground  
whole bean  
Death Cups

platforms and, in Hawaii and on the West Coast, through Safeway grocery stores. In the Albany area, Price Chopper carries the brand, as do eight ShopRite stores in New York. “We’re still working to get into Target,” says Brown.

A 16,000-square-foot building in Round Lake, N.Y., houses grinding, packaging, and warehouse operations. Customer-service, marketing, and logistics teams are also headquartered there.

The lessons Brown learned at UAlbany prepared him well for the business world. Project Renaissance, then a living-learning experience for freshmen, was “fantastic,” and “I made some really amazing friends and learned how to handle myself,” recalls Brown, who later studied accounting at the University of Hawaii – Manoa and earned a master’s in that field from The College of Saint Rose.

Brown’s educational background enables him to correct mistakes quickly; “when things go a little haywire, I’m very analytical, which is good. But it’s also bad, because I have a hard time making decisions unless I have all the information and all the logic in place.”

Learning to delegate, he admits, “drives me crazy; it’s difficult. I used to be more hands-on. This business has become kind of like my baby.”

The company has found its niche. “We have one type of coffee at Death Wish; that helps us stay focused. We’re not trying to make something for everyone. We make our product for our specific customer.”

Brown describes the Death Wish customer as “the guy who’s a little rough around the edges, a hard worker, a family man. We target our marketing to that person and to others

who identify with him. They’re enthusiastic about Death Wish Coffee. They tell their friends and family about it; then those people tell their friends and families. My mom, who’s in her 70s, drinks the coffee – and she tells me how great it is,” Brown adds with a smile.

He notes that the coffee’s strength reflects the “strong values” shared by both the people who work alongside him and those who purchase Death Wish. “Our goal is to make the coffee taste strong and pleasant, and to do what’s right for the world.”

Case in point: When new packaging inadvertently omitted the “100-percent organic” certification, customers contacted Brown to ask if the brand was no longer organic. “They’re very passionate people who are concerned about the environment,” says Brown.



Mark McCarty

Capital Region businesses using Death Wish Coffee in some of their products include:

The Old Albany Distilling Company: coffee-infused vodka

Rad Soap: body bar, body cream

“They’re great partners,” observes Death Wish founder and owner Brown, “and it’s fun to work with them.”

# Where Are They Now?

By Carol Olechowski

## Back to Her Roots • Lisa Lillien, B.A.'87

Fans of “Hungry Girl” – diet-and-lifestyle expert Lisa Lillien – “have been asking for a magazine for years.” So “when the opportunity presented itself, I jumped all over it!” exclaims the self-described “guru of guilt-free eating.”

Published by Meredith, the Spring 2018 *Hungry Girl* rolled off the presses in mid-January. “For now, two test issues are planned. If the magazine is successful, it could become a quarterly,” notes Lillien, adding that the publication’s initial circulation is 225,000.

According to its editor-in-chief, each issue will feature approximately 100 pages packed with “a lot of recipes, lifestyle content, hacks – even info for pet owners, with recipes for dogs!”

Lillien is excited about helping *Hungry Girl*; “my roots are in magazines,” she observes. After earning a degree in communications and business administration from the University at Albany, Lillien returned home to Long Island to edit the “teen fanzine” *Tutti Frutti*. She later held executive positions at Nickelodeon, TV Land, and Warner Bros. before launching *Hungry Girl* in 2004.

The brand began as a free email, titled “Tips and Tricks ... for Hungry Chicks” and sent daily to fewer than 100 subscribers. In each message, Lillien, who’d gone “up and down about 15 pounds” in her teens and 20s, dispensed common-sense advice about diet and fitness; offered recipes for tasty, nutritionally balanced meals and snacks; and suggested substitutions for high-calorie, high-fat packaged foods.



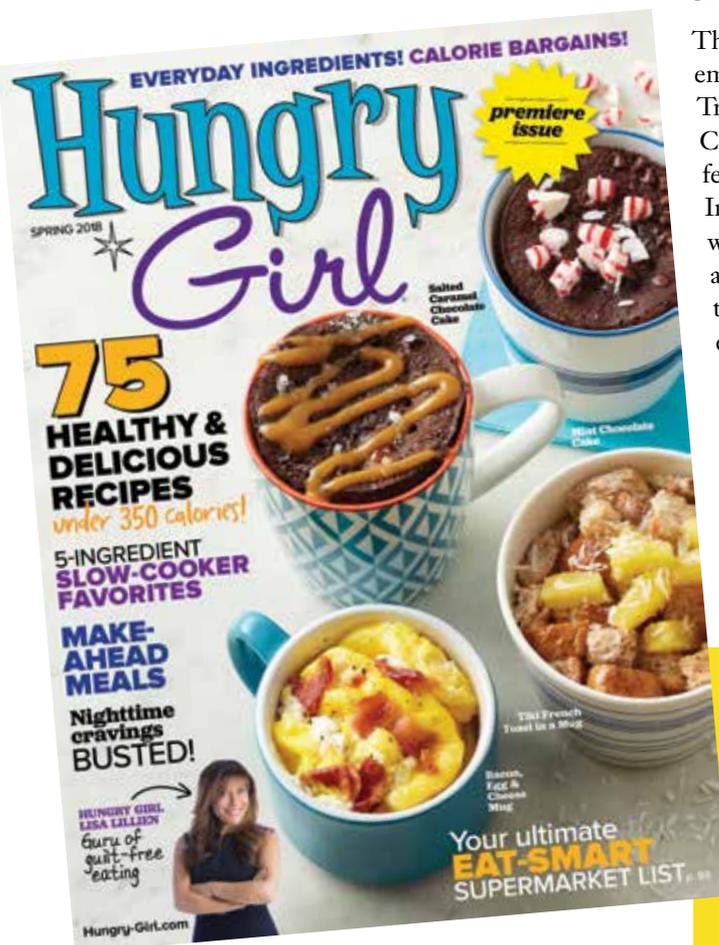
Lisa Lillien visited UAlbany in 2013.

Soon, the “foodologist” branched out into other media. She wrote a column for the *New York Daily News* and created weekly content for Weight Watchers.com, *Redbook*, and Yahoo! Lillien’s books became fixtures on the *New York Times* best-seller list. She reached television viewers through “Hungry Girl,” which aired on both Food Network and the Cooking Channel, and through guest shots on “The Dr. Oz Show.”

Based in Los Angeles, Lillien continues to travel for TV and personal appearances. Her 12th book, the Amazon No.-1 Best Seller *Hungry Girl Clean & Hungry OBSESSED! All-Natural Recipes for the Foods You Can't Live Without*, was published last September. And the email that launched the Hungry Girl brand 14 years ago still goes out each day – to more than 1 million readers.

*Hungry Girl* is sold at supermarkets, bookstores, newsstands – “and readers can order it online,” Lillien says. “It will also be available digitally.”

The second issue will publish in April.



## The Sky's the Limit • Dan Hart, B.S.'83

For Dan Hart, the sky's the limit.

As Virgin Orbit president and CEO, Hart oversees a team of more than 400 dedicated to “building a launch system to carry small satellites (300 to 500 kilograms) to orbit. Our first launch to orbit will be this year, so we are under full steam in our Long Beach [Calif.] headquarters and at our test range in the Mojave Air and Space Port.”

Hart notes: “The satellite industry is going through a transformation much like consumer electronics has over the years. Capabilities that once were only possible on satellites the sizes of SUVs can now be accomplished by satellites the sizes of washing machines, microwave ovens ... and even toasters.” These new resources, he adds, are “enabled by the density of electronics, advances in electric propulsion, laser

communications, and phased-array antennas, among other things.”

Over the past few years, “a large array of start-up companies has formed, aiming to provide communications, imaging, data storage, and a host of other capabilities using fleets of small satellites,” explains Hart. That’s where he and Virgin Orbit enter the picture.

“Unlike most launch systems, we are air-launched. Our 747, *Cosmic Girl*, carries our rocket out to sea, up to approximately 35,000 feet, and drops it. The rocket engine ignites, and the satellite goes to orbit.”

Hart says that 2018 promises to be “a very busy year for us.” His goal is to “lead this team to orbit and ramp up production of more than 24 rockets a year, then expand the company into other aspects of space transportation.

“Working with Richard Branson and the Virgin Team has been very exciting. They are fast moving – a true entrepreneurial group under a unified purpose to change business for good. It’s an inspiring place to be.”

Hart was recruited to Virgin Orbit in 2016. “I had been running Boeing’s Government Satellite Business and completing a number of satellite launches – GPS, NASA TDRS, X-37, etc. – when I received a call about a new space company that was looking for a CEO. One thing came to another, and here I am,” he recalls.



Currently, “Virgin Orbit is more focused on improving life on earth by enabling beneficial capabilities in space that serve earth and humanity,” adds Hart, who majored in physics at UAlbany and once aspired to a career as an astronaut. “That said, we’ll provide supplies to people in space or partner with Virgin Galactic and propel people into outer space.”

Given the opportunity, would Hart go into space?

“If there’s something I could contribute, something that needed doing, I’d be there in a heartbeat,” he responds.



Photo, left: Hart poses with Virgin Galactic CEO George Whitesides, left, and Virgin founder Richard Branson, center. Above: *Cosmic Girl* is Virgin Orbit's 747.

# Art For Art's Sake

By Stephen Shoemaker, B.A.'02

Brian Tolle, B.A.'86

## Political Involvement and Artistic Enterprise

**N**early three decades ago, Brian Tolle transitioned from political science to art. Now the famed sculptor – whose public works have been displayed throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe – finds himself, in a sense, returning to politics and embracing lessons dating from his undergraduate days at UAlbany.

“I really do feel as though things are coming around full circle. I’m being asked to do things that are not typical for an artist to do traditionally, and I’m embracing the opportunity to do them,” he said.

Though reluctant to share specifics until details are finalized, Tolle did say he’s in talks with the federal government to serve as artist in residence at a revered and important symbol of our nation’s heritage.

“I’m being asked to respond as an artist about the Republic, about democracy,” he said of his potential role in the project. “But I’m also being asked to lay the groundwork for inviting creative people into this space [in the future], and making their experience and their potentialities possible.”

Tolle is also drawing from his experiences during a short-lived political career in the office of longtime New York State Assemblyman Denis J. Butler, who represented the Astoria section of Queens.

No matter how different his own emerging political leanings were, Tolle learned, his role was to represent Butler. He now finds he is similarly able to separate himself, as artist, from the objects he creates. “I represent myself in a relatively impartial way. Yes, I know the history of the thing; I know the thought process behind the thing. But I’m not the thing.”

In addition, Tolle learned how to respectfully but firmly address those with contrary opinions, a skill he employs while in talks with financial backers for restoration to his Irish Hunger Memorial in Manhattan’s Battery Park. (He worked on the project in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks; it was completed the following year).

By treating those who hold opposing views “with diplomacy and respect,” Tolle deflects others’ perceptions of him as a temperamental artist – “a cliché” – or “an emotional creature.” He presents the facts “as I see them,” Tolle noted. “I’m not here to argue; I’m here to counsel.”



Andrzej Liguz



Politics have, throughout history, both embraced and spurned the arts. But art will always transcend politics, Tolle said, adding that there are parallels between these two human endeavors. The genius of documents like the Constitution and the *Magna Carta* lies in their existence as abstract ideas that transcend the pieces of paper they are printed on – and that are open to different interpretations.

In making that point, Tolle arrived at his own epiphany: “The relationship between my political involvement and my artistic enterprise is the fact that these realities exist in my mind, and that they’re open to interpretation by me, and by everyone,” he said.

“And that’s very appealing to me.”



© Peter Aaron/OTTO



© Peter Aaron/OTTO



Pictured clockwise, from top of opposite page, are artist Brian Tolle; two views of the Irish Hunger Memorial in New York City's Battery Park; Richard Nixon, "No. 37" (2012); Abraham Lincoln, "No. 16" (2012), which incorporates wording from his inaugural addresses; and Tolle's recreation of Miss Manhattan and Miss Brooklyn, "Pageant" (2017), located on the Brooklyn-side approach to the Manhattan Bridge.

## Joseph Carlucci, B.A.'99

### Making His Mark

**J**oseph Carlucci has a reputation for being both dogged and fearless. During the past decade, the head of Sales and Marketing at Crozier, an art-storage and logistics company actively expanding its global reach, has also worked at esteemed auction houses Sotheby's, Christie's, and Phillips. "My persistence, my lack of fear, and my ability to pick up after getting knocked down to go at it again," he said, landed him a career in the art industry.

The big knockdown came in 2007 when Carlucci was laid off from Japanese financial-holding company Nomura as the Great Recession settled in. After earning a degree in economics from UAlbany, he'd worked at investment bank Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette and at Credit Suisse following its acquisition of DLJ. Carlucci subsequently went to Goldman Sachs before accepting the position with Nomura.

The layoff from Nomura coincided with a nagging sense that the long hours invested in his career weren't meeting Carlucci's

expectations. He had turned 30, "so in my mind this was now or never. If I'm ever going to change careers, now's my chance."

Carlucci had recently acquired his first piece of art – a print of an abstract artist's painting (the print still hangs in his kitchen) – and was hooked. He began to explore the career possibilities of the art industry.

"I must have spent a fortune taking people out for drinks or coffee, just to pick their brains," Carlucci remembered. He talked with gallery and auction-house employees, people who worked for artists – and artists and aspiring artists.

Despite all their warnings about how emotional a business it could be, or how he wouldn't make any money, Carlucci realized an auction house might be the ideal place for him.

"I thought I might be a rarity in their world: a guy with finance experience, one who really has an underlying interest in art and actually wants to work there, not just buy from there," he said.

Perusing job listings on Christie's website, though, he sensed that none seemed to fit his experience. However, in a "light-bulb moment," he reasoned, "If I click on this nondescript link for an administrator, it must go somewhere." Carlucci forwarded an email explaining why he thought his professional experience, combined with his passion for art, made him a good fit for Christie's. He never expected to hear back.

Several days later, though, Carlucci received an email request to expand on his interest and knowledge of the arts. An hour after replying, he received a phone call, and an interview was set up. His new career in the arts began in Christie's commercial office.

While a certain cachet accompanies working at the big auction houses, Carlucci said, Crozier occupies vital roles on the art industry's periphery. While his latest career shift caught some of his family and friends off guard, the opportunity to make his mark in a growing market was too promising to pass up.

"You can't be afraid of trying anything," noted Carlucci. "Don't let your background or limitations prevent you from at least trying to go after what you want."

Even as a UAlbany senior, Carlucci understood the importance of expanding his horizons. After meeting his degree requirements, he took an acting course. While acting wasn't something he'd ever thought to pursue, he ended up loving the class and carrying some of its lessons with him. "I'd like to think that course helps me nowadays when I have to speak to my team or to groups of clients," Carlucci reflected.



Sandra Hamburg

# EQUALITY. ADVOCACY. ACHIEVEMENT.

## Celebrating LGBTQ Alumni

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93

The legacy of Harvey Milk '51 endures at UAlbany through the lives and work of his fellow alumni. After graduating from the New York State College for Teachers, Milk went on to careers in education and politics, and distinguished himself as an advocate for human rights. As the first openly gay candidate elected to office in a major U.S. city, he briefly served as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors until his assassination in 1978. The following are profiles of three University at Albany alumni who exemplify his spirit.

### JOSEPH VALENTINO, B.A.'89 **A Voice For Change**

**B**ack in 1998, Joseph Valentino only expected to spend a year or two at Here Media, the world's leading media company dedicated to the LGBTQ community. He assumed this would be another stepping stone in his burgeoning publishing career, but it soon became clear that this was more than a job – it became his mission.

Nineteen years later, he is now senior vice president, group publisher for Here Media. He oversees a team responsible for generating millions of dollars in ad revenue and sponsorships. Here Media's reach has expanded exponentially in the last decade beyond flagship print publications such as *The Advocate*, *OUT* and *Plus*. The company

launched Here TV in 2002, and its video, digital and social channels reach millions of people each day.

"My work sits at the intersection of my passion, my professional goals and so many causes I believe in," explained Valentino. He is particularly proud of his company's efforts to educate and support people with HIV/AIDS, and to reduce the stigma associated with the disease. "It's all about love, education and understanding," said Valentino.

Thinking back to his UAlbany days, the 2011 winner of UAlbany's Harvey Milk Award felt free to be himself in a community that was "very accepting." He credits



faculty members with fostering his confidence and public-speaking skills.

"UAlbany gave me the opportunity to speak my mind," Valentino said. "And that's what I do every day."



Photo, left, Nora Lum attends the “Bad Rap” premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in April 2016. Above, from left: Sarah Paulson, Rihanna, Awkwafina and Sandra Bullock film a scene from “Ocean’s 8” in New York City in January.

## NORA LUM, B.A.’11 (A.K.A. AWKWAFINA) Star of Rap, TV and Film

By Steve Barnes

Seven years after graduating from the University at Albany with a degree in journalism and women’s studies, Nora Lum will be on cinema screens worldwide in one of the most anticipated movies of 2018.

The film is “Ocean’s 8,” a spinoff of the “Ocean’s Eleven” franchise of heist pictures. In this next installment, which will feature an all-female crew of thieves, Lum co-stars alongside a who’s-who of Hollywood notables, including Cate Blanchett, Anne Hathaway, Sandra Bullock and Helena Bonham Carter. Collectively, the cast has won five Academy Awards, and, adding in the honors for singer-actress Rihanna, seven Grammys.

Lum is known to a subset of music fans for her alter ego, the comedy rapper Awkwafina, who has had cult hits with a few of her cheeky music videos. Acting is relatively new for Lum: “Ocean’s 8” is just her third major movie role.

“I was cast early, thank God. I didn’t know who else was going to be in it,” says Lum, chatting on the phone early this year from New York City during a break in filming. “If I’d known, I would have been terrified.”

Lum was cast by “Ocean’s 8” director Gary Ross after he saw the unreleased indie film “Dude,” with Lum as one of a quartet of female friends who met in high school. “Dude” was written

and directed by Olivia Milch, who shares screenwriting credit on “Ocean’s 8” with Ross.

“This is probably the biggest movie I’m ever going to be in,” says Lum, now 28. “When I saw the roster of who else was in it, it was mind-blowing. I’m a huge Cate Blanchett fan, and Rihanna, too. Actually, I was nervous about meeting all of them.”

She was star-struck by her co-stars until after a get-acquainted party to kick off filming last fall. “Everyone was super chill,” she recalls. “It went from me feeling like I was around these goddesses to me saying, ‘Hi, Sandi,’ ‘Hi, Annie.’”

As Awkwafina, Lum has been playing an exaggerated version of herself – a brash, self-assured, street-wise New York City kid – for years. Though precluded by contract from saying much about the plot of “Ocean’s 8” or her part in the action, she allows that her character is again similar to herself.

“I’m not playing Amelia Earhart or anything (crazy) like that,” she says. “I’m playing someone who was written for me, so I feel very comfortable.” Any lingering intimidation of appearing in scenes opposite veterans who have starred in Shakespeare, Dickens and the “Harry Potter” movies (Bonham Carter), or channeled Katharine Hepburn in “The Aviator” (Blanchett), further dwindled when Lum was able to deploy her comedy skills.

"I made them all laugh," she says. "That made me feel good, feel like I wasn't an imposter."

Music was Lum's first love and first success. She wrote raps and recorded beats in high school and while at UAlbany. Some friends knew of her secret identity as a comedy rapper, but it wasn't anything she promoted. I taught Lum in four journalism courses and thought of her as an extraordinarily gifted young writer, one capable of packing moods, scenes, emotion, insight and intelligent wit into essays of four to five pages. When I saw her first hit video, "My Vag," which parodies a popular 2006 rap tune by Mickey Avalon, it was at least a year after she'd graduated, and I was gape-jawed with flabbergasted delight that my serious, earnest student could be so hilariously bawdy.

After inauspicious academic performance in high school — "I think I took the earth-science Regents (exam) eight times," she says — Lum found her misspent youth served her well in college.

"When I got to SUNY, I had all of that already out of my system. I had no interest in partying. I wanted to learn from all of these professors I was so intrigued by. I don't think I would have been able to be Awkwafina if I didn't go to SUNY."

"My Vag," which has more than 1.5 million views on YouTube, led to other music videos; a recurring stint as a cultural commentator on the MTV series "Girl Talk"; *Awkwafina's NYC*, a book about walking tours in her hometown; her own Web series; and movie roles.

"I'm finding out whether this — this comedy-music-acting thing — is what I'm going to be doing for the rest of my life," Lum says. "I used to make very soft, drippy, electronic, emo songs, but I always knew in the back of my head that if people were going to know me for anything, it would be for 'My Vag.'"

From top right: Lum is pictured in November 2016 on the "Ocean's 8" set; *Tawk with Akwafina*, her Web-video series, is currently in Season 5; a few posts from her Instagram account.

Lum still lives in New York City. She is resisting moving to Los Angeles, though she admits, "it something feels like I'm flying out there 11 times a month."

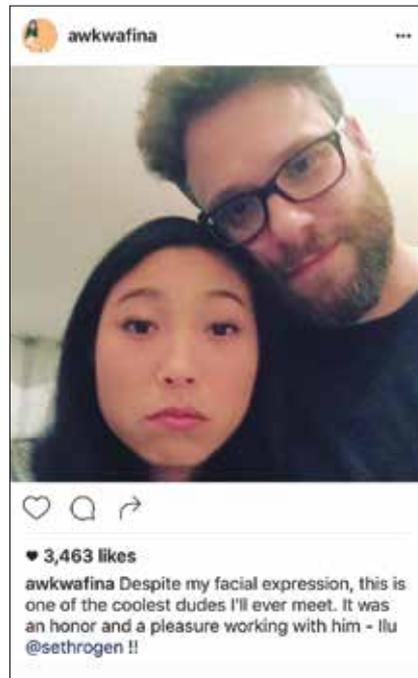
Her father, a lifelong government employee who used to urge her toward secure, public-sector jobs like meat inspector or air-traffic controller, has finally accepted her career and success.

"Now when we go out to dinner, when the check comes, he'll just look at me like, 'You got this, right?' He's definitely along for the ride," Lum says.

*Steve Barnes, a senior writer for the Times Union in Albany, has taught journalism courses at UAlbany since 2007.*



Steve Sanders/GC Images





Micr

**EDWARD  
FANDREY, B.A.'97**

THE POWER OF  
SELF-ASSESSMENT

BY STEPHEN SHOEMAKER, B.A.'02



**W**ith 17 years at tech giant Microsoft, Edward Fandrey, who has risen through the ranks to be the company's chief of staff for Worldwide Sales and Marketing, admits the company's corporate values are now part of his DNA.

"I didn't really think I'd be at any one company this long," he says. "But Microsoft keeps re-inventing itself" – a feat made possible by the organization's willingness to look at itself critically. "You want to celebrate what you're doing well, but you also want to focus on getting better and having a growth mindset."

It's a lesson Fandrey has applied to his own career. But before reporting directly to Microsoft's chief operating officer, Kevin Turner – who runs the company's massive \$95 billion dollar Sales and Marketing Group – Fandrey got his first taste of self-assessment as a psychology major at UAlbany. In one course, he was asked to contemplate his life goals and was challenged to translate those goals into achievable milestones with measurable results.

The course, Fandrey recalls, "was part of the many UAlbany core electives you could pick from. I didn't sign up for it because I was the type that planned out every goal in my life, to be honest, but what I learned in that course about setting and achieving goals changed my life."

The assignments spurred him to build qualities that would figure into his success. Says Fandrey:

"I came from a small town; however, I had big dreams. But when I first mapped it out in that class, I realized I wasn't doing anything in particular that was going to lead to accomplishing those goals." The Long Island native recognized that if he didn't take control of his life, he would return home after college and find a "pretty good job, but nothing great. It kind of scared me a bit, in a good way, and it motivated me to really get my act together to accomplish the dreams I had."

Fandrey buckled down and during his senior year took advantage of the New York City-based recruiters – all of them – who came to the UAlbany campus looking for talent. He laughs as he remembers having as many as 14 interviews per day on campus with potential employers, ranging from insurance firms to manufacturers of road equipment. "My one navy-blue interview suit and the conservative red tie that my dad bought me when I was back for winter break really got a lot of practice."

As a result, Fandrey got very good at interviewing and building his personal brand. He impressed an on-campus recruiter from Productivity Point International (now Productivity Point Global),

a firm dedicated to providing computer instruction to business firms trying to keep pace with the somewhat new world of email and spreadsheets. But it wasn't Fandrey's familiarity with the technology and software of the time that impressed them. "They were really impressed by how I was able to present well, simplify and relate to business leaders and sometimes career-changers who were learning the PC for the first time," he remembers.

Those skills also impressed Microsoft, one of PPI's clients, and led to an invitation to join that company three years later as a systems engineer in Manhattan. "It was kind of an overlay role where they wanted someone who knew technology but also was able to listen to customers and understand what Microsoft solution we could sell." From there, Fandrey moved purely into sales and managed Microsoft's global account for the Bank of New York Mellon. Later, in sales management, he led a business responsible for more than \$300 million dollars in sales of software and consulting services for Microsoft's largest New York-based clients.

Fandrey's ability to transform and build high-performing sales teams and his impressive year-over-year results caught the eye of Microsoft Chief Operating Officer Kevin Turner, who asked Fandrey to move to Microsoft's corporate headquarters

just outside Seattle and take on his current role as chief of staff in 2013. Fandrey helps Turner set strategy and motivate a worldwide sales and marketing force of nearly 29,000 as Microsoft continues

to transform from selling traditional "on-premises" products, such as Windows and Office, in favor of cloud-based software solutions like Office 365 and Azure cloud platform.

"Part of my role is to devise and execute a strategy for educating and motivating our sellers in 191 countries to speak with customers about the benefits of transitioning to the cloud," Fandrey explains. The most recent of those transformations have kept Microsoft a top tech firm all these years, and he's confident the company's best days are ahead of it.

Fandrey is just as optimistic about his own career, and the lessons gleaned by hustling from interview to interview on the UAlbany campus nearly 20 years ago still apply. "I learned never to underestimate the power of your personality, or to let anyone tell you that your career is predetermined and you can't impact its speed and course. It's meant so much to how I've achieved things at work and in life," observes Fandrey.

**Update:** Edward Fandrey, who was featured in the Spring 2016 alumni magazine, currently serves as vice president, Financial Services U.S., at Microsoft.



Microsoft

RICHARD GOODSTONE, B.S.'95

# Building Bonnaroo

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93



From its inception in 2002, Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival has blossomed into one of the nation's largest music festivals. More than a million passionate fans have attended the four-day event, held annually in Manchester, Tenn. It has been headlined by such music legends as Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney, Elton John and Stevie Wonder. The festival even has its own Ben & Jerry's flavor: Coffee Caramel Buzz.

It all comes back to an audacious idea hatched by four friends in a New Orleans apartment. (The festival's name was inspired by New Orleans culture. It means "best on the street" in French Creole.) One was of those friends and dreamers was Richard Goodstone, UAlbany graduate.

Goodstone is one of the co-founders of Superfly Productions, the experiential

marketing firm that developed and launched Bonnaroo. The festival is unique in that it celebrates a broad array of musical styles – rock, jazz, hip hop, etc. – along with comedy, visual arts, and even educational topics like sustainability and the environment.

Goodstone and his Superfly partners were inspired by some of the large music festivals in Europe, such as the U.K.'s Glastonbury Festival, and they saw an opportunity to replicate that model in the United States. He also credits the convergence of online music communities and "the iPod generation" with spurring interest in their multi-genre music festival.

"We were able to tap into the digitally connected grassroots community, and it just took off from there," said Goodstone. "We had the right idea at the right time."

Beyond Bonnaroo, Superfly produces innovative marketing efforts for a variety of major brands, from JetBlue to Tomy toys – all driven by a more experiential or interactive approach, in contrast to traditional advertising media, such as TV or print ads.

"We are a catalyst for positive feelings," explained Goodstone. "We are building experiences, moments, memories in a person's life. It's very enriching."

Goodstone said that he feels fortunate to work with his best friends at Superfly on a daily basis, and that his work never feels like a job. "We work, play and laugh hard," he noted.

The married father of two described his UAlbany experience as formative for his career because it gave him a strong marketing foundation. He also credits the University with introducing him to jazz.

"I was taking a jazz class, and our teacher played 'First Light' by Freddie Hubbard," recalled Goodstone. "It was a profound experience for me."

Through Bonnaroo and other Superfly efforts, Goodstone is now helping others enjoy similar life-shaping experiences.



Andrew Jorgensen



Andrew Jorgensen



Andrew Jorgensen



Andrew Jorgensen

### BONNAROO 2016 LINEUP

[CREATE A SCHEDULE](#)
[BY DISCOVER BONNAROO PLANET](#)

[2016](#)
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PEARL JAM • DEAD & COMPANY (2 SETS) • LCD SOUNDSYSTEM • J. COLE • ELLIE GOULDING  
 MACKLEMORE & RYAN LEWIS • TAMI IMPALA (LATE NIGHT) • DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE • M83 • HAIM  
 HALSEY • WEEN • JASON ISBELL • CHVRCHES • MIGUEL • CHRIS STAPLETON • JUDD APATOW  
 BOYSON TILLER • THE CHAINSMOKERS  
 SUPERJAM® HEART, SOUL & SPIRIT - A TRIBUTE TO TENNESSEE FEATURING KAMASI WASHINGTON & FRIENDS  
 BIG GRAMS (BIG BOI • PHANTOGRAM) • BAND OF HORSES • LEON BRIDGES • GRACE POTTER  
 FATHER JOHN MISTY • ADAM DEVINE • PURITY RING • VANESSA BAYER  
 THE CLAYPOOL LENNON DELIRIUM • TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB • SAM HUNT • FLOSSTRADAMUS  
 ZEDS DEAD • PETE DAVIDSON • ADVENTURE CLUB • TYLER THE CREATOR • GRIZ  
 CHARLES BRADLEY & HIS EXTRAORDINAIRES • LAMB OF GOD • NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SHEATS  
 BRIDGET EVERETT • KURT VILE & THE VIOLATORS • BLOOD ORANGE • LORD HURON • RL GRIME  
 THE BLUEGRASS SITUATION SUPERJAM® FEATURING ED HELMS AND FRIENDS • X AMBASSADORS  
 ST. LUCIA • PIFF THE MAGIC DRAGON • LUCIUS • VINCE STAPLES • THIRD EYE BLIND • JOHN EARLY  
 CYHANDE • MISTERWIVES • SEAN RATTON • CLUTCH • GOLDLINK • LETTUCE • NATE BARGATZE  
 CASHIERE CAT • ALICE WETTERLUND • THE GODDAMN COMEDY JAM • FIDLAR • IBEVI • KEYS N KRATES  
 APARNA NANCHERLA • SAM BUSH BAND • THE WOOD BROTHERS • SAINT MOTEL • DAUGHTER  
 THE FLOOZIES • BETH STELLING • MARIAN HILL • KAMASI WASHINGTON • BØRNS • POST MALONE  
 BOB MOSES • ADAM RAY • SHAMIR • ALLEN STONE • BRETT DENNEN • OH WONDER • JOSH RABINOWITZ  
 BOY & BEAR • DUNGEN • JOVELLE NICOLE • JUDAH & THE LION • STEVE GUNN  
 STEEP CANYON RANGERS • THE OH HILLDS • THE INTERNET • JOHN MORELAND • ANDRIA DAY



Andrew Jorgensen



BRANDON JAY MCLAREN, B.S.'02

# Born to Perform

By Claudia Ricci, Ph.D.'96

**I**t was the spring of his junior year at UAlbany, and Brandon Jay McLaren, a human-biology major recruited to play soccer, was headed straight toward medical school.

Then one night, he attended an *a capella* concert on campus.

“As I watched the show, I had a ‘Jesus moment,’” McLaren says. Recalling all the time he had spent in high school doing theatre, he realized that performing “is what I want to do.”

Having finished his pre-med classes, McLaren was free to study theatre. But he didn’t want to take beginning drama classes. An understanding faculty member, Marna Lawrence, let McLaren take 300-level classes. “She championed me,” he says. “She gave me a lot of guidance, and she broke all the rules.” McLaren soon earned a lead role in a campus production of *Flying West*.

Still, he confesses, it was a confusing time. “I kept asking myself, ‘Who are you?’ It was a crazy, crazy senior year!”

A native of Vancouver, British Columbia, McLaren graduated from UAlbany *cum laude*. He moved back home, found an agent and did commercials for a year. He also got a lead part in a play called *She’s the Man*.

In 2006, McLaren relocated to Los Angeles, where his

career has blossomed. “I’ve been really fortunate,” he says.

Well known for his role as the Red SPD Power Ranger in “Power Rangers: SPD,” McLaren has appeared in more than three dozen films and television shows. His credits include Danny Brooks in “Harper’s Island” and Lenin in “Being Erica.” More recently, he portrayed Bennett Ahmed, a teacher suspected of murdering a female student, in “The Killing,” which was nominated for six Emmy awards.

CBS recently cast McLaren in a new drama, “Ransom.” Shooting has begun in Toronto.

For a horror production, the entire shoot has to be filmed in the dark, “so you’re working 8 p.m. to 9 a.m. five days a week.” Though the days can be long, McLaren loves his work. “I’m typically excited to go to work, because it’s always going to be different.”

His years at UAlbany, says McLaren, “were some of the best years of my life.” How did he manage to excel at his studies and soccer? “I had the same routine all four years,” McLaren remembers. “I was either in the library or on the soccer field. I got really serious for four years.”

**Update:** *Brandon Jay McLaren, whose profile was featured in the Fall 2016 UAlbany, currently stars in “Ransom.”*

CHERYL ABEL-HODGES, B.A.'86

# Fashion Sense

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93



## From political science ... to Justin Bieber's boxers.

These seemingly incongruous topics merge in the dynamic career track of UAlbany graduate and fashion executive Cheryl Abel-Hodges.

The former poli-sci major is president of The Underwear Group and Global Calvin Klein Underwear. She oversees the underwear and intimate business segments for PVH, the apparel giant behind such iconic fashion brands as Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and IZOD – contributing to annual sales north of \$8 billion.

Calvin Klein Underwear is commonly associated with provocative marketing campaigns featuring celebrity endorsers, such as Kendall Jenner and the aforementioned Bieber. Behind the scenes, however, Abel-Hodges and her team manage the business side of the brand – from helping design and production to devising global market strategies.

She has been with PVH for a decade, following stints at Polo Ralph Lauren, Liz Claiborne and May Merchandising Company (part of May Department Stores, which merged with Macy's in 2005).

It all began when the onetime aspiring attorney took

what she thought would be a minor career detour after graduating from UAlbany: She enrolled in the Bloomingdale's Executive Training Program.

"I actually thought I would go to law school, but once I started working at Bloomingdale's ... I realized that I loved it," explained Abel-Hodges. As a longtime aficionado of clothing, shoes and accessories, she decided to pursue her passion and chart her own path in the retail and wholesale fashion industry.

"It's a sector where nothing ever stays the same, which is both exciting and challenging," said Abel-Hodges. "You learn something new every day."

She mentioned that "managing great teams, growing great brands and working with great retail partners" are among her favorite things about her current role.

The proud mother of two college students credits UAlbany with giving her "a great educational foundation" and says that "I loved my time and experience there."

*Update: Cheryl Abel-Hodges, whose profile was featured in the Fall 2016 UAlbany, is currently group president, Calvin Klein North America, and president, The Underwear Group.*

TOMMY HILFIGER

IZOD

Calvin Klein  
underwear

JOSH OSTROVSKY, B.A.'06

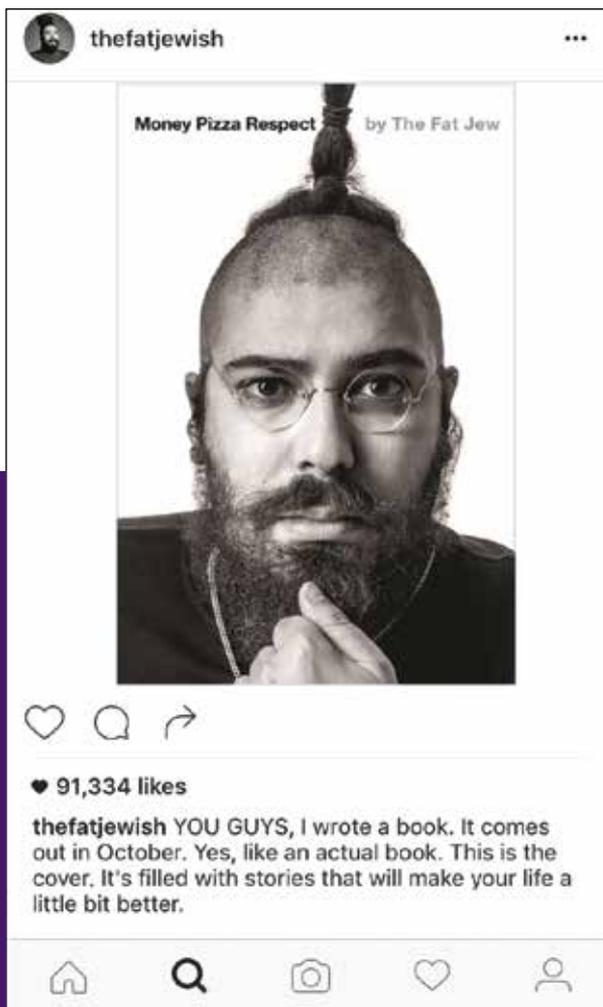
# Social Butterfly

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93

**K**aty Perry, Snoop Dogg and 9 million other people follow him on Instagram under the username @TheFatJewish. He's been a guest at a White House event where a joke about his hair earned a hearty laugh from President Obama. He co-launched a line of affordable wines called White Girl Rosé, which has sold more than 30,000 cases. He has officiated weddings and been hired to attend bar mitzvahs. And last February, he was paid handsomely to sit inside a giant vat of chili to promote Craftsman tools during the Super Bowl.

To say that Josh "The Fat Jew" Ostrovsky has taken a non-traditional life path is something of an understatement. Nonetheless, the former journalism major has carved out an impressive niche for himself. Whether you refer to him as a social-media icon, writer, actor, "plus-sized model" (his description) or marketing strategist, Ostrovsky is a savvy entrepreneur with a charmingly twisted sense of humor ... and clearly in the right place at the right time.

"I always knew I would do something different," said



Ostrovsky introduces his new book.



At the White House Correspondents' Dinner, he hobnobs with the Obamas.

Ostrovsky when describing his career aspirations from his UAlbany days.

He transferred to the University after previous stints at Skidmore College and NYU. Craving what he termed “a real college experience,” Ostrovsky was drawn to UAlbany’s sense of community. He built strong friendships here, including with a group of “Italian guys who brought their own deli meats from home – because they couldn’t get good capicola upstate.”

Ostrovsky credits University faculty with encouraging his creative instincts. In fact, his penchant for making outrageous videos and quirky social commentary dates back to his time in college.

“I was doing all the same stuff in college that I do now, but only my friends saw it,” noted Ostrovsky. “Now I get to share my ideas with millions of people.”

Ostrovsky has also learned how to monetize his quirky appeal. One of his primary sources of income is marketing himself and his large social-media following to some of the world’s best-known brands. From Bud Light to Burger

King, advertisers pay him to integrate their products into his Instagram and Snapchat feeds.

“They always start by saying, ‘Do something really crazy,’” said Ostrovsky with a laugh. “Then I make a few suggestions, and they usually want something less crazy.”

While social media has clearly played a major role in Ostrovsky’s success, and though he loves the Internet “more than my own family,” the multi-talented star believes that there is an increasing sense of “social-media burnout.”

“Real life is making a comeback,” predicted Ostrovsky. “People – especially millennials – are hungry for real-life experiences.”

That’s one of the reasons why Ostrovsky continues to pursue new creative and business interests, from winemaking to food and travel writing to developing ideas for a TV show.

“Every day is unexpected,” said Ostrovsky. “I never know where I’m going to end up.”



Ostrovsky gets a pedicure – and an interview – with Katie Couric.



Ostrovsky’s dog, Toast, has her own social-media fame.



SUSAN GALANDIUK, M.D., B.S.'76

# BIOLOGY/GERMAN MAJOR STEERS MEDICAL SUCCESS

BY JIM SCIANCALEPORE, M.A.'93



**A**s fate would have it, Dr. Susan Galandiuk's choice of double major at UAlbany would make a significant impact on her life's direction.

Galandiuk knew she wanted to pursue a career in medicine. Because she "always loved science," her decision to major in biology made perfect sense. Opting to take on a second major in German – while less conventional, perhaps – was just as formative.

The daughter of German-speaking Romanian and Ukrainian immigrants, Galandiuk was interested in immersing herself in her parents' native language. While at UAlbany, she participated in a summer program in Germany, where she visited the prestigious Wuerzburg University Medical School. She was instantly attracted to the school, and her two passions suddenly converged.

Galandiuk decided to pursue her medical degree at Wuerzburg, where she gained a more global, collaborative perspective on medicine. She also learned that she had a great affinity for both surgery and research.

"When I observed my first operation, I knew this was for me!" she said.

She completed a surgical internship in Wuerzburg and continued her training at the Cleveland Clinic. Though her career as a surgeon was well underway, Galandiuk missed the ability to do research, so she sought a place where she could potentially do both. She was awarded a fellowship at the University of Louisville In Kentucky, where – following a surgical residency at the Mayo Clinic – she would put down roots as surgeon, scientist and professor. By 1990, Galandiuk had found a home in Louisville.

She found something else, too: her husband, Hiram Polk, M.D. A noted surgeon, educator and researcher, Polk served as chairman of surgery at the University of Louisville for more than three decades. The two were married in 1993.

It helps to have a spouse who also comes from the medical field, Galandiuk observed. "He understands the hours required

and the demands of the job."

Galandiuk specializes in colon and rectal surgery, an area of medicine that people generally associate with cancer. She explained that many of her patients are facing more common afflictions, such as colitis and Crohn's disease – conditions that often require management more than surgical intervention.

"I have some patients for life," she noted. "I sometimes help three generations of the same family who are impacted by genetic disease."

While patient care is admittedly her "first love," Galandiuk is also energized by her passion for learning. "With research, there's always something new – something that could allow me to help many people," she said. "If I can learn something that puts me out of business, that would be a great thing."

Galandiuk believes that people in the medical profession need to collaborate to advance their knowledge. The author of numerous articles, she has served on dozens of editorial boards and medical societies, and she is an adviser to the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health. She recently took on another demanding title: editor-in-chief of *Diseases of the Colon & Rectum*, the world's leading academic journal for her specialty. She said that it's vital for practitioners to share information – not just with fellow professionals, but also with health-care consumers.

"There's been an explosion of content in health care, but not all of it is accurate," said Galandiuk. "We need to ensure that everyone has access to quality information."

In addition to her many health-care interests, Galandiuk said she is fond of the arts – particularly opera. She credited UAlbany's emphasis on providing a balanced undergraduate curriculum with helping to cultivate an appreciation for things outside the realm of science. It's one of several ways that the University helped shape Galandiuk's life and career.

**"My experience at UAlbany absolutely helped me do what I do today," she said.**



Galandiuk is an adviser to the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health. She recently took on another demanding title: editor-in-chief of *Diseases of the Colon & Rectum*, the world's leading academic journal for her specialty.



CHRIS CORRADO, B.S.'81

## HELPING OTHERS

# “REALIZE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL”

BY CLAUDIA RICCI, PH.D.'96

It's been 35 years since Chris Corrado made a bet with a University at Albany math professor. He still remembers what he said.

“I bet her that I'd never use linear algebra in my job,” recalls Corrado, now chief operating officer and chief information officer for the London Stock Exchange Group. He chuckles. “And then after I graduated, I went to work for IBM. The first computer language I had to learn was APL, which is based in linear algebra.”

Corrado lost that bet, but he went on to win a string of highly impressive jobs. His work history includes six years at Morgan Stanley in New York City as a systems programmer; two years in Japan as chief information officer for the Far East; a return to New York as head of Infrastructure; a transfer to London for two years as CIO for Europe and Asia; then three years with Deutsche Bank as chief technology officer. Corrado went back to New York City to join Merrill Lynch as chief technology officer for Capital Markets.

When 9/11 struck, Corrado was working at Merrill Lynch in the World Financial Center. He helped to rebuild the capital-markets business, installing thousands of desktops and hundreds of servers – and relocating thousands of personnel – in a matter of days.

When Hurricane Sandy hit New York in 2012, Corrado was working at UBS. Once again he came to the rescue, handling the crisis for the financial-services investment firm.

Looking back, Corrado says his undergraduate education at UAlbany was excellent preparation for his career. He recalls how John Levato, then assistant dean and advisor, made him

see how he could apply his major – business administration, with minor concentrations in math and computer science – in the real world of business.

Then there was the statistics professor who encouraged Corrado to combine several of his educational interests into an emphasis on management information systems. At the time, MIS was exclusively a graduate program. But Corrado was in the first class of undergraduates who focused on MIS – an opportunity that laid the foundation for his very impressive career.

It wasn't just academics at UAlbany that shaped his development, however. Each summer during his undergraduate years, Corrado stayed in Albany, working for the University's Office of Residential Life as part of a team that repaired dorm rooms after students had vacated them. At one point, Corrado got his first chance to manage a group of workers: four young men on a University painting crew.

Today, he oversees 2,000 people for the London Stock Exchange's technology and operational areas. Corrado runs the day-to-day operations of the exchange, information businesses, clearing and settlement businesses, and technology companies. In addition, he manages security, property and commercial services.

All in all, Corrado says UAlbany “was the best investment” he ever made.

When asked what he is most proud of in his illustrious career, Corrado doesn't hesitate: “of helping people realize their full potential – i.e., getting others to do things they did not think they were capable of doing.”



# London

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## Stock Exchange Group



TOM JUNOD, B.A.'80

## RECONNECTING WITH ALMA MATER

BY PAUL GRONDAHL, M.A.'84

**A**claimed journalist Tom Junod had not set foot on the University at Albany campus since his graduation 35 years earlier, but a remarkable transformation took place when he returned to his *alma mater* last September at the invitation of the New York State Writers Institute. He led a writing seminar; met with students; and read “The Falling Man,” his celebrated *Esquire* magazine article about the World Trade Center terrorist attacks, at the State Museum as part of a 9/11 commemorative program. Nothing prepared the prodigal writer for the depth of emotion that struck him.

“It felt like a return, a homecoming and all those really wonderful feelings. I’m not exaggerating when I say my visit there was a high point of my writing career,” said Junod (pronounced Juh-NO), who lives in Marietta, Ga. He is a two-time winner of the prestigious National Magazine Award, for which he has been nominated a record 11 times.

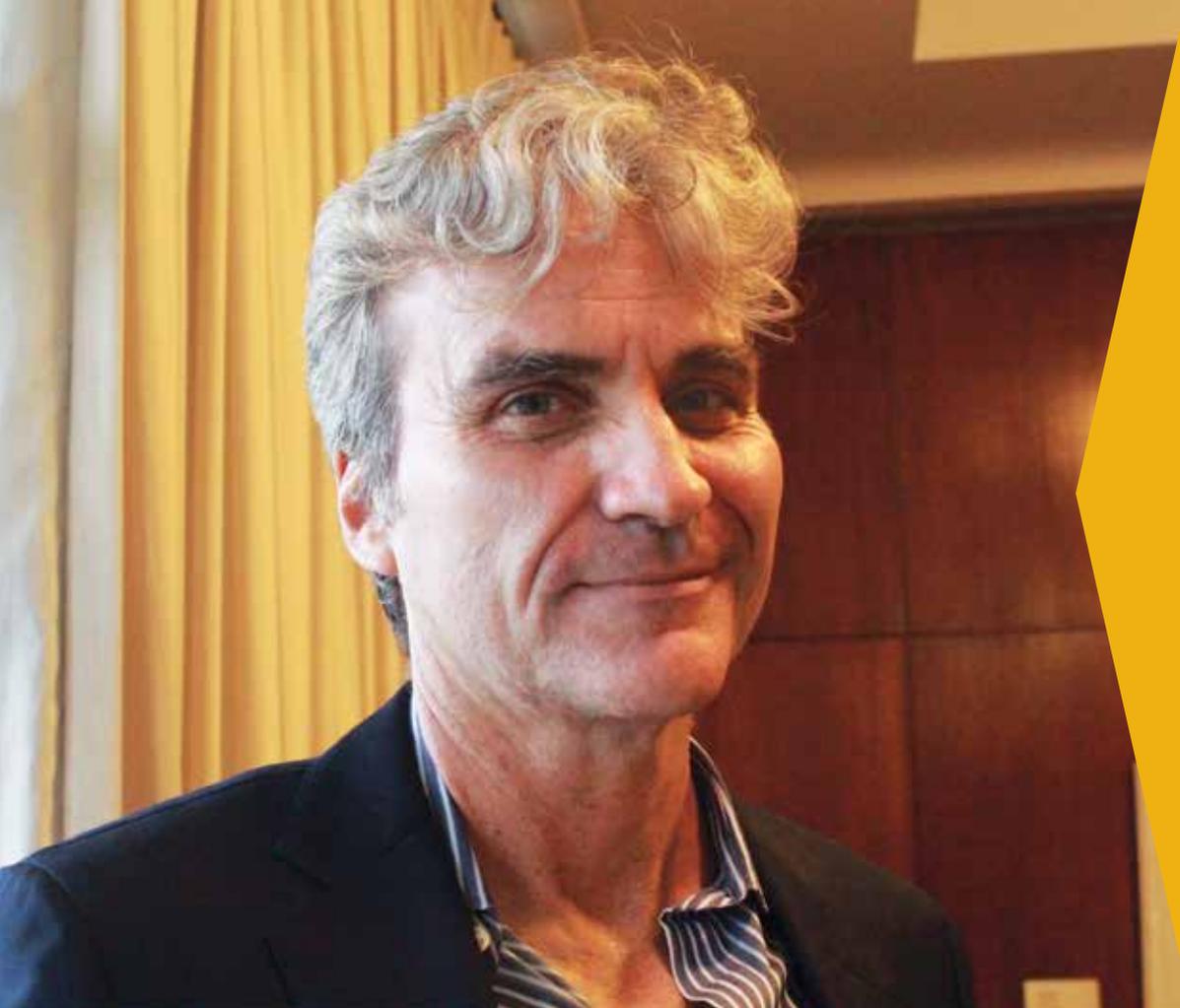
Junod returned again April 16 to accept the Excellence in Arts & Letters Award from the Alumni Association during a gala at the Albany Country Club. “It feels great to receive that honor,” he said. “It’s wonderful. I couldn’t be happier.”

Junod saw a lot of his younger self reflected in the students he met in writing classes. “They were smart and underdogs and fighters just looking for a chance,” he said. “I realized by talking with them that the underdog role was part of my lineage, too.”

Junod reconnected with a former professor, Judith Barlow, and met a literary idol, Writers Institute Founder and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist William Kennedy. “Bill and I walked around Albany, which felt like I was touring heaven with St. Michael,” Junod said. “Bill had a story for every building and street corner. We also talked about the struggles of being a writer. It’s not an easy thing to write a great book, even for Bill Kennedy. It reminded me your heroes don’t get to be heroes because it came easy to them.”



Highlights of journalist Tom Junod’s return to UAlbany in September 2015 included, from left, a visit with New York State Writers Institute Founder William Kennedy; a seminar; and, at the state museum, a reading of “The Falling Man,” his famous *Esquire* magazine piece about the World Trade Center attacks in 2001.



Hannah Brigida Infantado

Junod has twice won the prestigious National Magazine Award, for which he has been nominated a record 11 times.

Writing success did not come easily to Junod. The only journalism course he ever took was Fred LeBrun's *Journalism 101* his senior year. He earned his way into the big leagues of journalism through a combination of grit, drive, determination and a few lucky breaks. His luckiest break was falling in love with his future wife, Janet Junod '79, whom he met at SUNY Oneonta. Smitten, he transferred along with her to UAlbany his junior year.

Junod grew up in Wantagh, Nassau County. His father, a traveling salesman, sold women's purses. Junod did not have a clear career path and tried economics and psychology majors before he found his passion in English. He began reading Joan Didion, Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese and leading practitioners of The New Journalism. His English professors, particularly Barlow and Eugene Mirabelli, encouraged Junod's enthusiasm for writing and his unorthodox essays. He graduated *magna cum laude*, published a few pieces in literary journals and met with many rejections when he applied for editorial jobs in New York City. He ended up a traveling handbag salesman like his father and got held up at gunpoint in a Los Angeles hotel room. The experience rattled Junod so badly he quit the

business. He found a job writing articles for what he called "a third-rate trade magazine."

He refused to give up, kept writing stories and eventually broke into the big-time with articles in *Sports Illustrated*, *Life* and *GQ*. Junod became a protégé of *GQ* editor David Granger, who brought Junod along when he became editor-in-chief of *Esquire* magazine in 1997. Granger recently stepped down at *Esquire*, where Junod gained fame and considerable notoriety for deeply personal essays and celebrity profiles of Michael Stipe, Kevin Spacey, Nicole Kidman, Mister Rogers and many others. "David changed my life, and for 23 years he was my primary and ideal and reader," Junod said. "We went through a lot together. David never lost that faith in the underlying sound of my writing."

## Esquire

Along the way, the underdog from Wantagh has never stopped fighting.

**Update:** Tom Junod, featured in the Spring 2016 UAlbany magazine, is currently an editor with ESPN The Magazine and ESPN.com. His profile of and friendship with Mr. Rogers inspired a biopic, "You Are My Friend," which will star Tom Hanks as the children's-TV legend.



## SUZANNE MURPHY, B.A.'87

# A LIFELONG LOVE OF BOOKS

BY CLAUDIA RICCI, P.H.D.'96

**E**arlier this year, UAlbany accepted into its Presidential Scholars program Sophia, the daughter of alum Suzanne Murphy. Understandably, Murphy is proud of her daughter.

She is also very grateful to the University for her own education, which helped her to launch a highly successful 30-year career in children's book publishing. Last May, Murphy was named president and publisher of HarperCollins Children's Books, overseeing the operations of the company's entire children's division.

At UAlbany, Murphy majored in English and double minored in political science and history. She took full advantage of Albany's offerings – both on and off campus.

Living on State Quad, she was the first freshman in her dorm to take a bus downtown "to find out what was going on." Murphy recalls, "It was really beautiful being in the state capital with all of its history and politics."

She also held down a job while in college, working at Albany Savings Bank in Colonie Center as a part-time teller.

Originally from Ossining, N.Y., Murphy was drawn to UAlbany because of its size and the breadth of its course offerings. In addition to completing her studies, she tutored teaching assistants in the Educational Opportunities Program, which caters to a wide diversity of students.

Her English classes – and what was then the brand-new Writers Institute – "infused me with a love of books," Murphy says. "I gravitated to courses that really gave me a new perspective on the world." She wrote for the *ASP*

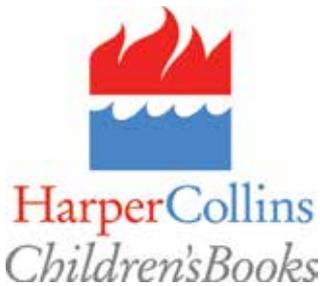
for two years and later co-chaired the campus Telethon, a 24-hour televised pledge campaign to raise money for children's charities. Students would audition to perform music, comedy, juggling or other routines. Murphy and her co-chair organized the campaign and also hosted an hour of the pledge drive on local TV.

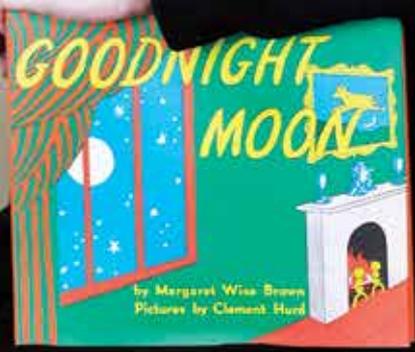
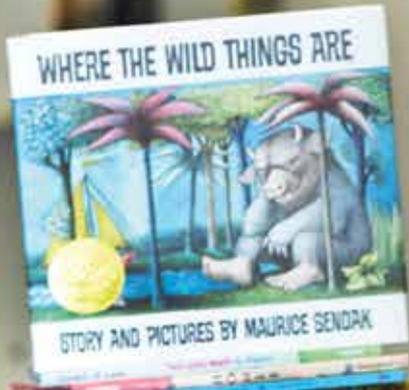
It was during the spring of her junior year that Murphy visited the Career Center and ended up with an internship in publicity and marketing at Dell. There were four interns at Dell that summer, but Murphy was the only student representing a state university.

After she graduated, Dell hired her for a full-time job as a publicity assistant. From there, Murphy worked in positions at Simon & Schuster and Random House before landing a job as vice president of Marketing and Publicity at Scholastic Trade publishing. While at Scholastic, she shepherded the publication of major best-selling books, including the Harry Potter series and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. From there, she joined Disney Publishing Worldwide as vice president, publisher, spending five years in that position. Murphy says she was "crazy lucky" to get the top job at HarperCollins last year. It thrills her to walk down the halls and see so many classic, beloved children's books, including *Goodnight Moon*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Charlotte's Web* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Since her daughter's acceptance by UAlbany, Murphy says, the University "has been very much" on her mind. Should Sophia select UAlbany, she would be the third generation in the family to do so, as Murphy's mother-in-law attended what was then the state university's teaching college in the 1950s.

Looking back, Murphy says she credits UAlbany "for so many things, but particularly my lifelong love of books and working to make the lives of children and families better through reading."







MICHAEL MACCARI, B.A.'85

## A GOOD FIT

BY SARAH AMMERMAN, B.A.'01

**P**erry Ellis International Creative Director Michael Maccari has made the most of his University at Albany education. Originally a math major with minors in business and fine art, “I wanted something more versatile, so I switched to English,” he remembers. “My art was always very realistic and precise, a lot of line drawings and graphic work; you could say it was mathematical. I had enough art credits to go in that direction, but I thought that a solid liberal-arts major, with more post-college schooling, could lead me in various directions.”

After graduating from UAlbany, Maccari worked as a manager and sales representative in a photo-retouching studio, gaining valuable experience that would direct him towards his future career. He continued his education at the Fashion Institute of Technology, where he took a production class that made him realize he could have a career designing menswear. Maccari recalls: “Menswear was relatable for me, and given my mathematical background and pragmatic nature, it was a good fit. I was wearing Perry Ellis at the time, and a family friend worked alongside Perry. I was intrigued by the nature of the work; fabric research; and naturally, the application of sketching to something three-dimensional.”

As Maccari continued to explore his interest in fashion design, he built a slightly unconventional portfolio. “I sketched on various project envelopes coming to and from clients, literally stopping in the street to draw when something inspired me. This became my portfolio for the menswear design school: varied

bits of ripped paper organized neatly in a book. The department chairman loved it, and I knew immediately I was on my way,” Maccari says.

Looking back at his time at UAlbany, Maccari says he wouldn’t change any part of his education. “Every piece contributes to the big picture,” he explains. “The mathematical start relates to the precision of menswear very directly, in terms of fit and proportion of details. The English background helps with the research each season, dreaming and writing about the ‘story.’ The fine-art foundation may be obvious, but finding your means of expression can only come after exploring various mediums. I had amazing fine-art instructors who pushed me to explore more deeply the work I was naturally drawn to. It provided focus, as well as exposure to similar artists and mentors.”

For those working toward their professional goals, Maccari shares this advice: “Explore your options fully, and don’t stop digging until you find and refine your passions. There can be many, and that’s a very good thing, but focus is important to understanding what really drives you.

“My work is never 9-to-5. It’s a never-ending process, and one I enjoy immensely. Because of that, I often don’t consider it work.”

Before landing at Perry Ellis International in December 2013, Maccari worked for a variety of designers, including A/X Armani Exchange, Polo Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, and J. Crew.

## P E R R Y   E L L I S



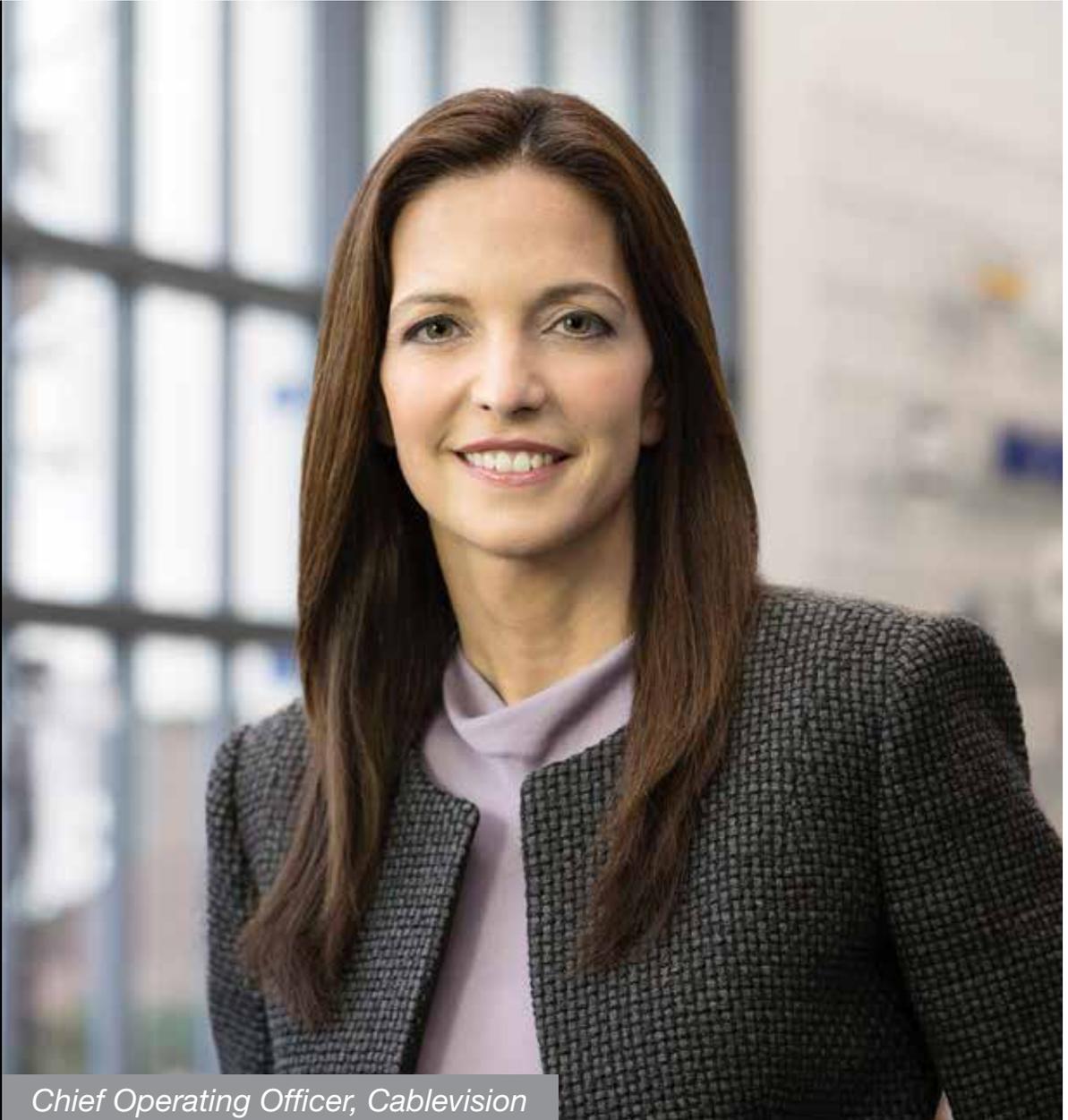
Kat Irnin



George Elder

Michael Maccari is pictured at his office, far left, and at the Fall 2015 Perry Ellis Fashion Show in New York City.

KRISTIN DOLAN, B.A. '88



Chief Operating Officer, Cablevision

# Expertise Comes With Experience

BY CLAUDIA RICCI, PH.D. '96

**K**ristin Dolan, the highly successful chief operating officer at Cablevision, has this advice for students preparing for careers in the real world: Don't expect to be experts coming out of college.

"You're never going to know everything going into a job," she says. "You're going to learn every day on the job. You really have to be flexible because the world is changing so fast."

Dolan knows plenty about being flexible. She changed her major at UAlbany three times before she settled on English with a business minor. (The other majors were accounting,

economics and computer science.)

The faculty member who most influenced her was writer Mark Nepo, then a professor in the English department. To get into the class, Dolan had to submit a writing sample. Nepo's class, and his highly successful *Book of Awakening*, taught Dolan the importance of being present for each and every activity during the day. She carried that attitude – that you had to immerse yourself in whatever you were doing – to other activities, including her other classes and later, to all the positions she held on her way up the ladder at Cablevision.

An avid reader, Dolan decided after college to pursue publishing. Pace University was offering a new M.S. in publishing program and she enrolled, eventually writing her thesis on cable television.

Her first internship was at a start-up magazine operated by former editors from the *New Yorker* magazine. It wasn't for her. "The people weren't friendly and I sat in a room all by myself all day."

Her next internship, with the American Movie Classics network, eventually turned into a permanent job at Cablevision. Dolan held a series of sales and marketing positions with increasingly more responsibility. After eight years on the job, she became a Cablevision vice president in charge of field communications. The position took her "out into the field, traveling throughout New York and New England to meet with Cablevision's front-line employees, including cable TV installers."

Dolan rose steadily through the ranks at Cablevision, eventually heading up the company's Optimum Services division, where she was responsible for all Optimum products, brand positioning and customer service. She has relied on her strong marketing background to move the company toward a more "friendly" feel. As one report put it, "she wants to get customers to actually like a cable company."

Named chief operating officer at Cablevision in April 2014,

Dolan has been featured in *CableFAX The Magazine's* lists of the top 100 cable executives and the top 50 most influential women in the industry. She supervises at least 10,000 employees.

While pursuing this high-powered career, Dolan also managed to earn an M.A. in literature from Long Island University.

As the cable industry becomes increasingly competitive, Dolan says that customer service has never been so important. This kind of attitude generally typifies small family businesses. Cablevision, Dolan notes, "is a small family business that just happens to be a Fortune 500 company, too."

Now, as COO, Dolan says she has to be particularly nimble, keeping tabs on myriad activities for the cable company. In one day she may have meetings that cover the gamut: advertising, product development, sales and marketing, budgeting, forecasting and operations.

Dolan says that one of her key strengths is continuing to help the company reinvent itself. "I like to fix things," she says. "I get in and get out. As soon as I do what I do, I move on to the next project."

*Update: Kristin Dolan, profiled in the Spring 2015 UAlbany, is now founder and chief executive officer of 605.*



ELDA DI RE, B.S.'83

## Tax and Financial-Services Expert

By Stephen Shoemaker, B.A.'02

If you've watched any of the big cable news stations during tax season or prior to the enactment of new legislation with tax implications, you may have seen Elda Di Re answering financial questions. The Ernst & Young (EY) partner has done segments on Bloomberg TV, CNBC and Fox, among others.

One standout appearance for her was with CNBC's Suze Orman after the Supreme Court's 2013 ruling in the *United States v. Windsor* same-sex marriage case. "It was a topic of such great import," Di Re says. "It was certainly something she followed for years. It felt great when she was asking me very specific questions about what I thought."

Di Re joined the audit practice at EY (then Ernst & Whinney) after graduation and eventually gained the experience to join the tax practice. She made partner in 1996, and in 2006 formed her own practice with EY. It specializes in working with clients in the financial-services industry.

She also serves on the board of The University at Albany Foundation; the accounting board for the School of Business;

and the finance committee of the United Nations School in Manhattan, which her son attends.

Di Re was drawn to the structure an accounting major provides, in terms of both education and job prospects, and says the career provides constant training and growth. "It's really a meritocracy. You're not battling against other people for a promotion; you're just continuing to grow each year, as long as you're doing well."

Di Re was the 2014 Commencement speaker for the School of Business. She likened her advice for graduates to a Venn diagram: "What do you like to do? What are you good at? And what does the marketplace need? It's where those three circles intersect that you should focus your efforts in your career."



# DEBBIE MILLMAN, B.A.'83

President, Design Group, Sterling Brands



Nebojsa Babic

## DESIGN MATTERS

By Carol Olechowski

Debbie Millman has a simple philosophy: *Design matters*. Why? “Design reflects the condition of our culture,” observes the president of Sterling Brands’ design group.

Millman’s interest in design blossomed at the University at Albany, where she majored in English and wrote for the *ASP*. “A baby designer was born” when she edited “Aspects,” the student newspaper’s arts and features section, and found “I was as interested in the form as I was in the content.”

Her minor in Russian literature, which enabled Millman to “understand humanity and the soul of a culture,” also influenced her career choice, as did her “amazing” professors. “Helen Elam taught me to learn with joy and gave me confidence. Deborah Dorfman taught me to write and listen and to be a better person. Harry Staley introduced me to James Joyce and inspired my pilgrimage to Dublin in 1992. And Hugh MacLean encouraged me to think with more rigor, to challenge conventions and to love Renaissance poetry.”

After graduation, “I wanted to do something special, but I felt compelled to safeguard my economic future,” recalls Millman. She worked for a cable magazine and a real-estate firm before starting a business with Cliff Sloan, B.A.’82. Millman subsequently accepted a marketing position with Frankfurt Balkind, then “the best design firm in the country.”

A year later, she joined New York-based Sterling Brands, which does brand strategy, innovation and brand design. Throughout two decades with the firm, Millman has worked with about 200 international brands, including Burger King, 7Up, Hershey’s, Gillette, Haagen Dazs, Colgate and Campbell’s Soup. She helped Sterling expand its staff from 15 to 150 while “shaping the overall vision and strategy of the design group.” In 2008, Millman and her partners sold the company to Omnicom.

Millman, president emeritus of the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), is also a respected broadcaster, author and educator. Her podcast “Design Matters,” currently in its 10th season, airs on Design Observer (<http://designobserver.com>). The show won the Cooper Hewitt National Design Award in 2011. With “Law & Order: SVU” star and Joyful Heart Foundation founder Mariska Hargitay, Millman created the NO MORE campaign ([www.nomore.org](http://www.nomore.org)) to eradicate domestic violence and sexual abuse. In 2009, she and design expert Steven Heller co-founded the world’s first graduate program in branding at New York City’s School of Visual Arts. Millman’s six books include *Brand Thinking and Other Noble Pursuits*.

**“None of this would have happened without the education I received at the University,” maintains Millman.**

She also met her close friends – Susan Benjamin, B.A.’83; Susan Milligan, B.A.’84; Robert Edelstein, B.A.’82; Joe Trelin, B.A.’83; and Sloan – at UAlbany.

*Update: An acclaimed writer, designer, educator, artist, and brand consultant, Debbie Millman continues to host the podcast “Design Matters.”*



Sarah Stone for BuzzFeed

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## Stephen Loguidice, B.A.'02 • **Leading the Buzz**

By Stephen Shoemaker, B.A.'02

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It's one thing to jump onto the content-marketing bandwagon to tell brand stories. It's another to have driven the wagon all along. That's what Stephen Loguidice and his colleagues at BuzzFeed have done since 2010, when they pioneered a new way for advertisers to get in front of the public.

Loguidice remembers: "We were the ones saying that everybody needs to start thinking differently, because consumption habits have changed drastically: Social [media] is the new starting point, and companies need to be looking this way. We were shouting it from the mountaintops."

In 2010, digital marketing equated to obnoxious banners, interstitial ads and video pre-roll. As the first salesperson brought on board to help monetize BuzzFeed, Loguidice was at the forefront of helping brands create content people would find compelling, humorous or interesting enough to share on social-media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. "People were throwing around the word 'content,' but there was no context behind it. We were the only ones doing it," says Loguidice, who earned his B.A. in economics with a minor

in business administration. He now serves as BuzzFeed's vice president of Brand Strategy for the East Coast.

One early client was Comedy Central, for "Tosh.0," which – as a TV show centered around Web content – was a perfect fit for BuzzFeed. Another client was General Electric, with its "Ecomagination" campaign. As an innovative company with "a very strong message" about its identity, Loguidice observes, GE "wasn't trying to sell anything right then and there."

As BuzzFeed expands into emerging social-media outlets like Pinterest and Snapchat, and into producing its own online video programming and, potentially, feature-length films, the central philosophy of good content marketing still applies, Loguidice says. "The core foundation is: How do I make something for people, make it for social [media], and build it to be spread and consumed on these platforms that people are already using?"

*Update: Stephen Loguidice is now senior vice president, Global Brand Development, at BuzzFeed.*

Tyrone G. Bristol, M.D., F.A.A.P., C.P.E., M.P.H.'07

# CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

By Carol Olechowski

Since joining Shanghai United Family Hospitals and Clinics (SHU) staff as chief medical officer in December 2008, pediatrician Tyrone Bristol has had ample opportunity to incorporate into his practice “preventative healthcare for the community, which I learned while getting my M.P.H. at UAlbany.”



The past four years “have gone by quite rapidly” for the School of Public Health alumnus, who earned undergraduate and M.D. degrees from Cornell University and Albany Medical College, respectively. “In addition to enhancing SHU standards with guidelines and policies, we’ve expanded healthcare services, such as diabetes and respiratory care, smoking cessation, sports medicine and adolescent care. We now have a consistent internal medical-education program for our staff and a significant outreach program to help educate our community on such topics as the dangers of lead poisoning and poor air quality. I’ve been able to continue one of my

professional passions: educating teenagers and parents about teen health risks, including the use of alcohol and other drugs, and unhealthy sexual behaviors.

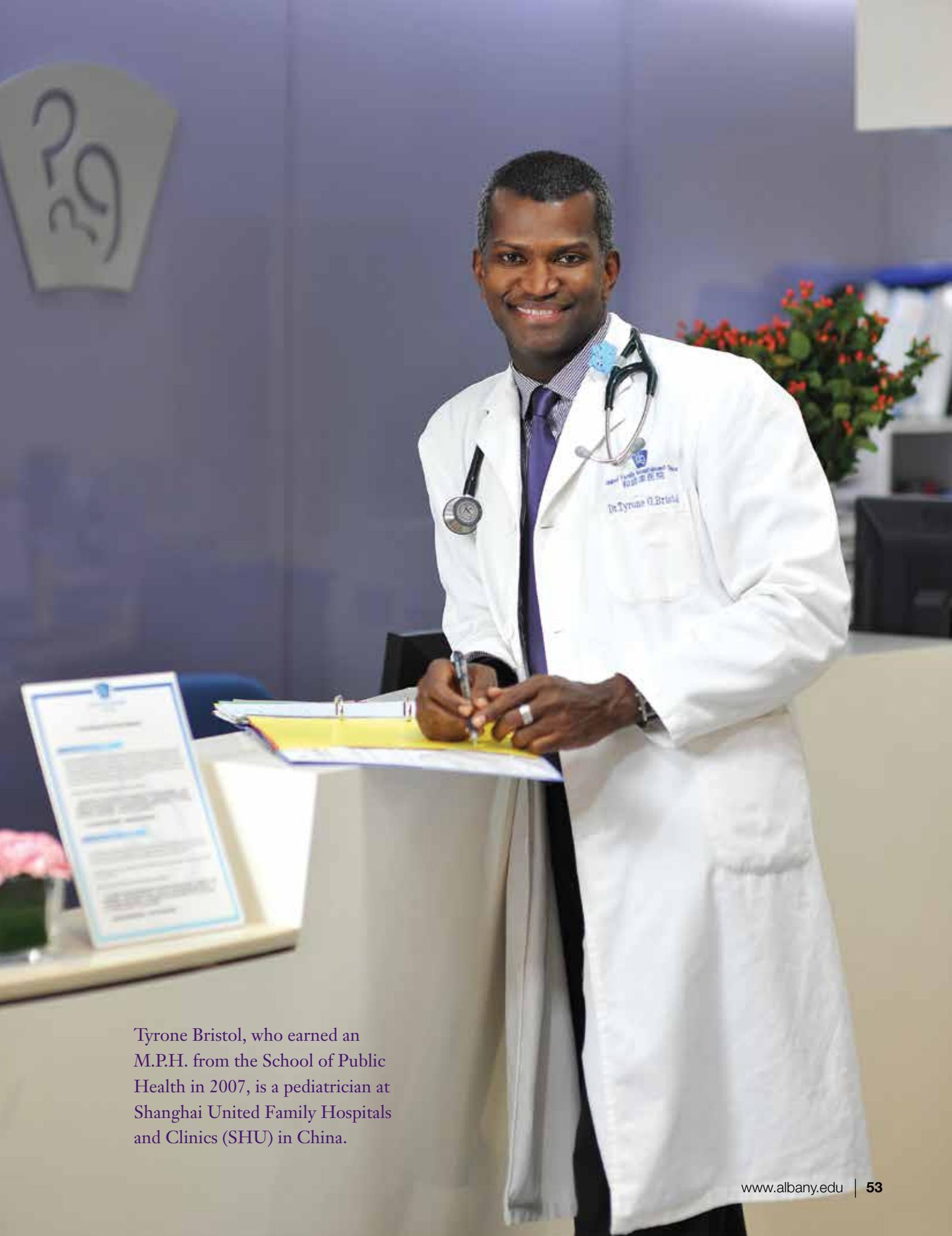
“Our staff and organization continue to grow, with new hospitals and clinic projects. We are proud to have been reaccredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) in 2011 for another three years. We still have many goals for the Shanghai organization, and I look forward to being part of it.”

Even as Bristol’s hospital-administrator role has expanded, “I’ve been able to build a pediatric practice in the very limited amount of time I have to see patients. I’ve learned many cultural and ethnic nuances of providing healthcare to kids from all over the world. I’ve had weekly Mandarin lessons since February 2009; I just started learning some medical Mandarin, and also how to write the characters. Personally, I was happy to become a Certified Physician Executive (CPE) in March.”

Life hasn’t been all work and no play for the Guyana-born Bristol, who immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager: “I continue to enjoy traveling and exploring other parts of Asia, such as Japan, Korea and Thailand.”

*Update: Tyrone Bristol, M.D., appeared in UAlbany’s Spring 2009 and Fall 2012 issues. He is now medical director at UNC Health Care in North Carolina, and clinical professor of pediatrics at the UNC School of Medicine.*





Tyrone Bristol, who earned an M.P.H. from the School of Public Health in 2007, is a pediatrician at Shanghai United Family Hospitals and Clinics (SHU) in China.



## JANE IREDALE, M.A.'98

*Founder and President, Iredale Mineral Cosmetics*

# A SENSE OF SATISFACTION

By Carol Olechowski

As a New York City-based casting director, producer and writer, Jane Iredale worked with Meryl Streep, Glenn Close, Henry Fonda, Jack Lemmon and other celebrities. Her clients included Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola. She worked for all the major television networks.

But in 1994, after 25 years in the entertainment field, Iredale embraced a new opportunity, founding Iredale Mineral Cosmetics ([www.janeiredale.com](http://www.janeiredale.com)), a line of natural makeup products.

"I saw so many actors and models struggling to keep their skins healthy because of the amounts and types of makeup they had to wear," recalls Iredale, who worked for J. Walter Thompson before establishing her own casting and production companies. "I wanted to be in a business that gave me a sense of satisfaction, and

enhancing the lives of women was a great motivator.

"The greatest challenge, of course, was financial. I maxed out my credit cards and went to friends, who made small investments. Later, as we gained more credibility, our bank provided a credit line."

With regard to cosmetics, Iredale explains, the word "mineral" has come to mean "a makeup formula that doesn't use fillers such as talc and is as clean as possible. It benefits the skin and minimizes any risk of sensitivity. Because minerals are pure pigment, they cover well and always feel light on the skin, allowing it to breathe and function normally. Minerals give a natural look that improves the skin's appearance."

Iredale Mineral Cosmetics are made in California, and new products are "always" in development. "Part of being a successful makeup brand is to keep bringing out things that are exciting and fresh. In 2015, we're launching our first hand cream – a beautiful non-sticky formula that smells of roses and has an SPF of 15," says Iredale.

The most rewarding part of her work is "receiving testimonials from customers about how our makeup has changed their lives." Iredale often interacts with customers at events and on social media. "They always have suggestions for me. Some have found their way into the line."

Her own favorite Iredale product is PurePressed Base, “a foundation, powder, concealer and sunscreen all in one. I use it every day. It stays where I put it, evens out my skin tone and protects me from sun damage.”

A native of England, Iredale earned a bachelor’s degree at New York University. In the mid-1990s, she enrolled in the University at Albany’s master’s program in liberal studies. Iredale acknowledges that it was difficult to attend classes while operating a business, “but it gave me something else to think about, rather than being consumed by the business 24 hours a day. My logic class was so challenging that I used to see the TA on a regular basis. When I got an A in that class, I thought: ‘If I can get through that, I can certainly make a success of my business. That’s easy, compared to logic.’”

.....  
**“One of the most important things I learned at the University was how to organize my thoughts and write a paper. Writing skills in business are so important; I can’t emphasize that enough,” Iredale notes.**  
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At home in Great Barrington, Mass., Iredale leads her employees in supporting numerous local organizations, including Fairview Hospital, the Women’s Cancer Wellness Fund, Shakespeare & Company, Berkshire Creative, and Habitat for Humanity. Other causes, such as Greenpeace, The Nature Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Society, are also important to her.

“I honestly believe that we’re only as strong as our weakest link, whether that’s a human being or the environment,” Iredale observes. “I’m lucky to have a satisfying and rewarding quality of life; the more people who share in those things, the better my life will be. So it isn’t really philanthropy. It’s pretty selfish.”

# A Fascinating Profession

By Claudia Ricci, Ph.D. '96

Looking back at her career, Comcast Executive Kristine Dankenbrink is grateful to UAlbany’s internship program for giving her “really early exposure to the world of business.”

The summer after junior year, Dankenbrink interned with the accounting firm Ernst & Whinney. One job was as a “trailer checker,” at a time when movie theaters played scheduled trailers. “When I was 19,” Dankenbrink chuckles, “this was the coolest thing.”

But other tasks that summer proved “painfully boring.” One job involved checking that thousands of numbers added up correctly; “it was like watching paint dry.”

Dankenbrink returned to the University and enrolled in a master’s program in taxation. “It’s not exactly a cool job at a cocktail party,” she says. “Everybody who doesn’t do taxation thinks it’s boring, but it is fascinating to me.”

People working in taxation “can have an amazing impact” on a company’s performance,” she says. “When you are in taxation, almost everything ends up going through your department.”

Dankenbrink, 46, has been senior vice president for Taxation for six years at Comcast, the nation’s largest cable company. Previously, she was senior vice president at Time Warner Cable, where she built the tax department. Today, she is helping Comcast acquire Time Warner Cable.

Her job also requires Dankenbrink to represent Comcast’s interests before government. She has testified in Washington and visited all 50 states.

Dankenbrink’s high powered job – she supervises 110 people – doesn’t end when she leaves the office. She has three children, including one, age 13, with severe autism. Another child, age 10, was adopted from Russia.

How does she manage? She “outsources all of the daily grind kind of jobs at home.” And she takes full advantage of new technologies that let people work at a distance. “You can be at a Christmas concert for your child, but you have your BlackBerry and you can be making decisions or giving advice.”

**KRISTINE  
DANKENBRINK,  
B.S./M.S. '90**





Dodie V. Legaspi

# RIZALINA MANTARING, M.S. '83

*President and CEO, Sun Life Financial Philippines  
Chair and President, Sun Life Foundation*

# “A CULTURE OF WINNING”

By Carol Olechowski

A company's culture is perhaps its greatest asset, observes Rizalina Mantaring. “People change, technologies change, and the business environment changes. But if a company has a strong culture—one founded on integrity, excellence, continuous learning and genuine concern for people—it will be able to adapt more easily and stay ahead of the competition. I guess you can say it's a culture of winning.”

Mantaring is determined to ensure that Sun Life maintains that culture. “In the Philippines, we operate several companies, primarily selling life insurance, mutual funds, and pension and education plans. We founded the life-insurance industry, starting operations in 1895, three years before the Republic of the Philippines was established.”

Shortly after Mantaring took over as CEO in 2009, Sun Life began preparing for its 120th anniversary by “developing a set of plans and strategies, collectively called Route 5.” Combining brand-building, marketing and the opening of a bancassurance channel—all things “we had never done”—with “the internal transformation of our advisers and staff,” Route 5 expanded the company's new business “at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 46 percent, well above our initial plan, between 2009 and 2013.” By 2011, Sun Life had become the Philippines' largest life insurer, retaining its longtime No.-2 ranking in mutual funds.

Sun Life's growth potential remains great. Mantaring notes: “The Philippines has a population of more than 100 million, with an average age of 22, a high literacy rate, and strong English-language skills. On gender equity, it is ninth overall on the World Economic Forum's ranking of countries, outranking even the U.S. and Canada. Prosperity has been increasing, with GDP (gross domestic product) growth in the 5.5-to-7.5 percent range over the last few years. In 2015, the Philippines will enter the demographic sweet spot, with a large and increasingly prosperous working-age population, setting the stage for tremendous

economic growth for the next two to three decades.”

Mantaring also heads the Sun Life Foundation, which has aided typhoon and earthquake victims; covered school costs for children; and “partnered with the Philippines' Department of Education, the Red Cross and other organizations on various initiatives.” To celebrate Sun Life's 120 years, “we have donated 120 boats to fishermen and are building 120 classrooms in the areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in 2013; we have also sent 120 scholars to school. We're quite proud of the work we have done. Sun Life is very much a part of the nation's history.”

Her education provided Mantaring the skills essential for leading the foundation and a global business. After earning an undergraduate degree at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, she studied computer science at what was then SUNY Albany, “a popular choice for graduate school among the people I knew.” Living by herself in a foreign country taught Mantaring “to be truly independent,” while interacting with classmates from various countries and cultures “has helped me at Sun Life, where we work with colleagues from all over the world.”

She learned other lessons, as well. During study sessions, Mantaring says, “I thought I was helping by sharing solutions to the various problems we discussed “until a classmate told me, ‘I don't know why you bother to attend these sessions; you don't need them.’ I realized then that, sometimes, you help best by letting people figure things out on their own.”

As a teaching assistant for Peter Bloniarz, then professor of computer science and “one of the best teachers I have ever had,” Mantaring would take only 20 minutes of the 30 allotted for discussing problem sets. “When Professor Bloniarz met all the TAs and asked if we had enough to discuss in our classes, he looked at me briefly and said nothing else, but he made me realize I had to figure out if I was actually delivering the expected results. I had to go above and beyond just doing a job.”

# Marc Guggenheim, B.A. '92

## BEYOND SUPER

BY JIM SCIANCALEPORA, M.A. '93

MARC GUGGENHEIM ...



... AT COMIC-CON

Marc Guggenheim's mother has a distinct memory of him as a 2-year-old, sitting on the floor of his bedroom ... flipping through a Superman comic book.

"I loved comic books before I could even read!" laughed Guggenheim.

The moment, as it turns out, was prescient. Guggenheim is currently the co-showrunner (a combination creator/writer/producer role) for the critically acclaimed TV show "Arrow," a modern take on the DC Comics superhero Green Arrow. He previously wrote the screenplay for "Green Lantern," the Ryan Reynolds feature film. He has also authored numerous comic books for some of the genre's most iconic characters, including The Flash, Wolverine, Aquaman and The Amazing Spiderman. Not surprisingly, Guggenheim has been a guest speaker at San Diego's ComicCon, the massive annual conference of all things super and sci-fi.

"I get to play with the toys I grew up with," he said. "It's very surreal and a huge amount of fun."

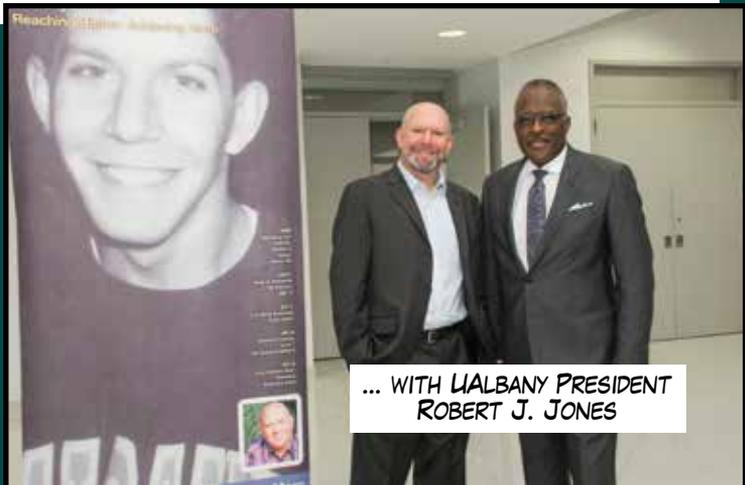
Of course, all great superhero stories have what is commonly referred to as an "origin story" – describing how these characters acquired their powers and discovered their destinies. Though he wasn't exactly bitten by a radioactive spider, Guggenheim directly attributes his growth as a writer and creative catalyst to his experience at UAlbany.

"My time at UAlbany opened me up socially and intellectually," explained the Long Island native. "It was four wonderful years of my life."

Guggenheim noted that he particularly enjoyed being in the University's English honors program, which gave him a broader appreciation of themes and storytelling. "It wasn't just about literature," he said. "It was about expansion of ideas, and expressing those ideas."

His personal story arc, however, didn't go straight from Albany to Hollywood: After earning his B.A., Guggenheim first pursued a career in law. He earned his law degree from Boston University and was able to score a plum position as an attorney at a prominent Boston firm. His career path was

Mark Schmidt

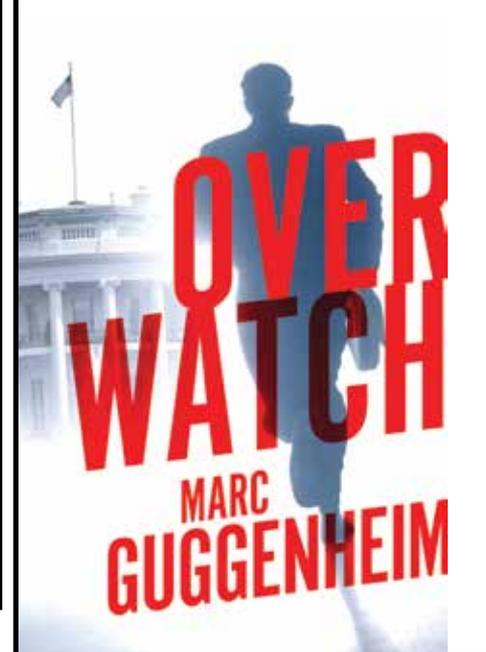


... WITH UALBANY PRESIDENT ROBERT J. JONES



... POSING WITH THE MAKKU ARMY FROM "ARROW"

Cate Cameron/Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.



clear, until a little bit of destiny intervened.

Guggenheim's younger brother was working on a student film at the time (both of his brothers are in the film/TV business today), and he asked his big brother for assistance with the script. This experience rekindled Guggenheim's passion for writing, and he decided it was time to "fish or cut bait."

At age 29, he decided to leave his job and move to L.A. to pursue a full-time career in writing. From initial stints as a writer on such TV shows as "The Practice," "Law & Order" and "Jack and Bobby" to his current showrunner status, he has never looked back. (On his Twitter feed, @mguggenheim, Guggenheim describes himself as a "recovering attorney and writer of stuff.")

Guggenheim's creative interests extend well beyond the superhero oeuvre. Now a married father of two, he recently published his first novel – a political spy thriller titled *Overwatch*. Melding elements of John Grisham and Tom Clancy, the book concerns a young attorney who works for for the CIA and uncovers a dangerous global conspiracy.

Guggenheim began writing *Overwatch* when he was between television writing jobs a few years ago. A friend advised him to "write something you don't normally do," and Guggenheim challenged himself to write a book – a very different process than scripting a show or movie.

"I quickly realized that I have to be the director, cinematographer, set designer and even the actors when writing a book," explained Guggenheim. "I learned a lot

during the process."

When asked to identify his proudest creative achievement so far, Guggenheim says he "can't pick a favorite child." He did mention that the TV show "Eli Stone," which marked his first stint as a co-showrunner, has a special place in his heart. The quirky dramedy detailed the sudden spiritual awakening of an attorney who works for a high-powered law firm and realizes that he has a higher calling.

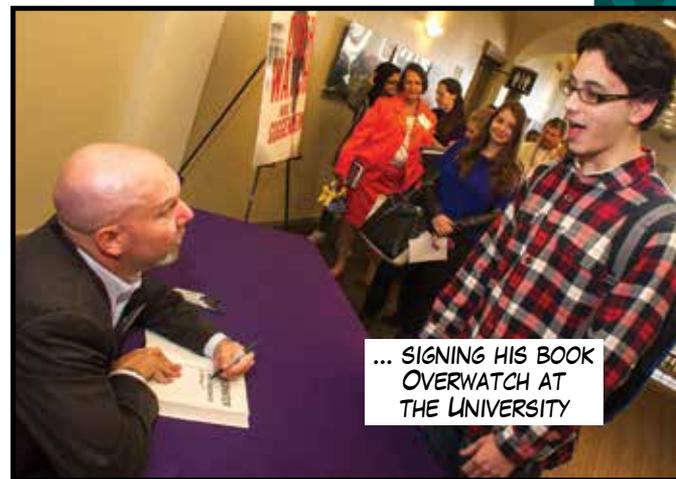
"It was a chance to talk about deeper topics, like faith and spirituality," said Guggenheim. "And there may have been a little more of me in that character."

While he is pulled in many different directions these days, Guggenheim still relishes his writing time. Like his many masked protagonists, Guggenheim says that he, too, has something of a double life.

"There's me and there's me the writer," he explained. "Every time I sit at the keyboard, I get to be someone else. That's a cool thing."

**Update:** Since appearing in UAlbany's Spring 2015 issue, Marc Guggenheim has worked on "Legends of Tomorrow" and "Trollhunters." In 2017, "Freedom Fighters: The Ray", Season 1, was released. In September 2017, he was tapped to write the television adaptation of "True Lies," based on the 1994 James Cameron action-comedy film of the same name.

Mark Schmidt



... SIGNING HIS BOOK OVERWATCH AT THE UNIVERSITY



... SPEAKING AT THE FALL 2014 REACHING HIGHER/ACHIEVING MORE LUNCHEON

Mark Schmidt

"MY TIME AT UALBANY OPENED ME UP SOCIALLY AND INTELLECTUALLY."



## Keith Garber, B.S.'97

# “Lightbulb Moment”

By Carol Olechowski

For Keith Garber and lifelong friend Kevin Schwartz, the entrepreneurial “lightbulb moment” came in 2004. “Kevin and his wife were thinking about starting a family,” recalls Garber. “They wanted their baby to be safe, but also free to play, crawl and explore, as babies should. They started searching for products that would make their home, and the planet, safe, but couldn’t find them.”

That’s when the idea for Babygenics – the Westbury, N.Y., maker of “household and personal-care products made with plant-based ingredients and designed to help parents create a baby-safe world” – was born. The company, “run by two dads,” has developed “a whole ecosystem of products, from home care to skin care, from the bath to laundry to sun care,” according to Garber.

As an undergraduate biology major at UAlbany, Garber was planning a career in medicine. “My love for biology and physiology was overtaken by my entrepreneurial spirit, and I completed a minor in business administration. The reality is, I had already begun my entrepreneurial career sophomore year, with classmate and best friend Josh Shaw [B.S.'97], as a founding partner of Student Advantage. By the time we were 24, we had built a six-person organization into a 650-person publicly traded company on the NASDAQ, generating more than \$100 million in sales,” Garber notes.

While he went on to initiate other successful start-ups, “I didn’t feel I was making a real difference in the lives of others – a dream of mine since I was a kid. When I teamed up with Kevin, I was finally able to combine my passion for growing a business, being a dad, and ultimately providing millions of parents access to baby-safe products.”

Garber and Schwartz “keep a simple goal for the company: to continue making baby products that use the safest ingredients available, are attainable for every mom and dad, and work insanely well!” The business “is so much fun!” adds Garber, who has three children – Zachary, 9; Skylar, 6; and Ashton, 2 – with wife Nicole. “Our wives and kids are test subjects for new formulas and packaging, and as our families grow, we uncover new parenting



Top photo, Nicole and Keith Garber; above, their children, Ashton, 2; Zachary, 9; and Skylar, 6

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scenarios that require new products and solutions. Knowing that new parents discover our products every day, joining our journey to make their babies free to explore safely and freely so they can thrive, only reinforces the passion that drives us every day to continue bringing the Babyganics ‘baby-safe world’ mission to life.”

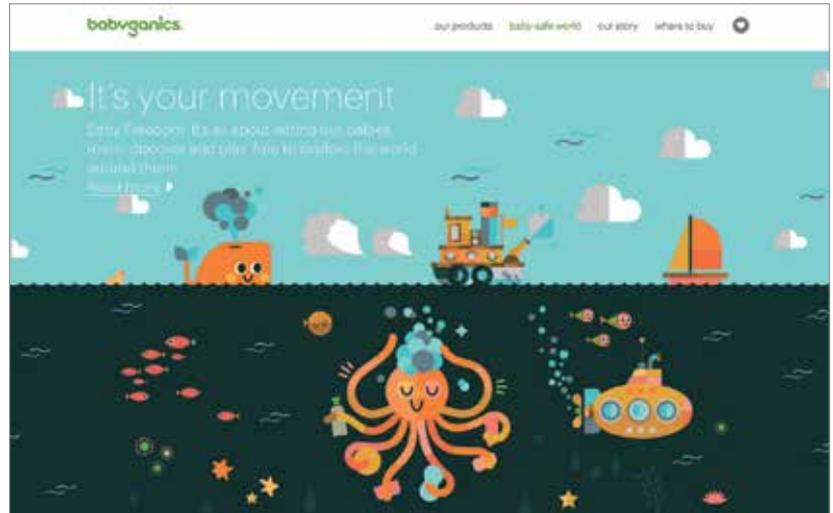
With the exception of diapers, all Babyganics products are manufactured in the United States, “underscoring our baby-safe promise by maintaining the highest safety and quality standards and expectations. We answer to mom (and dad) at the end of the day and take the trust they place in us very seriously. And, with our company’s tremendous growth, it’s nice to know that we are creating more jobs and opportunities throughout the U.S.,” Garber observes.

Babyganics products are sold by leading national retailers and online. Distributors include Babies ‘R’ Us, Toys ‘R’ Us, BuyBuyBaby, Diapers.com, Amazon.com, Target, Walgreens, CVS, Publix, Safeway, Kroger, and Wegmans.

Given its ambitious merchandising strategy, “Babyganics is fortunate to have some of the best online talent working within our business-development and marketing departments and at our agency partners,” says Garber. “With their expertise, Babyganics is very well positioned in the online world to engage with parents and parents-to-be and help to educate them on what they need to know when it comes to doing better for their families.”

## ADVICE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Babyganics co-founder Keith Garber advises aspiring entrepreneurs from UAlbany to “network with students from other schools to cross-pollinate and bring different business perspectives and approaches to life when building a business.” He speaks from experience: Garber and business partner Kevin Schwartz, a University at Buffalo graduate, “complement each other very well in business, and our combination has delivered a  $1 + 1 = 11$  equation in day-to-day business.”



“Babyganics is fortunate to have some of the best online talent working within our business-development and marketing departments and at our agency partners.”

# JENNIFER GEISSER, B.A.'90

## On Entertainment's Front Line

By Stephen Shoemaker, B.A.'02

When Teresa Giudice of "The Real Housewives of New Jersey" was sentenced to 15 months in federal prison for fraud last year, Jennifer Geisser fielded a flood of media calls. She's no stranger to the need to comment – or not – on the misdeeds of television personalities. It comes with her job as vice president of Communications for Bravo, the cable network on which "Housewives" airs.

"You choose certain real-life characters to be part of reality programming because they *are* over the top," Geisser says. "Things just happen in their lives, whether they bring it upon themselves or it's just a natural day-to-day thing for them."

Geisser serves in the same capacity for the Oxygen network, an additional role she took on near the end of 2013. On the East and West coasts, she oversees teams



working to promote brand and programming awareness to media and audiences – and handling the occasional crisis-management situation. Her communications career has spanned some of the biggest names in cable networks: CourtTV, the Hallmark Channel, We tv, and AMC among them.

"Culturally, each job has been different. The pace has been very different," Geisser says, comparing the immediacy of CourtTV's daytime coverage of ongoing trials to the family-friendly programming of Hallmark.

Geisser sensed she wanted to work in entertainment when she first came to UAlbany. "I just loved to watch TV. I was a big TV person growing up," she says. An internship at an Albany radio station helped confirm that notion.

"I enjoyed the internship, and I learned a lot," adds Geisser. "But I realized I wanted to be more on the front line [of entertainment] than you are in radio."

**Update:** Since appearing in UAlbany's Spring 2015 issue, Jennifer Geisser has been named senior vice president, Communications, at Bravo and Oxygen Media.

# JOAN MCDAID PERTAK, B.A.'83

## Life Lessons

By Claudia Ricci, Ph.D.'96

The most important lessons that Joan McDaid Pertak learned as a University at Albany undergraduate didn't come from the classroom but from the athletic program. Pertak, who is today senior vice president and chief information officer for PepsiCo Americas Beverages, ran track for four years at UAlbany and also worked in the physical-education department. She had to learn to juggle a job, along with classes and sports.

Under the direction of then-coach Ron White, Pertak learned that she could do all three. "He probably had the most influence on me," she says. "The message I got was that if you work hard, you will succeed."

Pertak has drawn on these life lessons throughout her career. Success, she says, comes from setting goals, working hard and "not letting barriers get in your way."

A psychology major, Pertak minored in computer science and business. Her first job out of college was in retail management. Although she enjoyed retail, she had a desire to get into the technical world, so she began her computer-science career at PepsiCo.

She left PepsiCo after two years for a computer-science consulting position out in California, but in 1989, she came back east and returned to PepsiCo. Pertak "started at the bottom" and climbed steadily up the ranks. Today, she supervises more than 300 employees who deliver the technical capabilities that help PepsiCo grow its business as a food-and-beverages powerhouse. She also heads up PepsiCo's mentoring program for technology employees, which has more than 400 mentor pairs in 17 countries.

As a mentor, Pertak has found that some women tend to "go for the safest jobs." In her mentoring, she tries to push women out of their comfort zones. Her advice to young women at UAlbany: "Don't play defense. Don't be afraid to take on opportunities that will challenge and stretch you!"



# Rob Stone, B.S.'90 | The Power of Music

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93

**“It’s no longer effective to talk at your audience,” explained Rob Stone. “You have to become part of the conversation – part of the culture.”**

Stone is the founder and co-CEO of Cornerstone, a marketing agency that exists at the intersection of music, marketing and pop culture. Cornerstone has developed experiential marketing efforts for some of the world’s biggest brands (including Nike, Converse and Coca-Cola) by connecting them in a relevant way with major music artists, including Kanye West; actors like Aaron Paul; and movies and TV shows such as “Entourage.” Launched in 1996, Cornerstone is now staffed by more than 100 people – with offices across three continents.

Cornerstone’s campaigns include traditional media, like outdoor and print, but they also leverage the viral power of video; social media; and live, culture-shaping events, such as the annual SXSW festival.

“People value the opinions and recommendations of their friends and peers over the clutter of messages being broadcast at them – that’s why social media and word of mouth are so important,” said Stone. “But you have to create something special and entertaining that people will genuinely want to interact with and share.”

Before founding Cornerstone, Stone began his career in the music business, working with legendary producer Clive Davis and such artists as Sean “Puffy” Combs and Notorious B.I.G. His love for music extends beyond Cornerstone: He is also co-founder of *The FADER*, a magazine that spotlights emerging artists. With a strong eye for talent, *The FADER* has provided the first-ever cover stories for Pharrell Williams, Nicki Minaj, The White Stripes and others.



Stone takes great joy in co-running both businesses, and said his instincts date back to his UAlbany days and beyond.

“At age 8, I sent my dad a list of candy and soda that I wanted him to bring to my sleep-away camp, because I knew I could resell them for a profit,” said Stone. “While at UAlbany, I started the first-ever Young Comedians night at LP’s [a now defunct Albany bar], and I created an advertising calendar with local merchants like Sovrana Pizza and other Albany vendors. I’ve always been entrepreneurial.”



# Adam Denenberg, B.S.'98

## Tuned In

By Carol Olechowski

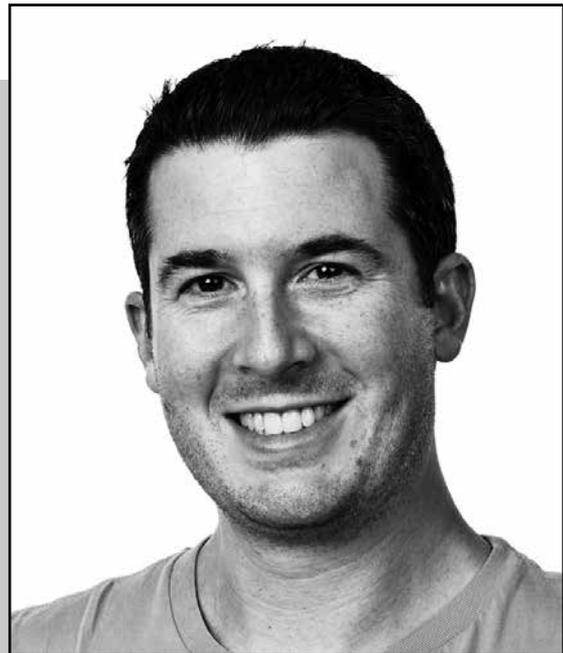
As chief technology officer of the iHeartRadio network, music fan and computer-science wiz Adam Denenberg has a job well suited to his passions.

The position “was definitely appealing,” says Denenberg, who joined iHeartRadio in November 2014 after serving as vice president of Engineering with The Huffington Post. “Working for a company with the range that iHeartRadio has was a tremendous opportunity for me.”

At iHeartRadio, iHeartMedia’s all-in-one digital-radio and streaming-music service, Denenberg is responsible for overall technology strategy. Recruiting is another aspect of his work: When meeting with prospective employees, “I talk about iHeartRadio’s culture of innovation, and why it’s so interesting and fun to work here,” Denenberg notes.

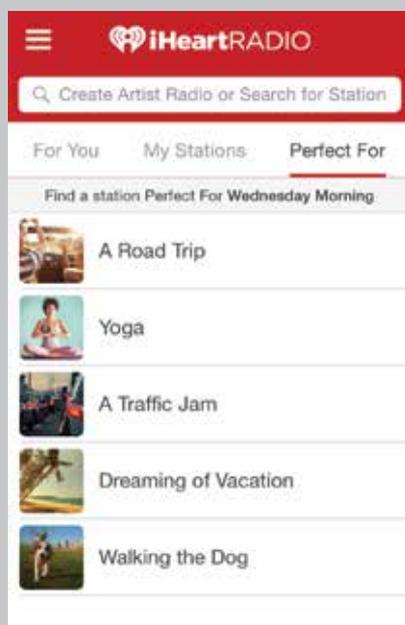
iHeartRadio’s 858 U.S.-based AM, FM and HD outlets broadcast news, talk, music, sports and a variety of other formats through iHeartRadio.com, its apps and individual stations’ websites. Each month, millions of listeners use their tablets, smartphones and gaming consoles to access its information and entertainment offerings.

“The reach of radio remains extremely strong, with 92 percent of Americans listening each week,” observes Denenberg,



whose work experience also includes positions with Thomson Reuters, ROO Media, About.com and Comedy Central. Since people tune in at their homes and offices, in cars, and on public transportation, he mines “data around listening and playing behaviors” to personalize their user experiences by determining what types of music they enjoy, and when. “By understanding the way people use our products – based on geographic locations, previous listening behaviors and time of day – we can make more informed decisions about whether they’re interested in Ben Harper, Drake or Pink Floyd.”

Denenberg, who majored in computer science and minored in physics, entered the technology field right after graduating from UAlbany. He praises professors S.S. Ravi and Seth Chaiken for teaching courses that provided students a “solid foundation” and afforded them the “flexibility” they would need whether their careers took them into robotics, artificial intelligence or in another direction.



# Finding the Right Career Path

## Adrienne Lazarus, B.A.'90



A political science major and a history minor led Adrienne Lazarus to a career in the fashion business.

"I planned to pursue a career in international relations, politics or law," recalled Lazarus, now president of Intermix, a leading fashion multi-brand retailer based in New York City. "I chose political science and history because I loved learning about those subjects, and I believed that if you love what you study, you will find your career path."

Lazarus found that studying political science allowed her "to develop strong written and oral skills, which are necessary in most business roles." From history, she learned "to see issues from multiple angles and opinions," a dynamic that encouraged "creative thinking." History, Lazarus added, "also taught me to understand and appreciate the history of an issue while making decisions, an asset in running a business. Fashion is a creative, dynamic business that requires smart decision-making and the ability to communicate well with many different people. It is a people-intensive business, so interpersonal skills are critical."

Her first job after graduation was with May Department Stores Company. "May Company was very selective in the schools it recruited from, and Albany was one of them. One day on campus, I met a recruiter who asked me to bring my resumé over, so I did, on a whim, and that led to my career in fashion. I left May Company after a year because I wanted to be in New York City, but I enjoyed it very much."

Lazarus joined Ann Taylor in 1991. She worked her way up through the ranks, launching the Loft division and propelling it to more than \$1 billion in sales before being promoted to president of Ann Taylor. After 17 years with the firm, "ready for something different and more creative," Lazarus went on to head Intermix, which carries more than 200 brands, including Helmut Lang, Stella McCartney, Rag and Bone, J Brand, and Chloe and Mulberry. Intermix has seen a 40-percent increase in business since

Lazarus' arrival three years ago.

*Update: Adrienne Lazarus was profiled in UAlbany's Spring 2012 edition. She's since stepped into a new role as chief executive officer of The Frye Company.*



# Norman E. Snyder, Jr., B.S.'83 Connecting With Consumers

By Claudia Ricci, Ph.D.'96

Back in the late 1990s, Norman Snyder was leading the South Beach Beverage Company and promoting its highly successful “SoBe” beverages. The company initially relied on guerilla marketing, followed by traditional mass-marketing campaigns, to drive consumer awareness.

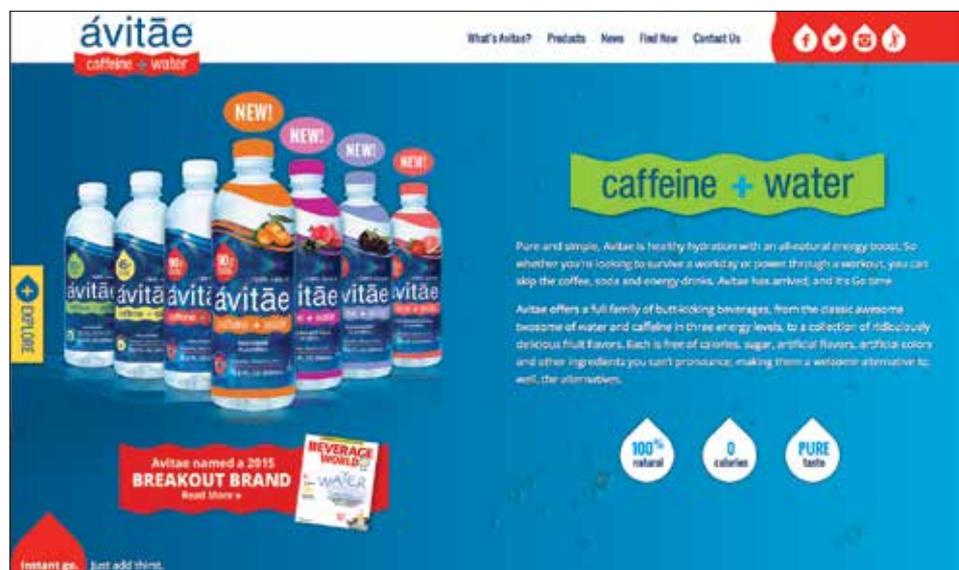
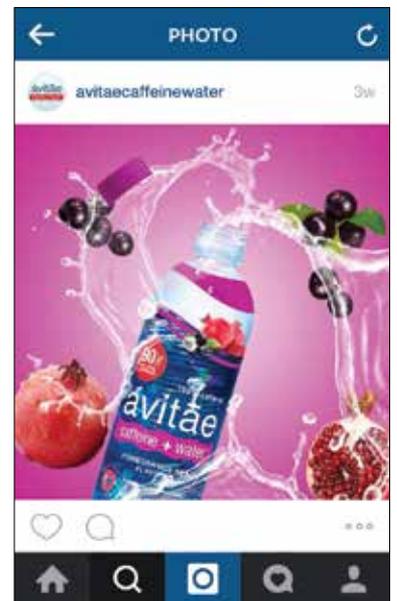
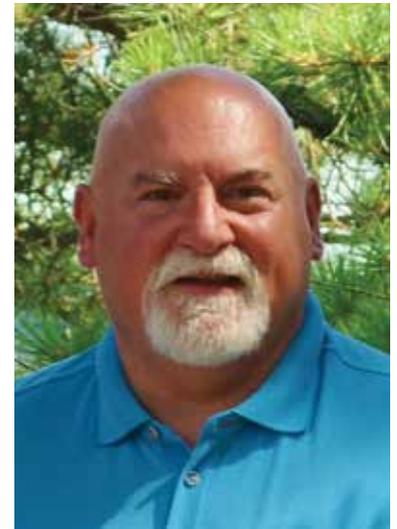
Twenty years later, as president and CEO of Avitae, USA, Snyder promotes beverages under the Avitae brand. But now, thanks to social media, marketing has taken on a dramatically new approach. Like so many other companies, Avitae wants “to interact directly with consumers,” Snyder says. “All of our advertising is built on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinstar.”

Recently, Avitae – which sells a line of caffeinated water without sugar –

announced new flavors on its webpage, and placed pictures and descriptions of the products throughout social-media outlets. Particularly important to the campaign was Facebook, where Avitae purchased digital ad space to promote the new drinks to a broader audience. Instagram, a photo-based medium, was also key.

Social media, Snyder says, are “extremely cost effective.” He estimates that social-media advertising costs only about 25 percent as much as an old-fashioned ad campaign.

Not only are social media cheaper, they’re also faster: “You can decide one day to run a campaign, and that afternoon it’s going out.” With social media, Snyder observes, “you connect faster than you would otherwise, and you get feedback faster, with a lot more specifics.”



Above, left: New flavors are introduced on Avitae’s website; above, right: Norman Snyder speaks at the Albany Center for Entrepreneurship’s Spring Seminar.

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## Ron Wechsler, B.A.'92

# The Significance of Social-Media Platforms

By Stephen Shoemaker, B.A.'02

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Sports perfectly illustrate the symbiosis between social media and live events. That fact isn't lost on Ron Wechsler, senior vice president for Original Programming and Production at NBC Sports: He says he contemplates the role social media play in his industry on a daily basis.

"Anything that comes up, I want to make sure, at the very least, I have an understanding of how it is being consumed," he said. As a result, Wechsler has adopted social-media platforms not necessarily targeted to his demographic.

"A 45-year-old guy on Snapchat isn't the norm," he quipped. Still, it's an especially good example of the platform he seeks, observed Wechsler, who earned a B.A. in English with a minor in rhetoric and communication at UAlbany. While the perception of Snapchat was an app for tweens and teens, it's quickly become a much bigger player in the game – one that broadcasters and networks are rushing to embrace.

**"The world is your focus group. Pay attention; figure out what people are talking about," he noted. "You have access to what they're enjoying, or not enjoying, in a real timeline. That is an incredible tool."**



"Sometimes, you're chasing very ephemeral platforms," he said. "And sometimes, if you're not paying attention, what seems insignificant can become incredibly significant almost overnight."

While live events are the bread and butter of sports networks, Wechsler knows there's a role for social media in helping to promote the types of original programming – documentaries, reality series, etc. – he oversees. Compelling, humorous, "OMG!" or cliché "viral" posts can all be inclinations to tune in. "Those are the sorts of things anybody in the content business tries to tap into, whether you're NBC or BuzzFeed," he said.

Though social media hasn't altered the core responsibility of putting out a quality televised product, Wechsler said it has made tapping into the *zeitgeist* much easier. "The world is your focus group. Pay attention; figure out what people are talking about," he noted. "You have access to what they're enjoying, or not enjoying, in a real timeline. That is an incredible tool."



Anna Chan/Birkenstock



# David Kahan, B.S.'82

## A Foothold on Customer Loyalty



By Carol Olechowski

Footwear legend Birkenstock “is not your typical company,” maintains David Kahan, the firm’s chief executive officer since 2013. “This is a company with heart and passion. Our mission is not just to sell footwear, but to sell footwear that brings people happiness and satisfaction.”

Kahan is responsible for “all elements of the business, including distribution; brand management; and, of course, delivering a profit to our shareholders.” He also relishes another role: connecting with Birkenstock’s customer base through social media.

For customers who prefer more traditional communication methods, Birkenstock maintains a call center. “In a day and age where it is nearly impossible to get a human being on the phone, we believe in personal engagement,” observes Kahan, adding that consumers also receive responses to email messages forwarded to the company’s general mailbox.

Thanks to its commitment to customers, Birkenstock has experienced “explosive growth over the past two years,” according to Kahan. The brand’s fans include actors Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Hudson and recent Academy Award winner Julianne Moore. “Julianne has my cell-phone number and can reach out anytime to find out when the newest style is coming out. Her Twitter picture shows her feet in a pair of fur-lined Birkenstocks. This isn’t something you can fake. We do no celebrity seedings or product placement.”

Social media, Kahan adds, “have changed the way brands engage their consumers. We believe in wrapping our arms around our loyal fans and creating a true community. The direct contact shows respect for our customers; it lets them know they are valued.”

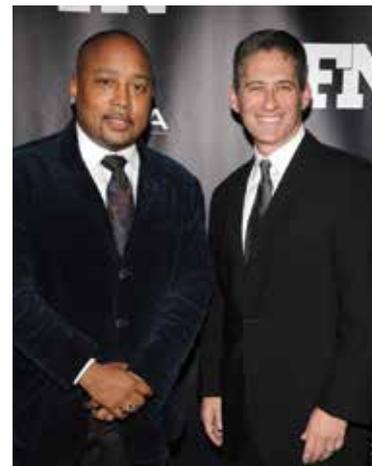
Birkenstock, founded by a family in Germany more than 240 years ago, is still made there, “largely by hand.” The brand came to the United States in the late 1960s when a California woman, Margot Fraser, discovered the comfortable shoes after developing foot pain while trekking through Europe. When Fraser returned to San Francisco, Kahan relates, “she contacted the Birkenstock family and, with zero footwear experience, asked if she could import some pairs. Managers at shoe stores told her the shoes were ugly and would never sell.”

Convinced of the shoes’ health benefits, however, Fraser sold the first pairs to health-food stores. “Birkenstocks caught on with a somewhat ‘alternative’ crowd that included college students and have since become a global phenomenon. Our styles are considered some of the most iconic footwear silhouettes in the industry,” Kahan observes.

Kahan himself is somewhat iconic. While majoring in accounting at UAlbany, he worked at Macy’s for a few summers. The experience melded his enthusiasm for sports, clothing and fashion with a penchant for assisting customers. After completing the retailer’s executive-training program, Kahan created The Macy’s Athletic Club, which capitalized on “the huge cultural interest in health and wellness, and marked Macy’s entry into the athletic-footwear business.”

Senior-management roles with Nike; Reebok, North America; and Adidas and its Rockport footwear division followed.

Birkenstock inspires customer loyalty because “we will never, ever compromise our quality or brand values,” explains Kahan. He can personally attest to the company’s unwavering commitment to workmanship and mission: Kahan wears Birkenstocks to work – with a business suit.



Daymond John of “Shark Tank,” left, poses with Birkenstock CEO David Kahan after presenting the footwear-company executive a Brand of the Year award.

### What’s Next for Birkenstock?

Birkenstock’s “fans for life,” says CEO David Kahan, have given the company opportunities to expand its product line.

“A closed-toe shoe collection introduced recently includes warm winter boots, women’s spring wedges, and also great men’s casual shoes.” Response to the line “has exceeded all expectations,” Kahan reports. “We also just launched hosiery. Many people wear them with the Birkenstocks – a look we call ‘socks ‘n’ stocks.’”

Kahan promises that Birkenstock “will continue to introduce what we call ‘limited-edition’ styles that deliver seasonally and excite the market. Spring 2016 will include neon colors.”

# Janice K. (Pyke) Ascencio, M.D., B.S.'94

## “A PART OF PEOPLE’S LIVES”

By Carol Olechowski



Ask Janice Krystal (Pyke) Ascencio what she most enjoys about her work, and she instantly responds, “Being a part of other people’s lives.” Attracted to the medical profession by the prospect of being involved with people “at the highest and lowest points of their lives,” Ascencio – an obstetrician and gynecologist – sees patients at the four offices of Geisinger Health System in Pennsylvania and performs surgery at the system’s medical center. She increasingly incorporates minimally invasive surgery (MIS) into her practice to “allow patients to heal and resume their normal activities more quickly.”

At the University at Albany, Ascencio was a pre-med student majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry. “I wanted to go to the University of Pennsylvania, but I was 16 and my mother didn’t want me to go so far away,” recalls the Jamaica native, whose family settled in Queens, N.Y., after immigrating to the United States. When her sister, Holly Pyke-Brown, B.S.’91, urged her to enroll at Albany, Ascencio did, and “it worked

out very well for me. Everyone there was very helpful. There was a center where we used to go for tutoring; I immediately signed up for a tutor in every class! It gave me kind of a security blanket; I was able to meet people. I met my husband, Alfredo Ascencio [B.S.’94, business administration], there.”

Although Ascencio was “very focused on my schoolwork,” her mentor and adviser, Professor Daniel Wulff, “wanted me to be a little more socialized. He felt I worked too hard. He wanted me to have a well-rounded experience; he got me listening to opera, and he helped me to do the applications for Phi Beta Kappa and Purple and Gold. He was an inspiration.”

Ascencio, who went on to graduate from the University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville, is “very grateful to have been a student at Albany. The curriculum was very competitive, and I was well prepared for a dynamic career.”

*Update: Janice K. (Pyke) Ascencio, featured in the Fall 2012 alumni magazine, is now in practice with Crystal Run Healthcare in Middletown, N.Y.*

By Michele Flynn

## Michael Nash, B.S. '83

THE BLACKSTONE GROUP

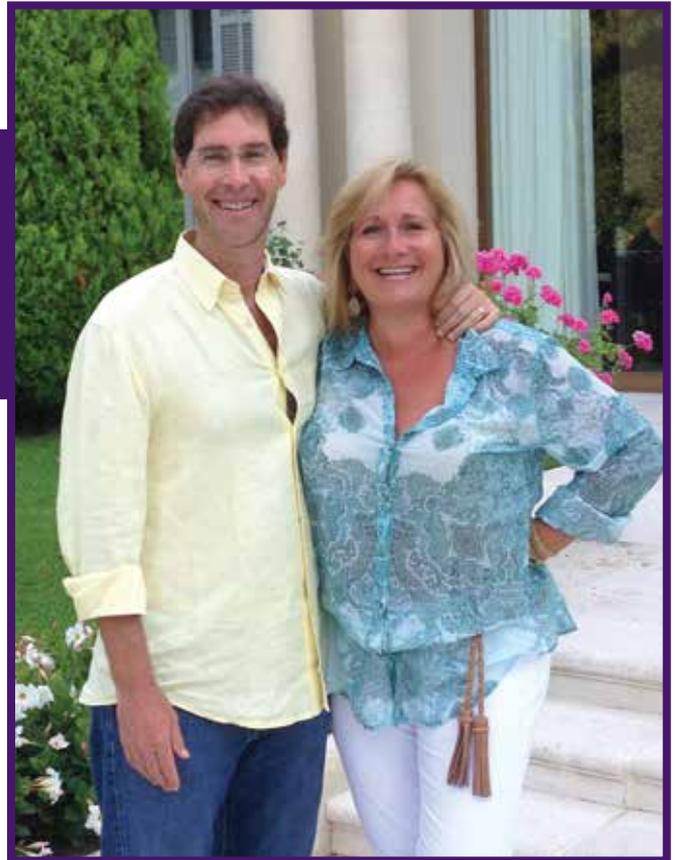
### FINDING A PASSION FOR FINANCE

**M**ike Nash's career started with an accounting degree, bringing him to Deloitte, New York University, the Bank of Nova Scotia, Barclays Bank and Merrill Lynch. He landed at the Blackstone Group in 2007.

Nash was hired by Deloitte straight out of school. He said: "The Big Eight was a good experience and a wonderful first job. You start with like-minded people. There is no better place for accounting than Deloitte. UAlbany provided that opportunity."

While at Deloitte, Nash earned an M.B.A. in finance from the Stern School of Business at NYU in 1989, having returned to school to figure out what he wanted to do after accounting. He found his passion in real-estate financing and began his real-estate career at the Bank of Nova Scotia, where he worked until 1991. He then moved to Barclays Bank, arriving during a recession, which provided an opportunity to develop his skills in Barclay's real-estate workout group as a senior vice president. In 1997, Nash joined Merrill Lynch to work within their real-estate principal investment business and ultimately led that group during his 10 years with the firm. He said: "It was a great experience to work for Merrill as they had a wonderful real-estate platform and allowed me to advance my real-estate investment skills. The firm was fantastic and treated me very well during my time there."

At Merrill Lynch, Nash had the opportunity to work with Blackstone, among many other clients, financing and partnering on many of their most notable deals during that time period. That direct relationship ultimately led to Nash joining Blackstone a few weeks prior to their initial public offering in June 2007. Of his role as senior managing director of Blackstone's Real Estate Debt Strategies Group, a business he co-founded with the firm, Nash said: "It has been a



wonderful experience from day one. I have been supported by Blackstone at every turn and am a big believer in the firm's culture and commitment to excellence. Helping to build this business with the firm from scratch has been the most challenging and rewarding thing I have done professionally."

Throughout his career Nash has always tried to learn something new and has always strived to work for the top companies. He said, "It is important to work for the very best, regardless of what you do." His advice to graduates is, "Try new things, keep an open mind, find who you are and sample all that life has to offer."

What Nash values above all else are his wife and son. As with his career, personal success started at the University at Albany. Nash said, "I met the love of my life late senior year." Lori (Wohl) Nash '83 was an English major. After a successful career in magazine publishing, she left to raise their son Zach. Zach, now 24, attended Lafayette College and has followed in his dad's footsteps. He works in commercial real estate for Deutsche Bank.

Stephen Adly Guirgis, B.A.'90

# PATH TO THE PULITZER PRIZE

By Paul Grondahl, M.A.'84

After changing his major three times, Stephen Adly Guirgis finally discovered his passion, and an academic home, in the University at Albany's theatre department. He credited theatre professors Langdon Brown and the late Jarka Burian and Al Asermely with inspiring him to pursue a career that culminated in the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for drama for his play *Between Riverside and Crazy*.

"Al was kind of like a shepherd of wayward souls, and he helped guide me through to graduation. Al's playwriting class helped open my mind and made me think maybe I could write for the theater someday," said Guirgis.

He recalled Burian as "a great teacher who taught me to love the theater," and he took Brown's classes in *Comic Theory*, *Shakespeare* and *Modern Drama*. Brown also cast Guirgis his senior year in his first lead in a University play, Richard Greenberg's *Eastern Standard*.

The son of an Egyptian immigrant, Guirgis grew up in Manhattan and had only vague objectives when he arrived at UAlbany. He struggled academically and felt adrift as he tried various majors before he found his niche in the tight-knit theatre program. "Things really started to click, at that point," he recalled. "We were kind of like a weird group, but we were always doing

something, creating shows, and we stuck together."

Glenn Fleshler, B.A.'90, Guirgis' roommate in off-campus apartments and fellow theatre major, went on to star in the TV series "True Detective" and "Hannibal" and has been cast in many feature films. Another Guirgis collaborator who attended UAlbany is John Ortiz, a founder, with the late actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, of the off-Broadway LAByrinth Theater Company.

When Guirgis visited UAlbany in 2010 for a seminar, lecture and student production of his play *Jesus Hopped The A Train*, Brown introduced his former student, praising Guirgis for his "amazing ability to hear dialogue and reproduce the rhythm and dialect." Added Brown: "He's a very empathetic person with a high intelligence quotient. He has a take on diversity and colorful characters that is unique and fresh."

"His writing is electrifying," said Donald Faulkner, director of the New York State Writers Institute. "We're very proud of Stephen, who's still legendary around here."



Eileen Barroso/Columbia University

From left, Mike Pride, administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes, and Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger present the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Drama May 28 to Stephen Adly Guirgis for his play *Between Riverside and Crazy*.

Guirgis enjoyed returning to his *alma mater*. “I have a lot of good memories of UAlbany,” he said. “I’m really happy that I’m still friends with several people from the theatre program. We’re all just a lucky bunch of kids from UAlbany who were trying to find ourselves, and now we’re making a living in theater in New York.”

Guirgis is an actor and playwright who endured lean years while getting established in the New York theater world. He worked as a violence-prevention specialist and HIV-prevention educator in prisons, shelters and schools. He was recently hired as a writer for an upcoming Netflix TV show. “Get Down,” focused on the birth of hip-hop in the 1970s, is set in the South Bronx and directed by Baz Luhrmann.

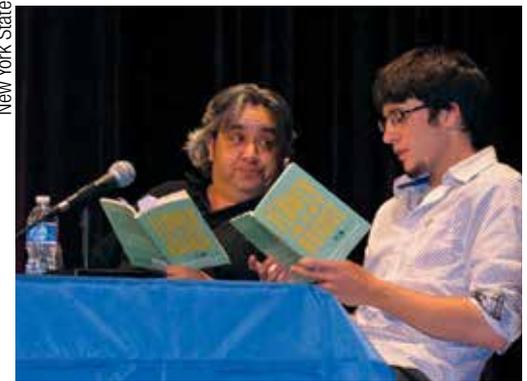
The Pulitzer jury called *Between Riverside and Crazy* “a nuanced, beautifully written play about a retired police officer faced with eviction that uses dark comedy to confront questions of life and death.” Critics have hailed Guirgis as “a masterful poet of the downtrodden.”

Guirgis lives in the apartment where he grew up on the Upper West Side. His parents are deceased. “I wish my parents and my great friend Phil (Seymour Hoffman) could have lived to see me win the Pulitzer. I know they’d be incredibly proud,” he said.

During an April 12, 2010, visit to UAlbany, Guirgis is interviewed by New York State Writers Institute staff and performs a presentation reading with theatre major Weston Johnson.



New York State Writers Institute



Left to right, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Elizabeth Canavan, Michael Rispoli, Rosal Colon and Ray Anthony Thomas star in the world premiere of Guirgis' *Between Riverside and Crazy*. Opening night for the play, directed by Austin Pendleton, was July 31, 2014, at Atlantic Theater Company's Linda Gross Theater in New York City.

Courtesy Atlantic Theater Company/Kevin Thomas Garcia

By Carol Olechowski

## Ivan Bart, B.A.'85

# “In the Fashion Space”

Stuffing envelopes may seem a humble task, but for IMG Models Senior Vice President and Managing Director Ivan Bart, it was the precursor to an exciting career. He started in the public relations business by promoting a New York City physician’s speaking engagements, then took a position with a PR firm “that had a modeling agency attached to it. I stuffed envelopes with people’s pictures and mailed them. Little by little, I gained recognition and represented some big people. I worked at various other firms in New York and eventually got into IMG. I’ve been there for 17 years.”

Bart, who “thought psychology was what I wanted to

do,” transferred to the University at Albany after two years at SUNY Oneonta. “In retrospect, I valued the opportunity of living in the city and going to a good school in an urban environment. I was thrilled to be at Albany. The University had everything a college should have. A college education is supposed to help a young person evolve and learn about himself. I was able to do that at Albany.”

He lived in an apartment on Lark Street and “couldn’t wait to hang out with all the hipsters there and be part of the scene” after classes. Bart also enjoyed the concerts, theater and other cultural attractions on and off campus.

On his way from one class to another, he admired the uptown campus environment. In his native New York City, Bart marvels that “the same architect [Edward Durell Stone] who designed Lincoln Center” designed his *alma mater*. “Every time I go to Lincoln Center, I think of UAlbany.”

At the University, he also met “so many diverse people.” Bart found a lifelong friend in Deborah Kelsey, a student five years his senior; the two met in class and “were very close.” The friendship lasted for 20 years, ending only with Kelsey’s passing a few years ago. Bart, who still mourns his friend, takes comfort in the memory of having met her at Albany. “The whole gestalt of the experience,” he reflects, “was very positive.”

Bart remained in Albany for a year after graduation. After treating himself to a European tour, he returned home and landed “in the fashion space,” where he has worked for 25 years “with some of the biggest models: Lauren Hutton and Stephanie Seymour and Carolyn Murphy.” Bart negotiates fees for endorsements, catalogue and magazine work; “manages how they look, how they dress”; and



IMG Models Senior Vice President and Managing Director Ivan Bart, B.A.'85, and client Emily DiDonato

otherwise guides their careers. He has also worked with actresses Liv Tyler, Julianne Moore, Milla Jovovich “and some other famous people.”

The fashion business, Bart points out, is “a young environment. I’m surrounded by college-age people all the time, so as I hit midlife, I’m still very much in touch with the latest music and celebrities. We’re in a world that’s moving quickly, and it’s important to understand the ways young people communicate or are communicated with. That’s a very big plus in my business.”

When he isn’t working, Bart enjoys his country home, where “I garden, eat fresh food and go to the local farmers market.” Travel likewise remains one of his passions. “I love seeing new places and experiencing different things. I’m adventurous; I don’t need tour guides. I love to find little gems, like a tiny restaurant where Mama is cooking in the kitchen, or the chicest little stores.” His favorite destination is Paris, “a big, daunting city that feels uniquely familiar. I’m never lost in Paris. I’ve connected also in Africa and in various parts of Asia and Latin America, and I like to vacation in Sicily.”

Bart’s must-see list includes Easter Island. “I would also love to explore the Middle East and its culture, which intrigues me. I think I would be pleasantly, sweetly surprised and would delight in some unique experiences with people who are very warm and friendly.”

**Update:** *Ivan Bart is now president, IMG Models.*



Bart poses, above, with supermodel Carolyn Murphy, and below, with director Darren Aronofsky and actress Marisa Tomei.



## Stacy J. Kanter, B.S.'79

# The Art of the Deal

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A. '93

“I love puzzles,” said Stacy J. Kanter, partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, one of the largest law firms in the world. “I enjoy working through a challenge and bringing something to a successful conclusion.”



It’s this love – and a unique combination of problem-solving and people skills, underscored by tenacity and perseverance – that has made Kanter a nationally recognized leader in the legal community.

She was recently named a “Dealmaker of the Year” by *The American Lawyer* magazine, which honored Kanter for her work in guiding Realogy Holdings Corp. through a successful initial public offering (IPO). The task was a multi-year, multi-layered challenge as she helped the real-estate giant (parent company to brands such as Century 21 and Coldwell Banker) navigate the intricacies of a debt restructuring during a real-estate downturn ... and ultimately raise \$1.2 billion dollars, making it the biggest private equity-backed IPO of 2012.

In her work for Realogy and other clients, Kanter employs expertise that intersects law and business, building on a foundation she formed as a business major at UAlbany.

“I was looking for a quality education from a public university, and UAlbany was my best choice,” she explained. She also credits experiential opportunities at the University – such as serving as an R.A. and on student boards – with helping to foster her leadership skills.

The mother of two currently lives and works in Manhattan. She is both co-head of her firm’s Global Corporate Finance practice and co-chair of its Global Diversity Committee.

Whatever puzzles are coming her way in the future, Kanter is ready.

# MELANIE GRAY, B.A. '78

Partner, Winston & Strawn

By Carol Olechowski

## Committed to the Law and the Community

At age 7, Melanie Gray decided she wanted to become a lawyer. When the Parish, N.Y., native arrived at the University at Albany a decade later, “my intended major was political science. But I fell in love with philosophy – the exploration of knowledge, the journey of understanding what we know, how we know it and what it means.”

Her teachers gave Gray the confidence to excel. A visiting professor who taught advanced logic “inspired me,” while another encouraged her passion for philosophy and “made me believe that I could take upper-level classes and do well.”

Gray’s UAlbany studies provided a sound foundation for her post-graduate plans. She went on to earn a J.D., with honors, from Syracuse University, and then started her practice at a Chicago law firm. Gray relocated to Houston in 1985.

She has built an enviable reputation as a litigation attorney with expertise in complex bankruptcy cases, contract and business disputes, and corporate internal investigations. As one of the lead attorneys in Enron’s Chapter 11 reorganization, she “made certain the company’s value was maximized and fairly distributed to creditors.”

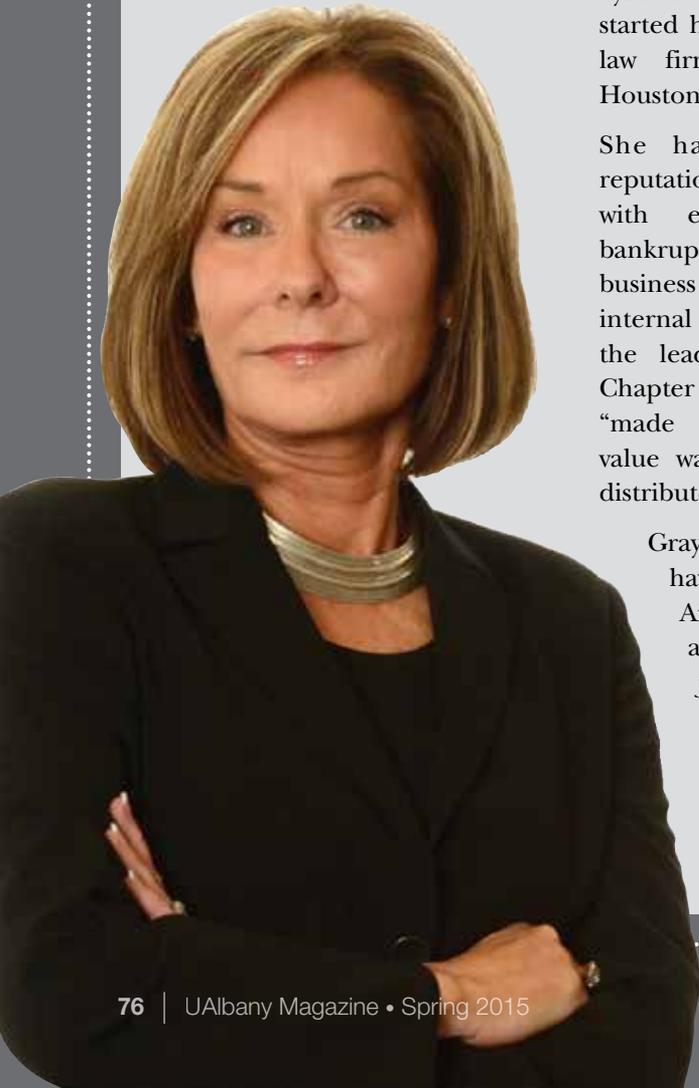
Gray, whose other clients have included American Airlines, General Electric and General Motors, joined Winston & Strawn’s Houston office as a partner in October 2013. Her work has

earned her numerous accolades; last year, Gray was named a Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America. She is also included in the “Bankruptcy and Creditor/ Debtor Rights” section of the 2015 edition of *Best Lawyers in America*.

Gray likens lawyers to “the directors and the actors of the [courtroom] play.” She loves being in the courtroom and explains: “Law is very mentally stimulating and engaging. Advocating for a client and getting ready for the trial are also very creative.”

She also enjoys community service. In keeping with her “particular areas of passion: women’s issues, education and health,” Gray serves on the boards of numerous organizations, including Baylor College of Medicine; Girls Inc.; Houston Area Women’s Center; the Greater Houston Community Foundation; the Society for the Performing Arts; and Teen & Family Services. As trustee and campaign co-chair, she aided Syracuse University in raising \$1 billion between 2007 and 2012.

Gray is married to attorney Mark Wawro. They have three children: William, 26; Chris, 24; and Allison, 19.



# French Connection

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93



**Maria Dempsey,  
B.A.'87**

From the time Maria Dempsey took her first high-school French class, she knew she had found her passion – for the language, culture and all things related to France. This love ultimately led her to UAlbany ... and her current position as executive vice president, Marketing, for Clarins, a leader in skin care and makeup.

In a decision she calls “the best deal of my life,” Dempsey chose UAlbany because it offered a degree in French and business and the ability to study abroad as part of the curriculum. She ended up spending 14 months in Paris, an experience that would forever shape her career.

“Studying in Paris took me out of my comfort zone and taught me how to adapt,” Dempsey explained. “It was one of many ways that my UAlbany degree helped me find and define what I love to do.”

After graduation, Dempsey worked her way up to vice president of Marketing for the Lancome Division of L’Oreal USA and, later, to vice president of Marketing for John Frieda.

**CLARINS** In her current role at Clarins, she oversees the company’s advertising, marketing, promotions, Internet and customer-relationship management (CRM) efforts in the United States – helping Europe’s No.-1 cosmetics brand grow its American market share.

Dempsey works in Manhattan, but she travels several times a year to the company’s headquarters in Paris – a trip she doesn’t mind at all.

*Update: Maria Dempsey is now a consultant at Crabtree & Evelyn.*

B.A.'93

# Teru Kuwayama

## Activist With a Camera

By Carol Olechowski

With only a camera and a photographer's keen perception, Teru Kuwayama records history in the making.

As a freelancer for *Time*, *Newsweek* and other publications, he has journeyed to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq 15 to 20 times, "probably half the time embedded with U.S. and NATO forces; the other half, solo or with an aid organization." Wherever he goes, Kuwayama, who has also traveled extensively in India and Kashmir, captures images of humanity – and inhumanity – many of us would otherwise never see.

"In years past," observed the New York City native, "I was more of a traveler with a camera." His work, however, has "made the journalism aspect of my career more central. I'm not interested in producing compositions of tragedies; I want to unravel them and work toward solutions. But, on some level, I've probably crossed a line from being a journalist to more of an activist."

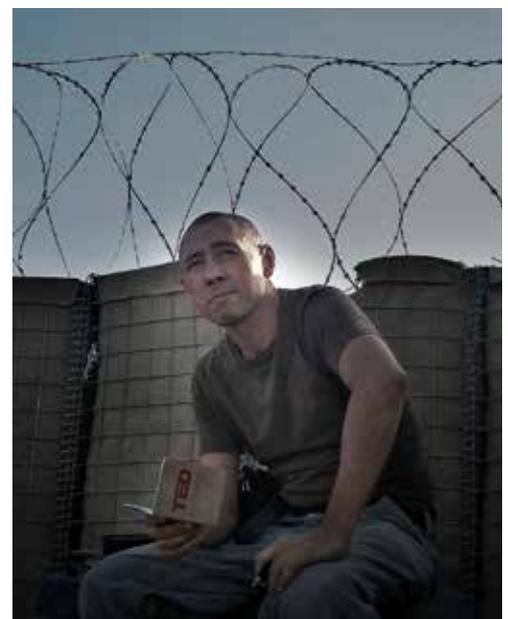
Activist or journalist, Kuwayama arrived at Albany with no career goals "at all."

His father, a painter, had "done some photography when I was a kid," in the "pre-digital, black-and-white, analog era," so Kuwayama did have a rudimentary knowledge of "the mechanics of cameras and darkrooms." Despite a professed lack of interest in photography, he joined the Student Photo Service. "I went by the office one day to meet a friend, and they happened to be holding an interest meeting. While I was waiting, I filled out the form, just to be polite. I didn't have any intention of joining, but as it turned out, I was the only one in the room who knew the difference between a shutter speed and an aperture, so I was recruited. A year later, I ran the place."

His first assignment – photographing a ticket for an ASP story about parking policies – went well. But during the second, which called for Kuwayama to "batch develop a week's worth of film for everyone else's assignments, I ruined everyone's film. It wasn't a very auspicious start." Things improved, however, as he began photographing "sports, fashion, portraits, news, music, architecture, landscapes, parties, and anything and everything else. But the most basic thematic thread that interested me was life around me, and the people I encountered."

Kuwayama was also an intern for Gary Gold, B.S.'70. The professional photographer "was really important to me and to many others who passed through Albany. He was sort of a mentor, patron saint and bail bondsman, all rolled into one," noted Kuwayama.

After receiving his bachelor's degree in art, Kuwayama remained in Albany and freelanced for the weekly *Metroland*, supplementing his income by washing



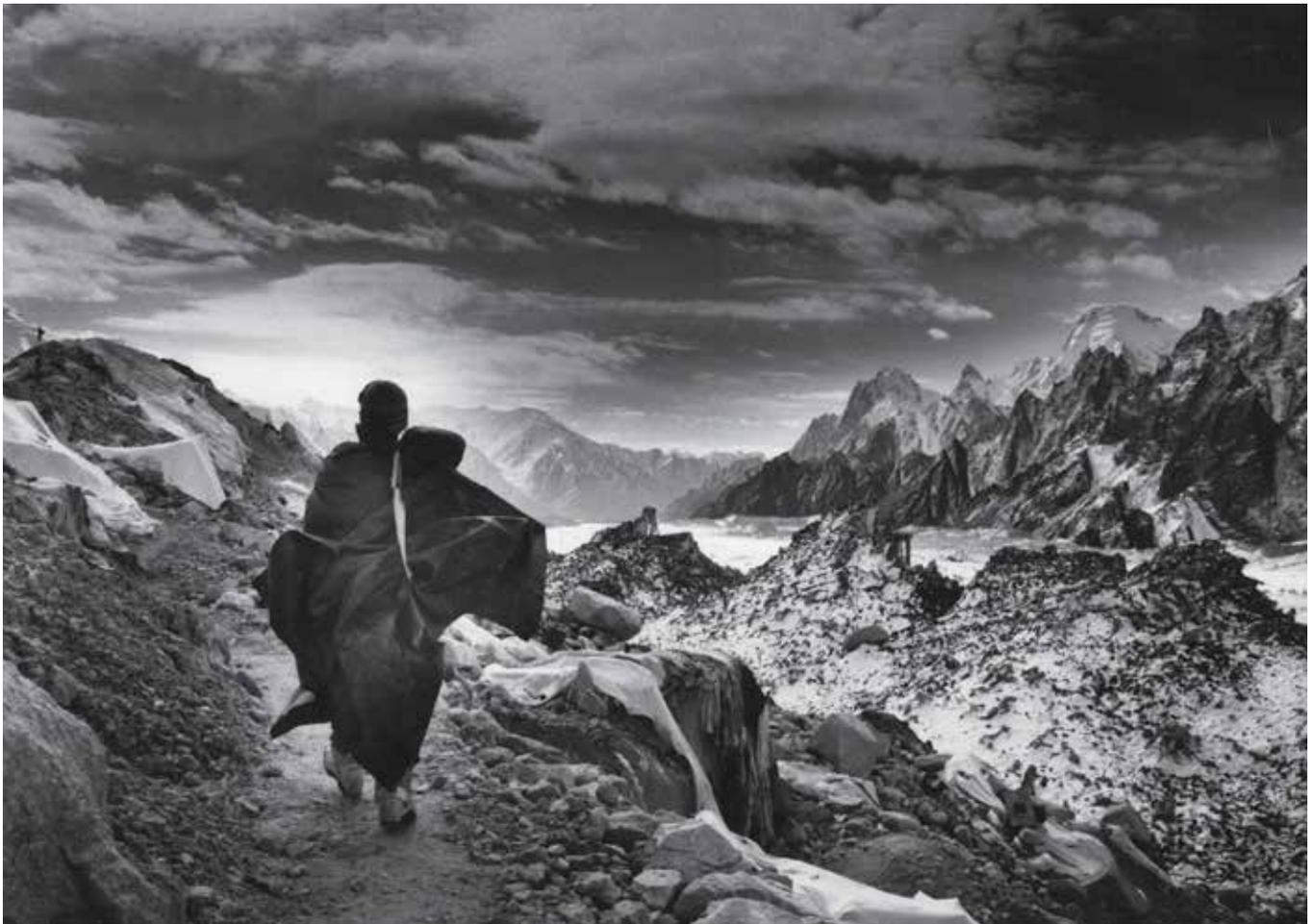
dishes at a Mexican restaurant. When he moved back to New York, he did construction, worked in a type shop, filed slides at a photojournalism agency, and “did darkroom work for people who actually had careers as ‘working photographers.’ I’ve never had a staff job anywhere. Freelancing wasn’t a decision; it was just what was available to me.”

For his Fall 2010 project, Basetrack ([www.basetrack.org](http://www.basetrack.org) or [www.facebook.com/basetrack](http://www.facebook.com/basetrack)), Kuwayama employed “photography and social media, tactically and strategically,” in an attempt “to inject Afghanistan deeper into the public consciousness. The intention is to use photographs to draw viewers into contact with unfamiliar ideas and sources of information. I’m not trying to convey a specific message so much as I’m trying to disrupt a disconnect between the American people and the longest war in U.S. history. If we’re going to spend \$100 billion a year on a decade-long war and deploy 100,000 troops to the other side of the planet, we should do it with a lot more thought and consideration than we have so far.”

For the time being, at least, Kuwayama will continue to cover the “conflicted regions and crisis situations” he documents so well. “I have no idea what’s around the corner, or what I’ll be doing a year from now. I’m ready to move on, but I’m also deeply invested in what’s become a very personal story.”

See Teru Kuwayama’s photos and posts at [terukuwayama.com](http://terukuwayama.com), [www.lightstalkers.org](http://www.lightstalkers.org), and [twitter.com](https://twitter.com).

**Update:** Since his feature ran in UAlbany, Teru Kuwayama has accepted a new position as community manager for Instagram.



# DEAN C. BACKER, B.S. '88

## Wall Street Success

By Michele Flynn

**D**ean Backer's fascination with Wall Street started in junior high school and continued as he worked on a business major at his first-choice school: the University at Albany.

Sports held an equal appeal. Backer played soccer and baseball through high school and continued playing soccer in college, giving it up after one season to raise his grades for entry into the School of Business.

He began his first and only internship, at Kidder Peabody, on an ominous date, Oct. 19, 1987, Black Monday. The worldwide stock market crash did not deter him, and only strengthened his attraction to finance.

After beginning his career at Andersen Consulting, Backer was recruited by Goldman Sachs, an Andersen client. Twenty-five years later, Backer is a member of Goldman Sachs's "Quarter Century Club," a small group that includes not only partners, but all employees who have logged 25 years with the firm, right down to the person in the mailroom.

Backer oversees and serves as global head of sales and capital introduction in the global securities service business. "Educated risk-taking" helped him get there. One decision was more significant than he could have predicted. After a year on the job, Goldman offered him a chance to prove himself. Backer was invited to be part of a three-person team establishing a trust company for Goldman in the Cayman Islands. They were successful. He returned after three years, became a managing director in 1999 and made partner in 2002.

The Cayman Islands provided more than a foundation for his career. He met his wife Anna there. They returned to New York together in 1994 and married in 1998. Backer notes

that most of his wedding party were grade-school friends and college roommates.

The Goldman partner asserts that his success was a result of hard work, good luck, timing, his "first-class education" at UAlbany and the guidance of the late School of Business adviser John Levato. Levato regularly hosted Backer and his suitemates at the Italian-American Center to feast on spaghetti and meatballs and talk. He said, "John started as an adviser, became a mentor and ended as a friend." Backer feels that Bill Roller, director of Development for the School of Business, embodies much of Levato's spirit. "There is a lot of John Levato in Bill Roller. He helps me figure out how I can be involved."

Backer said, "I would not be at Goldman Sachs without UAlbany and the internship that John helped arrange. I feel that I owe the school a lot. They did a great job educating me at a great value." To that end, Backer feels a strong commitment to UAlbany and the need to give back. He supports the school through the *Dean C. Backer '88 Scholarship*, membership on the Dean's Advisory Board and mentoring students.

Backer is a recipient of The University at Albany Foundation Excellence in Business Award. He is the board president and chairperson of Help for Children, a non-profit that funds organizations combating child abuse. Additionally, he serves on the boards of CDI, an organization that provides free academic, career readiness and social services to public-school students; the UJA Federation of New York; and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

The Backers live in New York City with their daughters, Chelsea and Phoebe. The family travels, skis and scuba dives.



**"I would not be at Goldman Sachs without UAlbany and the internship that John helped arrange. I feel that I owe the school a lot. They did a great job educating me at a great value."**



## Frankie Bailey, M.A.'79, Ph.D.'86

### Frankie Y. Bailey is a woman of mystery – and non-fiction, too.

**B**ailey, creator of the popular Lizzie Stuart mystery series (The Overmountain Press), grew up in Danville, Va., and studied psychology and English at Virginia Tech. When her adviser suggested she pursue advanced study in criminal justice, she asked, “What is criminal justice?” The adviser explained, then added, “The place to go for criminal justice is SUNY Albany. It was the only place I applied.”

As is the case with her mystery novels, a few twists and turns lay ahead. Bailey applied late for admission to the School of Criminal Justice, missing out on a fellowship. While waiting to enroll, “I worked in a department store, spent all my money on a two-week trip to Europe and joined the U.S. Army.” She began her studies while on leave.

Bailey admits to being “a little intimidated when I heard about the ‘2C’ rule – two C’s and you’re in trouble. But John Morgan, the assistant dean, greeted my parents and me, gave us a terrific tour and welcomed me to the school.”

At UAlbany, Bailey wondered how she would put her degree to good use. “Here, most Ph.D. students teach,” she says, noting that she was very shy as a child. By casting herself as “an actor on a stage, interacting with the audience,” she overcame her shyness and began to enjoy teaching.

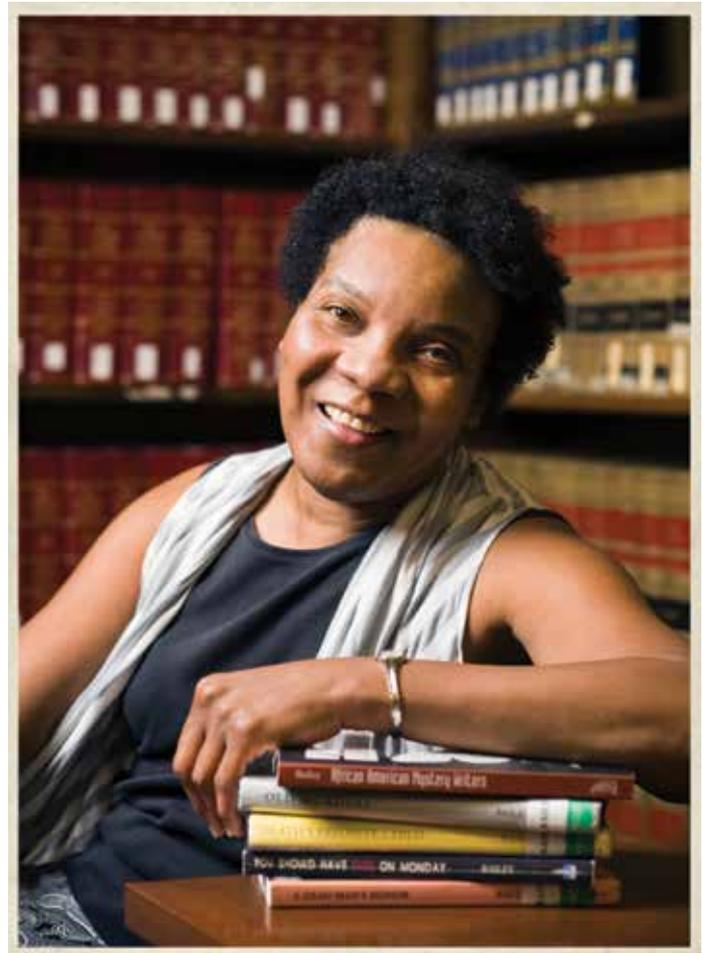
Bailey later taught at Kentucky State University; she also served as acting assistant vice president for Academic Affairs for a year but didn’t care for administrative work. When David Duffee, then dean of UAlbany’s School of Criminal Justice, invited her to apply for a three-year visiting professorship, “I jumped at the chance to get back into research and teaching.” Now an associate professor of criminal justice, Bailey teaches at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. “My broad area of research is crime and American culture, including mass media/popular culture, and crime history,” she notes.

Asked if Lizzie Stuart is based on her own life and experiences, Bailey emphatically shakes her head. Like her creator, Lizzie is a UAlbany graduate, but the fictional crime historian and her lover, former homicide detective Quinn, have taken on lives of their own. Raised by her grandparents in Kentucky, Lizzie spent the first four novels in the series seeking the truth about her

mother but has yet to learn her father’s identity. The fifth, *40 Acres and a Soggy Grave*, is set for publication in 2011. Bailey is also researching Albany history and architecture for a new mystery series set in New York’s capital “about 10 years in the future.”

Bailey and her good friend Alice Green, B.A.’62; M.A.’67, ’79; M.S.W.’73; Ph.D.’83, are currently conducting research for a book about blacks in Albany. Green, executive director of the Center for Law and Justice in Albany, has collaborated with Bailey on several books, including *Wicked Albany: Lawlessness and Liquor in the Prohibition Era* (The History Press, 2009).

*Update:* Frankie Bailey is now professor of criminal justice at UAlbany.





## JOAN (ROSENBAUM) SOLOTAR, B.S.'86

As senior managing director of Blackstone, one of the foremost investment firms in the world, Joan (Rosenbaum) Solotar enjoys working in “a dynamic environment where my days are varied and I continue to acquire experience 30 years into my career.” Informally, she is also a role model who encourages young women to consider finance as a career option. “Women can be hugely successful in finance, have rewarding careers and families, and pursue other interests,” Solotar observes.

The mother of two often meets with college-age women to share her own experience. “We review résumés, and I offer tips about interviewing and skill-building. I find what a lot of students need is guidance and a little more confidence,” comments Solotar, whose article “Truths for Our Daughters” (<https://hbr.org/2013/05/truths-for-our-daughters>) was published by the *Harvard Business Review* in 2013.

One challenge for professional women, Solotar says, is “balancing the parent and professional roles.” When work-related commitments precluded Solotar’s presence at home for dinner with her children, her parents, who lived nearby, stepped in. “You need a support system, whether it’s family or hired.”

The University at Albany, too, was a great support system – and “a launchpad into business” – for Solotar, who’s spent

much of her career in equity research with such firms as Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (DLJ), Crédit Suisse and Bank of America. Initially a political-science major planning a career in law, she switched to business.

“The undergraduate business program gave me an incredible base of knowledge,” Solotar recalls. “I had a fantastic experience and felt well prepared. John Levato provided guidance for all of us, and certainly for me.

“During senior year, a friend and I completed a Small Business Association project that combined academic lessons and practical experience. We worked with a sole proprietor in downtown Albany on better inventory management,” notes Solotar, an M.B.A. graduate of New York University’s Stern School of Business.

Solotar, the first in her family to graduate from college, feels it’s important for her to “provide some guidance and support” to UAlbany students. “I’ve met some incredibly bright students who would benefit from a little outside guidance, so I would encourage my alumni peers to pay it forward, take the time to come back to campus and help students along the way,” says the Queens, N.Y., native, who established the *Solotar Family Scholarship* with former husband Gavin Solotar, B.S.’86.

– Carol Olechowski

# MARYANNE R. LAVAN, B.S.'81

## Epitome of a Leader

By Carol Olechowski

**E**arly in life, Maryanne Lavan learned some valuable lessons. Her parents taught her “the value of hard work, respect and integrity. In any job, do your best, always, no matter what.”

They also taught their daughter to be nice to everyone. Lavan’s father, a public-school teacher, “worked at a number of jobs” to support his family. “It does matter how you treat people,” comments Lavan, now the senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary at Lockheed Martin Corporation. “You need to treat everyone well. The person delivering packages could be my dad.”

Lavan also learned valuable lessons at the University at Albany, where she studied business. She was a residential assistant, a position that enabled her to “acquire some leadership skills,” and worked in the cafeteria. Both experiences have contributed to her professional success, she says.

Longtime School of Business Assistant Dean John Levato also encouraged Lavan. She recalls Levato, who passed away in 2014, as “a hands-on, involved person who was admired and inspirational. He had a lot of energy and a positive attitude. I kept in touch with him on and off after graduation.”

Lavan continued her education at Washington College of Law, American University. While an associate for a District of Columbia

law firm, she did some work for Martin Marietta, now known as Lockheed Martin, and subsequently took a position with the company. This April, Lavan will have been with the Maryland-based corporation for 25 years.

As counsel, “I oversee significant litigation, offer legal advice to the executive leadership team, and manage the legal department.” explains Lavan.

“I’m very fortunate to have a great team. It takes many people to run the corporation. At Lockheed Martin, it’s not about me; it’s about the team. I think it’s important not to let ego get in the way. I want people to have an environment where they feel comfortable and want to do a good job.

“I try always to remember where I came from. It was a big stretch for my family to send me to college, so I appreciated the experience. I’m determined to work hard and appreciate the opportunities I have,” adds the Farmingdale, N.Y., native, who established the University’s *Anne and Thomas Lavan Scholarship* to honor her parents.



# Jordan Edelson, B.A. '07

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A. '93

“My work is my passion,” explained Jordan Edelson. Whether you’re a fan of the NBA, Lady Gaga, beer, perfume or a growing range of games, you may have held his work in the palm of your hand.

Edelson is the CEO and founder of Appetizer Mobile, a mobile-application development, consulting and marketing company. The Manhattan-based business was formed in 2009, and Edelson and his team have already scored numerous wins.

From developing top-selling educational apps for Montessorium – which were featured in two Apple iPad TV commercials – to creating an experiential app for Lady Gaga’s Little Monsters tour and digital bobblehead versions of top NBA stars, Appetizer continues to expand its portfolio.

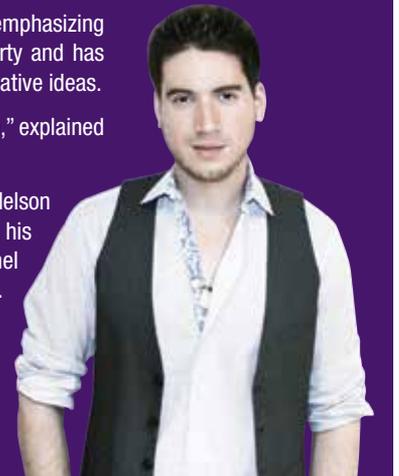
Edelson noted that the company is now emphasizing the development of its own intellectual property and has instituted an in-house design lab to drive innovative ideas.

“I love being creative and never feeling boxed in,” explained Edelson, 29. “It’s very inspiring.”

Long before he arrived at UAlbany, Edelson was taking technology in new directions; his innovations included a digital-streaming channel for video games, formed when he was just 17.

Edelson noted that the University gave him a “perfect foundation” of communication and business skills – a foundation that helps to fuel his passion today.

## UPWARDLY MOBILE



Jordan S. Josephson, M.D., F.A.C.S., B.S.'78

# “Country Doctor in the Big City”

By Carol Olechowski

Family, health and people helping people” are the three most important things in life, according to Jordan S. Josephson. Living by that conviction, the board-certified sinus and nasal specialist has built a thriving practice, treating patients from around the world and affording them the same “personal touch” he would ensure his own family.

An expert on CAID (Chronic Airway-Digestive Inflammatory Disease, which includes sinus problems; allergies, asthma; snoring; sleep apnea; and gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD), Josephson likens himself to “a country doctor in the big city.” At the New York Nasal and Sinus Center on East 77 Street in Manhattan, he sees patients from around the world. Josephson is also an attending physician at Lenox Hill Hospital; Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital; and St. Luke’s-Roosevelt Hospital. He is an educator, lecturing and teaching surgeons internationally his technique of functional endoscopic sinus surgery and nasal reconstruction; and a researcher whose work has appeared in more than 40 peer-reviewed journals. A former member of the National Institutes of Health’s consulting staff, Josephson received an NIH award for dedication and service, and was similarly recognized by the American Academy of Otolaryngology. *New York Magazine* named him one of its “Best Doctors 2004” as one of 13 innovators in medicine, and he has placed numerous times among “America’s Top Doctors” as compiled by healthcare and research information company Castle Connolly Medical Ltd.

In 2006, Josephson wrote *Sinus Relief Now* ([www.sinusreliefnow.com](http://www.sinusreliefnow.com)) to help readers “really understand their problems.” The book “puts the patient on the same page with the physician so that the patient can receive the right comprehensive treatment.” Josephson believes that both Eastern alternative and Western traditional medicines, which are explored in *Sinus Relief Now*, “have something to offer people who suffer from sinus disease, allergies, asthma” and

the other CAID-related diseases. Many of these sufferers “are miserable and are told that they are normal, or that they should live with their problems,” said the author. “But no one should have to suffer, as there are solutions” – ranging from medicines to surgery – “to help these patients feel better.” A “staggering” 120 million people in the United States alone suffer from these diseases, but, Josephson warns, the figure is rising, owing to “air pollution and global warming.”

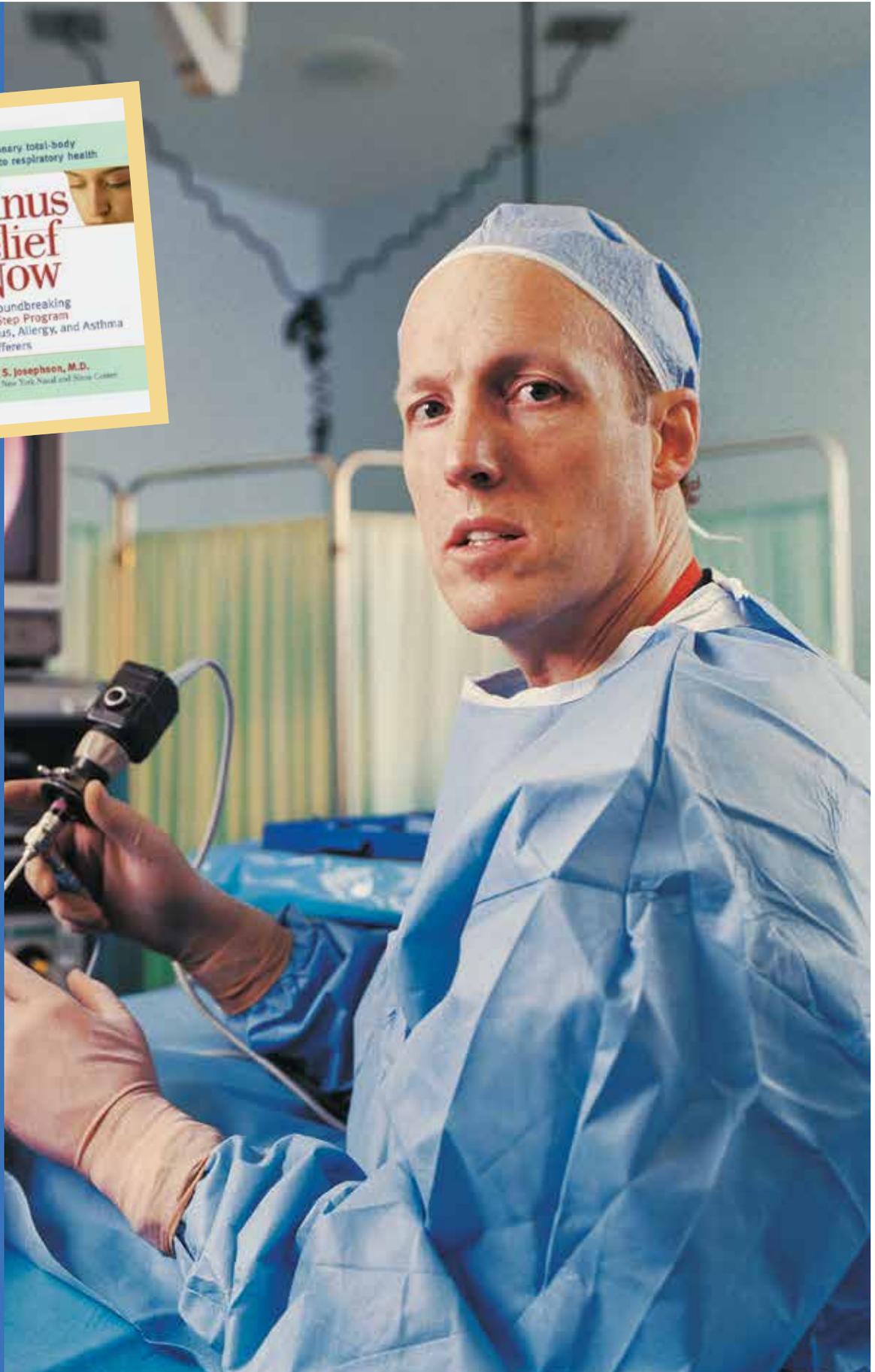
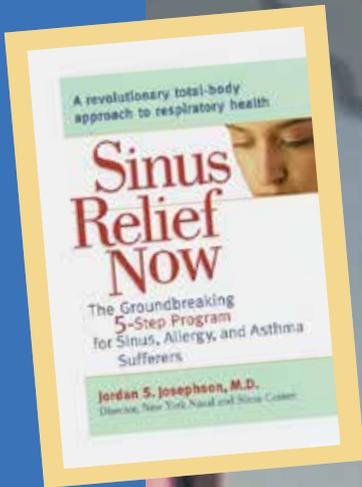
Josephson also carries his message to the masses “through as many avenues as possible,” including television (“Regis and Kelly,” “Fox News,” “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and “Today,” to name just a few) and radio (appearances on “hundreds of programs,” including with Dr. Mehmet Oz, host of Winfrey’s Sirius XM broadcast “Oprah & Friends”). In addition, he is often quoted in such publications as *The New York Times*, *Allure*, *Parenting Magazine*, *Redbook*, *Men’s Health*, and the *Medical Herald*. Recently named

the leading consultant on sinus and allergies for *WebMD* ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)), he plans “various projects” with the Internet site, including “a huge no-smoking campaign.”

No matter which means Josephson uses to assist others, he acknowledges that the greatest reward comes in healing the sick. He recalled the time that Oz referred to him a former “Oprah” guest – a man who’d suffered a nasal injury as a teenager and who subsequently suffered from snoring, sleep apnea and an inability to breathe through his nose. Josephson performed a thorough examination and discovered, in the patient’s mouth, a small cancer that even a CT scan had not detected. He removed the cancer, fixed the breathing and sleep apnea, and the patient is now healthy.

Josephson attributes that happy ending to thoroughness and luck. “A physician needs a good mind, good hands and a good heart,” he noted, “and I am lucky that God gave me all of those. Saving this man’s life was a very humbling experience. I really love what I do.”

**“A physician needs a  
good mind, good hands  
and a good heart . . .”**



Sinus and nasal surgeon Jordan Josephson, M.D., F.A.C.S., prepares to perform surgery. Josephson is also the author of *Sinus Relief Now*, published in 2006.



# FRANK WHALEY, B.A.'85

## “Ironweed” and Irony

By Carol Olechowski

At the University at Albany, Frank Whaley discovered a “great” theatre program, “amazing” facilities, a city with a “different” cultural scene – and his range as an actor.

“Professor Jim Leonard, one of my acting teachers, was a great influence. He helped me to find my range,” recalls the Syracuse, N.Y.-born Whaley, admitting, “I’ve played a lot of bad guys.”

He attended SUNY Potsdam as a freshman but, in 1982, transferred to Albany, where his brother, Robert Whaley, B.A.’84 (now an actor and musician), was enrolled as a theatre major. An EOP student, Frank Whaley majored in theatre and “began writing monologues to perform in class.” He took two courses with Professor of English William Kennedy, who would also have a profound – and somewhat ironic – influence on his career.

In the late 1980s, Whaley was working as a waiter in New York City when he learned of a casting call for the film “Ironweed” based on Kennedy’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. “I had read the book, and all of William Kennedy’s books, and I made sure that I got into auditions. I was cast in the role of Francis Phelan, the main character, as a young man; Jack Nicholson played Francis at a later age. It was amazing.” The movie, filmed in Albany, brought Whaley back to “Lark Street below Central, where I had lived while attending the University. It was just crazy,” adds the actor, who received his diploma two years after graduating from Albany because “I couldn’t afford to pay my library fines” until 1987.

“Ironweed,” Whaley’s first film, set the pace for his career. (For

a partial list of his movies, see the sidebar.) But Whaley, 44, is also a popular character actor on TV; his recent guest appearances include roles on “House” and “Boston Legal.” At this point, though, the father of two (Buster, 5, and Tallulah, 3) observes: “I prefer to write and to direct my own writing. It’s much more challenging and fulfilling to see the project transform from beginning to end.” In 1999, for his first writing-directing effort, “Joe the King,” Whaley won the Sundance Film Festival’s Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award.

His latest project is intended for the small screen. Whaley and his wife, actress-writer Heather Bucha, are collaborating on a “dark comedy” about the fictional Sharon Shaw, “an actress past her prime, and her struggle to maintain her sanity and raise her daughter in Hollywood. Sharon was a big movie star, but she’s forced to take a co-hosting job on a nature program. Heather and I will write and produce the series; we’re negotiating with a couple of TV networks. We’re talking to a few actresses, too; it’s a meaty role.”

Whaley knows about meaty roles. Whether he’s offered a dramatic or comedic part, “I can do it all, and I’m really excited about both. I’ve never thought in terms of doing one or the other. If it’s something I can sink my teeth into, it doesn’t matter what category the role falls into. I’m proud of my range.”

**Update:** Frank Whaley’s latest credits include the TV movie “Madoff,” as well as the films “Warning Shot” and “The Outcasts.” He also just finished filming “Wish Man.”

### FILM FACTS

Since graduating from the University at Albany, actor Frank Whaley has amassed an impressive list of movie credits, including:

“Ironweed” (début; 1987)

“Field of Dreams” (1989)

“Born on the Fourth of July” (1989)

“The Doors” (1991)

“JFK” (1991)

“Swing Kids” (1993)

“Pulp Fiction” (1994)

“Joe the King”

(Whaley’s writing and direction earned this movie the Sundance Film Festival’s Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award; 1999)

“The Jimmy Show” (2001)

“The School of Rock”

(not credited, 2003)

“World Trade Center” (2006)

“Vacancy” (2007)



Getty Images

# CAROLEE CARMELLO, B.S. '83

## From Bachelor of Science to Broadway Star



By Carol Olechowski



Joan Marcus

If Carolee Carmello hadn't decided to try out for theatrical roles during her undergraduate years at the University at Albany, life might have been very different today for the Broadway star.

Born in Albany and raised in the city's Pine Hills neighborhood, Carmello majored in business administration at the University and was looking forward to a career in personnel work or marketing.

"I lived on Dutch Quad, and I tried out for a couple of shows there as a lark," recalled Carmello, who played the roles of Nancy (*Oliver!*) and Hodel (*Fiddler on the Roof*) in quad productions. At the time, though, acting "was really just a hobby for me," she noted.

In the summer of 1983, Carmello went to Lake George, where she performed in the musical *They're Playing Our Song*. For her, "that was the beginning. I met a lot of actors from New York City. I had to join the Actors' Equity Association to do the show, and I was exposed to a part of the theatre I hadn't seen before. I had no expectations."

The only thing Carmello did expect was that her aspirations wouldn't work out, "and I would be going back to my business roots. I thought attempting to have a career in the theatre would last a year, or maybe two. That was 24 years ago."

Carmello modestly attributes much of her success to luck. When a show closed or she missed out on a role, "I was lucky enough to get another theatre job." Her first big break on Broadway was *City of Angels*. Since then, she's gone on to star in numerous other productions. For her role in *Parade*, Carmello was nominated for a Tony and earned a Drama Desk Award; *Lestat* won her Drama Desk and Tony nominations. Her other Broadway credits include *The Scarlet Pimpernel*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Urinetown*; *Falsettos*; and *1776*. Off Broadway, Carmello has performed in such shows as *Elegies*; *I Can Get It For You Wholesale*; and *Hello Again*, for which she received an Obie.

When she's not onstage, the actress plays two other roles: wife and mother. She and her husband, Tony Award nominee Gregg Edelman have two children, Zoe and Ethan.



Carmello (as Donna Sheridan) and her co-star Carey Anderson (as Donna's daughter, Sophie) share a touching moment onstage in *Mamma Mia!*

If she weren't a world-famous theatre professional, Carmello could picture herself in "corporate administration somewhere." She's thought of returning to school for her M.B.A. and is glad to have earned a business degree at UAlbany. "A lot of my friends feel the theatre is the only career path; they can't even entertain the idea of another possibility," she observed. "With my degree, I could do other things. I have something to fall back on. It's also helped me in the business – dealing with contracts and negotiations and investing my money. There are a lot of entrepreneurial aspects to

show business; you have to market yourself, in a way. My degree has definitely paid off."

**Update:** Since this profile was published in Winter 2008, Carolee Carmello has gone on to star in several other shows, including *The Addams Family*; *Sister Act*; *Scandalous* (for which she received a third Tony nomination and a Drama Desk nomination); *Finding Neverland*; and *Tuck Everlasting*. From April 2017 until February 2018, she portrayed Mrs. Lovett in the off-Broadway production of *Sweeney Todd*.

**MONTE LIPMAN, B.A.'86**

**AVERY LIPMAN, B.A.'88**

# A Passion for Music

By Carol Olechowski



Music-loving brothers Avery (left) and Monte Lipman head Universal Republic Records.



Monte Lipman says he and his brother, Avery, have always had “a tremendous interest in music,” although neither sings or “has ever played an instrument.” But that hasn’t kept Monte, Universal Republic Records’ president and CEO, and Avery, co-president and chief operating officer, from becoming one of the most dynamic family acts in the music field.

For the Lipmans, music has been “a hobby and a passion,” explains Monte, who was on the staff of WCDB and a member of the concert committee when he majored in communication and minored in business at Albany. Selling recorded music is nothing new to them: Both worked at the campus record co-op as undergraduates; in fact, Avery managed the shop for two years. Today, they’re still selling music – but on a grander scale.

Monte recalls “transitioning into the business” in the early 1990s. That was when he and Avery launched their own label, Republic Records, “in the kitchen of our father’s house” in New Jersey. Back then, “in the pre-computer days, any album packaging we created was cut and paste. But everything went well. We never intended to build Republic into a powerhouse; we just wanted to work with cool artists, people who put out music that we liked.”

The Lipmans scouted potential talent in clubs and from newspaper stories, or via tips from friends and relatives of fledgling acts, as well as from demo tapes submitted by performers. The first artist Republic signed, Bloodhound Gang, became “a huge international smash.” Hits by Chumbawamba and 3 Doors Down followed – as did a buyout several years ago from Universal Music Group, which is No. 1 in international sales of recorded music. The siblings’ label, now known as Universal Republic Records, retained them in upper management.

Both brothers “spend a fair amount of time trying to find artists we feel we can be successful with,” notes Avery. “We oversee marketing and promotion and development of artists, helping them to be successful. In terms of technology, we find ourselves in the midst of a fundamental transformation. On the one hand, it’s frustrating and scary; on the other, it’s probably the most incredibly challenging and exciting time to be in business.”

Technology has indeed transformed the music business,

Monte confirms. “With the popularity of the Internet, there’s more access and communication than ever. Back in the day, a kid didn’t know where to send the [demo] tape. Now, we can correspond directly with artists in a matter of moments. Most of the music we receive now is digital. A good number of people still mail it to us, but folks also send things to their MySpace pages.”

Universal Republic “is a major label powerhouse with the spirit of an independent,” adds Monte. “In the last two years, we’ve had tremendous success with rock bands like Hinder and Godsmack. Our most recent signing is Colbie Caillat, who currently has the No. 1 song in the U.S., ‘Bubbly.’ Mika has become an international phenomenon; so has Amy Winehouse, who just received six Grammy nominations, including Album of the Year. Country phenom Taylor Swift has also been nominated for Best New Artist. And our No. 1-selling artist, Jack Johnson, put out a new album Feb. 5.” In all, approximately

40 artists record on the Universal Republic label.

The recording industry, according to Monte, “is always changing. It’s never the same year after year; there’s a natural evolution to it. The way we produce and distribute music will change. What won’t change is the impact music has on culture and society.”

Both Lipmans use the abilities they acquired at Albany to manage

Universal Republic’s 200 employees, a quarter of whom are located in Manhattan, where the brothers work. Monte has drawn inspiration from “the entrepreneurial spirit” embraced by the School of Business. Avery, an English major who played junior-varsity football as a freshman, describes “problem solving, getting things done when there are seemingly impossible obstacles, becoming an adult and a responsible person, and coming into contact with people who are go-getters and can really make things happen” as just a few of the lessons he mastered during “the college experience.” He also acknowledges that he’s found “practical applications,” such as “writing promotional documents and things of that nature,” for the language skills he sharpened as an undergraduate.

You won’t find Avery writing lyrics, however – or strumming a guitar or improvising a tune on the piano. “The only thing I play,” he jokes, “is the radio.”



Singer Colbie Caillat center, with Monte, left, and Avery

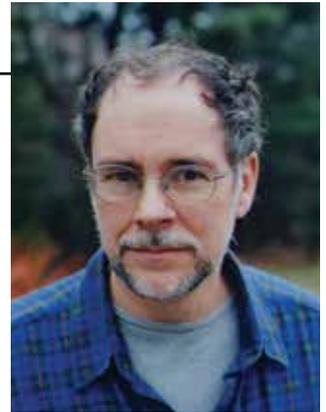




# GREGORY MAGUIRE, B.A.'76

## A Wicked Talent

By Carol Olechowski



For decades, the story of Dorothy, the Kansas farm girl propelled by a tornado to a mystical land in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, has captivated readers. But, until Gregory Maguire decided to delve into the matter, no one had given much thought at all to the Wicked Witch of the West, the nemesis who plagues Dorothy and her companions as they seek out the wizard, who will (they hope) grant them some special favors, including the girl's wish for a safe return home.

In *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, Maguire explores the background of the witch from birth to death. Although *Wicked* is often characterized as “the back story of the Wizard of Oz,” the author himself describes the work as “a novel in which I could examine the curious conundrums surrounding the notions of human malfeasance and the tendency to demonize those with whom we disagree. That it should be about a villain that readers would commonly understand to be evil was simply a given; the Wicked Witch of the West occurred to me as an inspiration. Everyone in the U.S. knew who she was, yet Baum, and the 1939 film based on his classic children's novel, had given virtually no background story for her. She was easily identifiable, yet ripe for interpretation.”

Maguire “knew *Wicked* was a good idea,” but he felt the book,

written for adults, would be only “moderately successful; it might stop selling when enough people had read it to pronounce, ‘Oh, it doesn't live up to its promise.’ I did not expect that the word of mouth would be positive, would make it a sleeper.”

Both versions of *Wicked* have garnered so much acclaim that most people are probably unaware that Maguire is also a highly successful author of books for children. He credits the University at Albany with nurturing his interest in that genre.

Maguire enrolled at the University in 1972, attracted by its “fine reputation,” its proximity to his home and its affordable tuition. The Albany, N.Y., native was “too busy” working his way through school and completing his academic work in dual majors (English and studio art) to participate in extracurricular activities. However, he enjoyed his classes and recalls that, freshman year, he was “particularly taken with a six-credit course in [William] Faulkner, and also my first English course, *Love, Sex and Power in the American Novel*.” Maguire also fondly remembers Assistant Professor Lillian Orsini, M.S.L.S. [now emerita], who taught library sciences and “kindly allowed me into her graduate seminar in children's literature. With her as one of my mentors, I took an independent study in writing fiction for children.” His first book, *The Lightning Time*, was published by Farrar Straus and Giroux in 1978.

Over the next two decades, Maguire penned a number of other children's books, including *Six Haunted Hairdos* and *Seven Spiders Spinning*. “I knew from personal experience that writing for children can be among the most powerful of communication tools,” he observes. “Young readers are generous in their sympathies, open-minded and passionate. To write for children is to write for the most dedicated and responsive audience around.”

Yet, the switch to adult literature was not difficult. “My solidest prep work for *Wicked* was the reading I had done as a child. I felt I could use all the love of the invented landscapes I had developed in reading [J.R.R.] Tolkien, [Ursula] LeGuin and others; I could range from low comedy to high tragedy, from mild social farce to social criticism. It was not hard to change gears; it was merely a matter of changing topics,” Maguire says.

For his latest book, Maguire returned to his roots as a children's author. *What-the-Dickens: The Story of a Rogue Tooth Fairy*, written for readers aged 9 to 12, was published late last year by Candlewick Press.

**Update:** Gregory Maguire's most recent books, *After Alice* and *Hiddense: A Tale of the Once and Future Nutcracker*, were published in 2015 and 2017, respectively.



# William Thomas, B.A.'97

## Presidential Praise

By Gina Muscato

For UAlbany alumnus William Thomas, being named Maryland's 2009 Teacher of the Year has its perks: a new computer, \$9,000 in cash and a new \$25,000 Saturn Aura. But the biggest reward will be meeting President Barack Obama in April, when Thomas is honored at the White House for his achievement.

The 33-year-old Thomas, who earned a teaching B.A. in history from UAlbany, will be thinking about what he'll say when he meets the president. Undoubtedly, he'll leave with a story to tell his students – and another way to make teaching government “relevant.”

“It's important to reach students on their level to bring them to a higher plane,” said Thomas, who teaches at Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School in Upper Marlboro, Md.

In his own life, Thomas has relied on encouraging influences. He grew up in the small town of Ellenville, N.Y., where his parents, Eunice and George Thomas, instilled in him the importance of education and inspired his path to teaching. While pursuing his degree at UAlbany, he thrived, learning about diverse cultures in history and social studies classes. He enjoyed the University's diverse atmosphere and the student body, and was also challenged by the high expectations of his professors.

Today, Thomas does the same for his high school students. “I want all of the students to believe that I will not give up on them, that I will push them until they succeed,” he said.

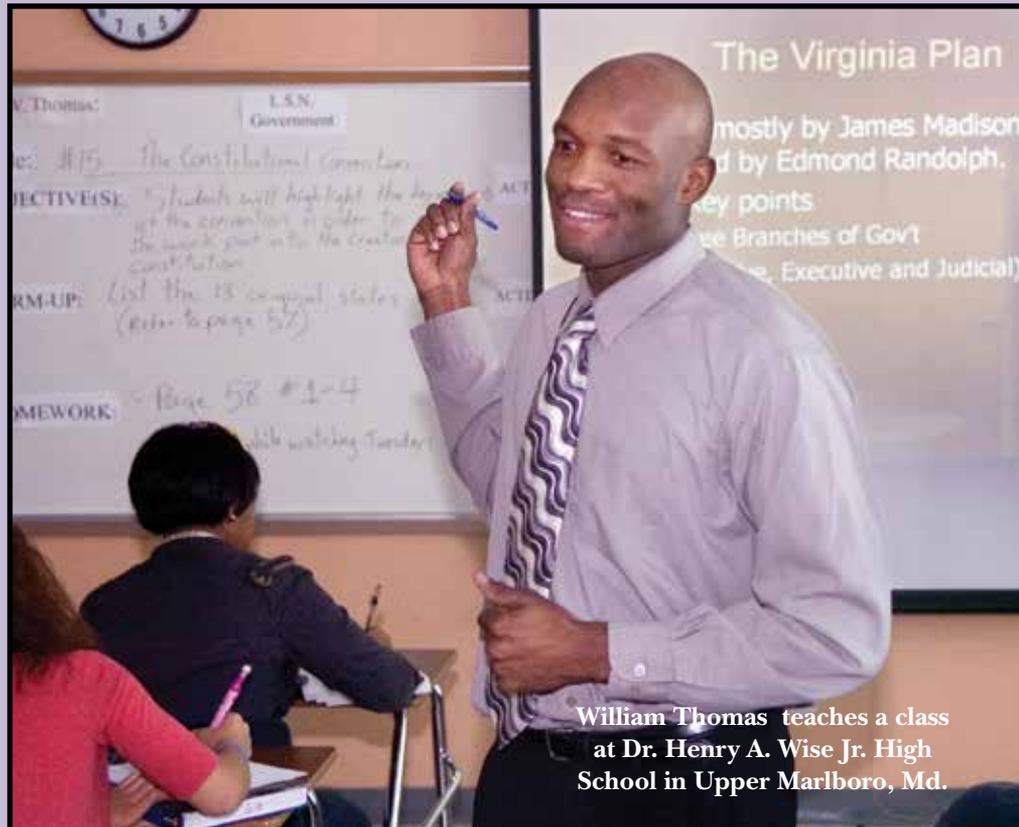
In doing so, Thomas has become a role model, particularly to African-American students – a responsibility he relishes.

He dresses in a shirt and tie every day, putting into practice the high standards that he preaches in his classroom. His skills and dedication to his students have brought Thomas several offers to become an administrator in the Maryland school system. But he is unwilling to give up his life's calling: teaching.

In fact, it's a family calling: His wife, Nicole Thomas, who earned a teaching B.A. in 1996 and an M.S. in reading in 1998, is a 10th-grade English teacher at the same school. Married in 1999, they met at UAlbany, where they shared an interest in the gospel choir and a passion for teaching. Both were finalists for Prince George's County Teacher of the Year. William Thomas garnered that honor, then bested seven candidates from other counties for the statewide award.

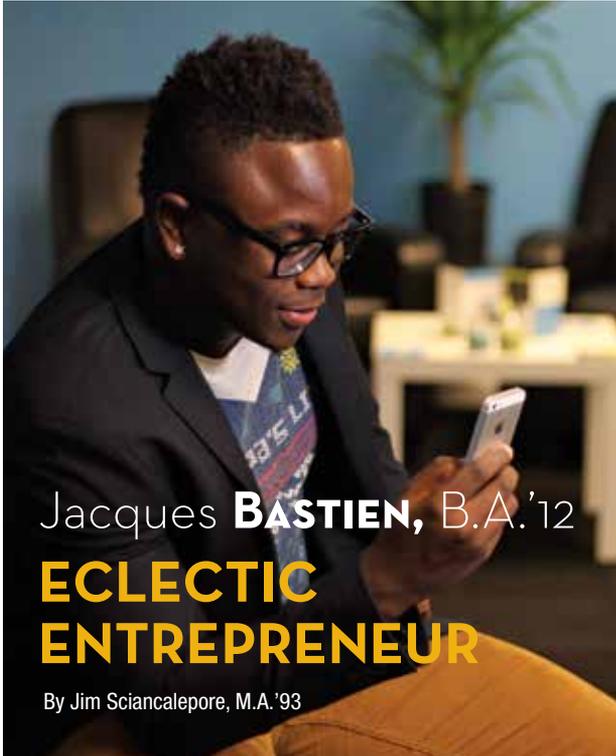
Still, he maintains he's not the best teacher – either in the state or in his house. “My wife is the better teacher,” Thomas admitted with a laugh. “It's not even close.”

“I want all of the students to believe that I will not give up on them, that I will push them until they succeed.”



William Thomas teaches a class at Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School in Upper Marlboro, Md.

Brenda Ahearn



Jacques **BASTIEN**, B.A.'12  
**ECLECTIC  
ENTREPRENEUR**

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A.'93

**F**ounder and executive of multiple companies. Designer. Writer. College professor. Media personality. And that's all within two years of graduation.

"I've been so busy for so long that I couldn't imagine life simpler," noted the multi-faceted Jacques Bastien. Born in Haiti, Bastien has been an entrepreneur since his high-school days in Brooklyn, when he created and sold music beats for aspiring artists. He continues to channel that energy in numerous directions.

These days, the 24-year-old Bastien is largely focused on running his Albany-based social media and interactive-marketing agency, Boogie. He started the company in his dorm room while a sophomore at UAlbany, and the venture has evolved and grown since then.

Bastien credits UAlbany for providing him a strong foundation for his business success, and he maintains strong ties to the University. He currently teaches an interactive design course as an adjunct professor, and Boogie employs several UAlbany graduates (including his wife, Dahcia, a fellow 2012 graduate).

Perhaps the most important skill Bastien learned at UAlbany was his ability to maximize his time.

"I've learned to operate effectively with four to five hours of sleep," said Bastien. "It's difficult to imagine myself not having so much to do."

*Update: In addition to Boogie, Jacques Bastien co-founded the multicultural marketing agency SHADE in 2016.*

## Lisa Fund, B.S.'05

## A Firm Commitment to UAlbany

By Carol Olechowski

"UAlbany helped me build a solid foundation to ensure I have a successful future," says Lisa Fund, 30. "The University taught me how to balance my time, and confirmed the importance of giving back to the community and being involved with the Alumni Association. Without strong support from the athletics and math departments, the School of Business and many mentors, I do not think I would be where I am today."

Fund today is at Goldman Sachs in New Jersey. Hired as an analyst in July 2005, shortly after earning a degree in mathematics, she has since held "a variety of roles" with the firm. Currently, as manager of a Global Strategy and Change Management team in the Securities Operations Control & Quality Management Group, Fund oversees "global projects to help the organization optimize controls, create efficiency and enhance service levels." The work affords her opportunities for extensive travel: Recent business has taken her primarily to Salt Lake City, "where we have a large presence."

Fund helps Goldman Sachs recruit for Operations at various campuses and serves as a mentoring champion. She is also involved with the company's various diversity-affinity networks.

Outside of Goldman Sachs, Fund volunteers with the Global Circle Steering Committee of the non-profit American Jewish World Service, a group of young professionals that supports AJWS' efforts "to alleviate poverty, hunger

and disease among the most marginalized people and communities in the developing world." The organization also advocates for "gender equality, global hunger relief, global health initiatives and basic human rights."

Fund's philanthropic interests extend to the University. The GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) alumna and former captain of the women's tennis team has spoken at math graduation and various open houses, "sharing what UAlbany offers and what a great education I received." She also responded to an Alumni Association challenge to encourage

leadership gifts from young alumni by endowing a scholarship fund. The award will support a female student intending to follow academic and career paths similar to Fund's.

"Having the Alumni Association match half of the endowment minimum is a fantastic way to encourage and enable younger alumni to start an endowment," observes Fund. "Each year, I try to give a donation to UAlbany, and I thought that [the scholarship] would be a great way to confirm my commitment to the University and be able to impact a student's career. I am looking forward to congratulating the first scholarship recipient in the next few years and following her successes, along with those of future recipients!"



# Matthew Alfieri, B.S.'08

## ALLEGIANCE TO UALBANY

By Carol Olechowski

**M**atthew Alfieri is living a dream: working in London as vice president on the Principal Strategic Investments team at Goldman Sachs. “I almost don’t believe it’s real. It’s like an extended holiday,” he observes.

As a business administration major in UAlbany’s Financial Analyst Honors Program, Alfieri worked hard to attain that dream. With friends Vincent Cisternino, B.S.’08, and Michael Reynolds, B.S.’08, he founded the University at Albany School of Business Investment Group (UASBIG) to “afford students the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom in a real-world portfolio-management setting.”

A summer analyst with Citi in 2006 and with Goldman Sachs in 2007, Alfieri joined the latter as a full-time analyst after graduation. His expertise now also includes “advising corporates in such areas as initial public offerings (IPOs), other forms of equity financings and general corporate finance matters.”

Today, “I work on Goldman’s Principal Strategic Investments team, which manages a portfolio of private-equity positions with roughly \$1 billion invested across about 60 companies,” says Alfieri, 27. A board member for one of the portfolio companies, he also assumes director-level roles for other investments. “Goldman’s culture is very team oriented and driven. People know one another at all levels,” Alfieri notes.

University connections have promoted his career aims. David Smith, Hany Shawky and Rita Biswas were among the professors “helpful in shaping my learning experience.” Alfieri is grateful to “alumni like Michael Borys [B.S.’78, M.B.A.’79] and Dan Byrne [B.S.’93, M.B.A.’96], who came through the doors of GS before me and helped make recruiting from UAlbany possible.”

His mentors include Goldman Sachs managing directors Dean Backer, B.S.’88, and Stacy Bash-Polley, B.S.’89; Wellington Management Co. Partner Michael Carmen, B.S.’84; and GoldenTree Asset Management President Robert Matza, B.S.’77. When Alfieri was seeking new challenges at the company’s New York office in 2011, advisers rightly predicted that a new opportunity would arise when the economy emerged from its slump. He

left for London shortly thereafter.

Alfieri is now following his mentors’ example: “I’ve helped some younger alumni get interviews with Goldman Sachs, or been part of the interview process. I also try to stay connected with the school through my participation on the UASBIG Associate Advisory Board.”

**Update:** Matthew Alfieri is now vice president at Centana Growth Partners.



# Eric Fisher, B.S.'06

## “WEATHER GEEK”

By Carol Olechowski

Eric Fisher, chief meteorologist at WBZ-TV, the CBS affiliate in Boston, had a unique childhood, to say the least. “I was that kid sitting out on the porch with Mom yelling at me to get inside during thunderstorms. I would watch endless hours of The Weather Channel, get pumped up for big snowstorms, and even had a backyard weather station where I kept observations in a notebook. So you could say the path was laid out. I knew I wanted to work in weather,” recalls Fisher, 30.

As a high-school student in South Windsor, Conn., he “took all the science classes possible.” When it was time for college, “I looked solely at schools with meteorology programs, and the University at Albany seemed the best fit.”

UAlbany’s atmospheric-science program, Fisher points out, “is for those who are really into the weather – true ‘weather geeks,’ as many of us proudly call ourselves! It’s not just a program to breeze through and get on TV, and for that I’m grateful. Professors [Lance] Bosart, [Mike] Landin and

[Chris] Thorncroft, to name a few, were all excellent, laying down the fundamentals of what we’d expect out in the job market. And even though there was not a broadcasting program in place, everyone in the department made us comfortable in our love for the weather so we could fully embrace and enjoy our work – the key to success in any job.”

Fisher returned to his native Massachusetts after graduation to work at WGGB in Springfield. Four years later, “my strong background in meteorology helped to get me a job at The Weather Channel, which is pretty much the mother ship for hard-core weather fans.”

WBZ has been home base for Fisher since 2013.



# James Allen, B.A. '07

## A NEW VOICE

By Jim Sciancalepore, M.A. '93



James Allen works with U.S. Sen. Cory Booker.

“We see an entire generation that is up for grabs ... young people who have been overlooked or underestimated by most media outlets,” explained James Allen. “They consume content through new channels: social and mobile. And they happen to be the largest generation in American history.”

Allen was describing the concept behind Mic.com, a new media outlet for which he is the vice president of Communications and Strategy. Allen and his co-workers have an ambitious goal: to be the most trusted and relevant news source for millennials.

Mic is certainly off to a good start: Its audience has grown by more than 750 percent since early 2013. It currently reaches more than 19 million monthly readers, an estimated two-thirds of them under age 35.

As “keeper of the Mic brand,” Allen oversees brand strategy and media relations – and serves as Mic’s liaison in Washington, D.C., and other industry communities.

Allen, 28, is no stranger to politics. While a sophomore at UAlbany, he served as an intern to former U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton. Allen later worked as campaign manager for U.S. Rep. John Carney’s successful congressional campaign, and he was director of Communications for Newark [N.J.] Mayor (now senator) Cory Booker.

“All of these roles gave me a deep understanding of politics and journalism,” said Allen. “For me, Mic is the best of both worlds: I get my political fix, and I’m diving into the digital-media industry at a very exciting time.”

**Update:** James Allen is now chief of Staff, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, [under] Vice Chairman Jeffrey Lynford.



Jonathan Rochelle,  
B.S. '85

Mike Tritchonis

## GOOGLING SUCCESS

It's not easy to make the leap from a secure job at a big, established company to form a risky start-up. Nor is it easy for entrepreneurs to sell their successful businesses – with all the associated freedom and autonomy – and work for someone else.

Jonathan Rochelle has experienced both of these transitions, and his decisions have turned out very well.

After graduating from UAlbany in 1985, Rochelle was able to apply his computer-science degree to a position at financial giant J.P. Morgan. Rochelle would spend the next 15 years on Wall Street developing applications for the financial services sector – including solutions to help analysts visualize and access data from complex financial models.

Though he achieved success at J.P. Morgan, Rochelle had other ambitions.

"I always had ideas I wanted to develop... to create and launch products, something I really believed in," explained Rochelle.

In 2001, he decided to leave the safety of his longtime job and co-found a start-up company. Or two companies, actually. One, consulting service ITK Solutions, provided

technology services to banks and other big-name financial organizations. The second, a software company called 2Web Technologies, featured a signature product that could provide cloud-based access to spreadsheets and other documents, an extremely unique idea at the time.

Serving as CEO for 2Web, Rochelle guided the company to profitability – and attracted the attention of a quickly growing Internet company: Google.

Based on what Rochelle termed a "serendipitous contact" with Google, he and 2Web's co-founder began discussing their solution and how it could be utilized by the Internet giant, which was looking to expand beyond its search-engine roots. In 2005, a purchase offer was made: Google wanted to acquire 2Web ... and hire Rochelle, the company's co-founder, and several of their colleagues.

This offer was certainly appealing to Rochelle from a business standpoint, but it also meant that he would be working for someone else again – after going out on his own just four years earlier. "It was a hard decision to sell, and a little scary to join such a large company," said Rochelle. "But we had a good feeling about Google."

Rochelle, once again, made the leap. He noted that he had been attracted to Google's entrepreneurial environment, in which he could still be innovative and maintain some autonomy. He was also excited by the prospect of developing products on a greater scale.

"Supported by Google, our products could have a much bigger impact," Rochelle added.

Incorporating 2Web technology, Rochelle and team would ultimately develop the solutions behind Google Docs, Sheets, and Slides, and Google Drive – now used by tens of millions of people worldwide. In his current role as a director of Product Management at Google, he is working to expand the company's roster of cloud-based applications, with an emphasis on the education sector.

"You could say that I'm an evangelist for cloud computing," he noted.

Years later, he still looks back fondly on his UAlbany education – citing the rigor of the University's computer science degree. "In terms of value, it was an awesome program," he said. "I would never have been hired or successful at Google without it."

# Ronald Frasch, B.S.'70

## Merchandising Maven

By Carol Olechowski

If Saks Fifth Avenue President and Chief Merchandising Officer Ron Frasch had a career objective when he was 17, “it wasn’t the fashion industry.” He initially attended Ohio University to study journalism. After considering finances and proximity to home, however, the Glens Falls native transferred to what was then SUNY Albany and opted for a business major instead.

“I was very proud to be accepted at Albany,” recalls Frasch. “To be able to succeed in a very competitive environment was really important.” That setting, combined with “extremely talented professors and extremely bright students,” reinforced his determination “to get my degree and find a job.”



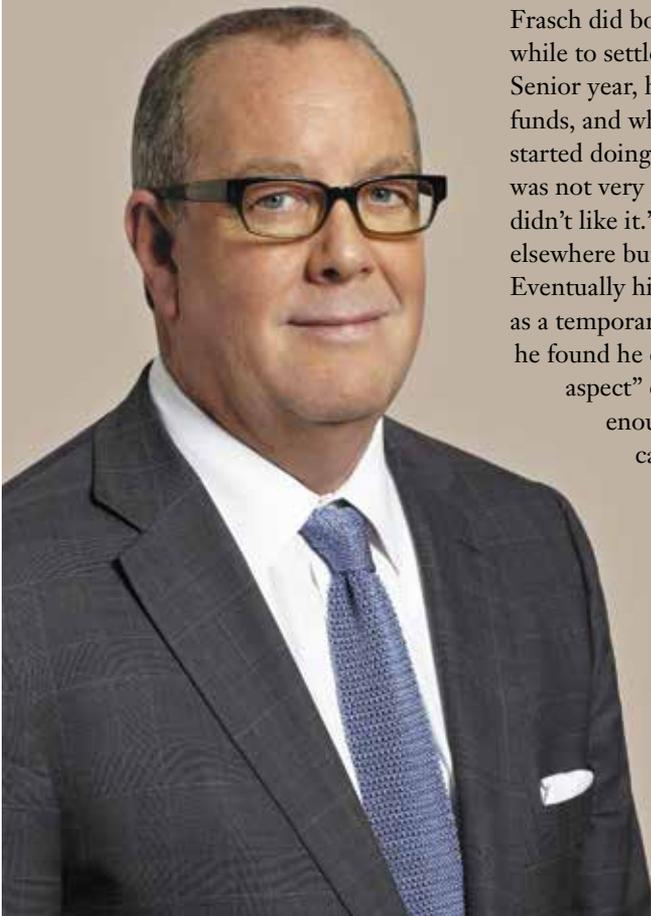
At Saks, Frasch uses the teamwork and time-management skills he acquired at UAlbany. Working “arm in arm” with CEO Steve Sadove, he is “responsible for all the merchandising and merchandise planning, and all the stores report to me. I also have responsibility for store-planning functions, the overall look of our stores and any construction that goes along with renovating them. Steve and I do everything else together.”

Frasch also works with several UAlbany alumni, “all very good people in our industry. They are driven to be successful. That’s something very special, and I’m very proud of my fellow graduates.

“I love the people, developing and mentoring them,” adds Frasch. “The business is very stimulating and constantly new. I enjoy the dynamic of an ever-changing environment, whether it’s product, people or plans. I don’t think two days have ever been the same in my entire career. I love what I do.”

*Update: Ron Frasch joined Castanea Partners as an operating partner in 2014 to focus on luxury apparel and accessories, and aspirational branded consumer products. He is also a member of the boards of directors of Burberry and Crocs.*

Frasch did both, but it took him a while to settle into the right career. Senior year, he had sold mutual funds, and when he graduated, “I started doing that full time. But I was not very good at it, and I really didn’t like it.” Frasch interviewed elsewhere but “couldn’t find a job.” Eventually hired at Bloomingdale’s as a temporary seasonal employee, he found he enjoyed “the people aspect” of merchandising enough to make it his career. Frasch has spent all of his 40 years in the business, including the last eight, with Saks Fifth Avenue. He has also held executive-level positions with Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman.







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