

A person stands in a snowy forest, looking up at the aurora borealis (Northern Lights) dancing in the night sky. The scene is illuminated by the vibrant green and blue hues of the aurora, creating a magical and serene atmosphere. The forest is dense with evergreen trees, and the ground is covered in a thick layer of snow.

# UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

## MAGAZINE

Volume 31 • Number 3

# BLUE HEN BOLD

A new UD musical opens eyes (and ears) to an untold war story.

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Alumni in Alaska find awe and adventure in the largest state.

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UD turns to hydroponics to feed the planet and protect the world.

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At NYPD, alumna Wendy Garcia isn't settling for the status quo.

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# KEEPING YOUR HEAD

A '90s-inspired paintball tournament? No, just a colorful illustration of the importance of safety goggles during an emergency. This hands-on activity took place during a building-wide safety retreat for more than 300 tenants of UD's Ammon Pinizzotto Biopharmaceutical Innovation Center, held in September. The faculty, student and staff participants extinguished fires, identified laboratory safety infractions, got a behind-the-scenes look at UDPD dogs searching for explosives, generally became better stewards of campus safety—and finished off the day, naturally, with UDairy ice cream.

Photo by Evan Krape



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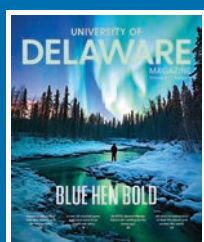
Blue Hens offer an insider's guide to life (and travel) in Alaska.

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**SAFETY FIRST:** Tenants of UD's Ammon Pinizzotto Biopharmaceutical Innovation Center paused their regularly scheduled workday earlier this September for a refresher on ways to promote and enhance campus safety. The building-wide retreat included 11 different stations and hands-on activities, including a lab station where participants were tasked with safe chemical storage (pictured above), learning what to do in an active shooter situation, seeing how UDPD dogs work to find explosives, extinguishing a live fire in a fire pan, understanding how to use automated defibrillators for CPR and more.

—Karen Roberts, AS90, 21M  
Photo by Evan Krape

## UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE MAGAZINE

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FROM OUR

# PRESIDENT

## TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE, TOGETHER

An intellectual intersection ... a vibrant source of knowledge, innovation and service to others ... a dedicated community of students, scholars, explorers, artists, entrepreneurs, idealists, world-changers and more—so many apt descriptions of the University of Delaware.

One of the most inspiring characteristics of UD is our success in working together to transform bold ideas into far-reaching impact. Our shared accomplishments over the past several years provide multiple examples of this. In 2023, we opened the new FinTech Innovation Hub, where UD and its partners are creating exciting financial-technology solutions that help disadvantaged families access the tools they need to break the cycle of poverty. Through our key role in the new Mid-Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub, we are advancing UD's leadership in developing the research and workforce around this sustainable energy source for the planet.

Here at UD, we not only learn *with* each other, but also *from* each other. Everyone—from our youngest students to our oldest alumni, on campus and around the world—plays an essential role in redefining our culture of collaboration with renewed vitality. At the new Center for Intercultural Engagement, our

students are making new connections—embracing both unique and shared perspectives—to achieve their common goals.

As we look ahead to 2024 and beyond, our potential is limitless. We are excited to open Building X, the interdisciplinary science facility now rising at the heart of campus, which will transform our teaching and research in human disease, neuroscience and human behavior, and quantum science and engineering. Also on the horizon: developments in biopharmaceuticals, human-centered artificial intelligence, business, the arts and humanities, athletics and much more.

Recognition of our excellent academic programs and student experience continues to grow nationwide and globally, and none of this would have been possible without the collected efforts of thousands of Blue Hens like you. My wife, Eleni, and I are deeply grateful for the hard work and support of every member of the UD community throughout 2023. We wish you an inspiring year ahead filled with peace, health and happiness.

Dennis Assanis, President



# ON THE GREEN

News  
from campus  
and beyond



KATHY F. ATKINSON

## TOP RANKED...AGAIN

The University of Delaware has once again ranked among the nation's best universities.

*U.S. News & World Report* placed UD 76th in the country and 36th among public institutions (up from the previous year's rankings of 89 and 38, respectively). In the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)/College Pulse 2024 Best Colleges in the U.S.*, UD ranked 86th.

Both news outlets have made significant updates to their methodology. The *WSJ* has shifted their rankings to prioritize learning environments, career preparation, graduation rates and starting salaries. *U.S. News* has also placed greater emphasis on outcomes like graduation rates for underrepresented groups and college graduate earnings, as opposed to previous ranking factors like alumni giving and class size.

Information gathered for the Class of 2022 shows 94% of UD graduates are employed or pursuing further education within six months of commencement.

Beyond its national rankings, UD was recognized by *U.S. News* for affordability (109 in Best Value Schools, compared to 135 last year); advancement opportunities (333 in Top Performers in Social Mobility, compared to 418 last year); and

veteran support (45 for Best Colleges for Veterans, compared to 56 last year). UD is also among the top 76 colleges that have a commitment to teaching undergraduate students in a high-quality manner.

Long recognized for its academic excellence, UD's chemical engineering program remained in the top 10 nationally, ranking fifth overall. Along with chemical engineering, several individual undergraduate academic programs were highly ranked in the 2024 edition of *U.S. News*, including:

- **Best Business Programs:** 84 out of 523
- **Best Computer Science Programs:** 82 out of 554
- **Best Economics Programs:** 99 out of 309 (new ranking category introduced in 2024)
- **Best Engineering Programs Whose Highest Degree is a Doctorate:** 50 out of 208
- **Best Nursing Programs:** 112 out of 656
- **Best Psychology Programs:** 67 out of 542 (new ranking category introduced in 2024)

Earlier this year, *U.S. News* ranked 22 UD graduate programs among the nation's best, including 10 in the top 50. 🐦





## NEW CENTER OPENS

UD's new Center for Intercultural Engagement (CIE) opened this fall on the second floor of the Perkins Student Center.

Established as part of the University's five-year Advancing Racial Equity and Inclusion Plan, the CIE serves as a physical space "to serve and uplift the growing community of Blue Hens whose identities are historically underrepresented and marginalized within higher education," says Division of Student Life Vice President José-Luis Riera. "Here we are in fall 2023, seeing that vision become a reality with the dedication of this center."

The CIE includes an ablution station, all-gender restrooms, food and supply pantry, interfaith meditation and prayer room, and a Clothing Coop, which offers free professional attire and UD-branded gear for students in need. The space also serves as a hub for many registered student organizations. 🐦

## A HISTORIC VISIT... 2.0

In September, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo visited UD for a lively discussion with UD Biden Institute Chair Valerie Biden Owens, AS67, 18H.

During the event, Raimondo, the former governor of Rhode Island, reflected on her time as a Rhodes scholar, a transformative experience that "teaches you to not be so closed-minded."

The importance of study abroad became a recurring theme, as the Secretary's visit echoed a historic, 1920s visit by then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. With his support—and understanding that global citizenship is vital to global commerce—the nation's first study abroad program was established at UD one century ago.

From society to science, UD continues to innovate. Prior to her talk, Raimondo toured the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL), a public-private partnership headquartered at UD with a mission to expedite and improve the manufacture of large-molecule medicines made from living cells, including insulin, monoclonal antibodies, cancer medicines, vaccines, cell therapies and gene therapies. She also visited research facilities at UD's Ammon Pinizzotto Biopharmaceutical Innovation Center. 🐦



## PREPARING THE CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE

Hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe, and the U.S. Department of Energy is working to accelerate its use as a clean energy source and as a means to decarbonize heavy industry, transportation and energy storage.

UD will now play a leading role in hydrogen-related workforce development efforts via the Mid-Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub (MACH2), selected by the Energy Department in October to receive up to \$750 million in funding through the historic Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs program.

MACH2 will encompass a network of hydrogen producers, consumers, local connective infrastructure for hydrogen deployment, and the education and training needed to develop the region's clean energy workforce. UD will lead the higher education component, along with Cheyney, Rowan and the University of Pennsylvania.

MACH2 was one of seven hydrogen hubs chosen. In stiff national competition, MACH2 ranked among the most pro-labor and greenest hubs in the nation, according to the Delaware Sustainable Chemistry Alliance, which brokered the proposal and involved industries, academic institutions, local governments and community partners from across Delaware, southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.

"Collaboration is the key to success in strengthening our region's economy and advancing sustainable energy sources for the future. The University of Delaware is proud to lead MACH2's higher education workforce development initiatives in partnership with Cheyney, Rowan and Penn," says President Dennis Assanis. "Working together, we will provide new educational and research opportunities for our students and grow our region's skilled workforce for the high-paying clean-hydrogen jobs of today and the future." 🐦

—Tracey Bryant



EVAN KRAPE

Prof. Yushan Yan is pictured above left working on hydrogen fuel cell technology with Stephanie (Stevi) Matz, EG23PhD.





PHOTOS BY KATHY F. ATKINSON

# A NEW GEM IN UD'S INNOVATION NEIGHBORHOOD

Ah, the good old days. You'd earn your pay, get a paycheck, deposit it, wait until it clears, write a check to the plumber, put it in the mail and wait for the plumber to cash it days or weeks later. That's how personal finance worked not so long ago.

Financial technology—fintech for short—is revolutionizing the industry, bringing the power of data science and computer engineering to bear on financial services in unimagined ways, and presenting new challenges for data security, regulation and policy development.

Today, you can pay the power bill from your phone, at 4 a.m., still in your pajamas, no stamp required. You can use the same phone to invest in the stock market, accept instant payments for walking a client's dogs, send donations to help with disaster relief, check out the deductible on your insurance policy and transfer credit card balances to an account offering zero percent financing.

UD's expansive new facilities, opened this fall, support the strategic work of scholars and researchers at the six-floor FinTech Innovation Hub, located on UD's Science, Technology and Advanced Research (STAR) Campus. About half the



space is devoted to UD-based work, while the other half is home to fintech-related startups and companies that draw on fintech or want to do so: data analytics firms, software developers and financial services.

"The research and innovation at this new hub will expand Delaware's legacy of national leadership in financial services," says President Dennis Assanis. "It also opens new space for education, giving our students access to a highly collaborative ecosystem and preparing them for great jobs and future success. And it puts UD and the state at the forefront of promoting

equity in financial services and health."

This past fall, the job-search website Indeed.com listed more than 1,900 available fintech engineering jobs, more than 22,000 cybersecurity-related jobs and more than 220,000 data engineering-related jobs. Meanwhile, almost 6 million households in the United States had no checking or savings account at a bank or credit union in 2021, according to a national FDIC survey.

Expanding access and helping new businesses launch are goals of the Fintech CAFE (Center for Accelerating Financial Equity)—a nonprofit organization that opens in 2024 and will offer funding and connections for enterprising new startups.

"It's very exciting," says UD's Tracy Shickel, associate vice president for corporate engagement. "This is going to change people's lives in a good way." 🐦

—Beth Miller



*The FinTech Innovation Hub has two new co-directors: Rudolf Eigenmann (left), distinguished professor of electrical and computer engineering in the College of Engineering, will oversee research. Carlos Asarta (right), professor of economics in the Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics, will oversee education and outreach.*





EVAN KRAPE

## LET THEM EAT CAKE

Move over, chips and soda. A new “Cake ATM” at the Trabant University Center sells decadent, Hoboken-fresh slices from Carlo’s Bakery, owned by famed Cake Boss and current Blue Hen parent, Buddy Valastro.

A gift to UD, the machine sells five different flavors and serves as a hands-on project for hospitality management students, who manage inventory, rotate stock, examine sales analytics (Does chocolate sell better when placed on the top shelf? When is the best time to have a sale?), and much more.

The cakes are designed to stay fresh for at least 10 days, but they sell out much sooner, according to Sheryl Kline, deputy dean of the Lerner College of Business and Economics.

“The vending business is important,” she says. “It’s great to give our students such a unique opportunity to learn by doing.” 🐦

## COMPETITIVE EDGE

Are men more competitive than women? When it comes to negotiating salaries, new UD research suggests they might be.

Consider this study by Associate Management Prof. Dustin Sleesman, who recruited more than 950 people to participate in a simulated salary negotiation. The group was evenly divided by men and women, and everyone knew the pay range—along with information on a current employee’s salary. Some were told that this employee had fewer qualifications than they did, some that the qualifications were about the same, and some that this employee was more qualified. There was also a control group, in which participants didn’t get any salary information.

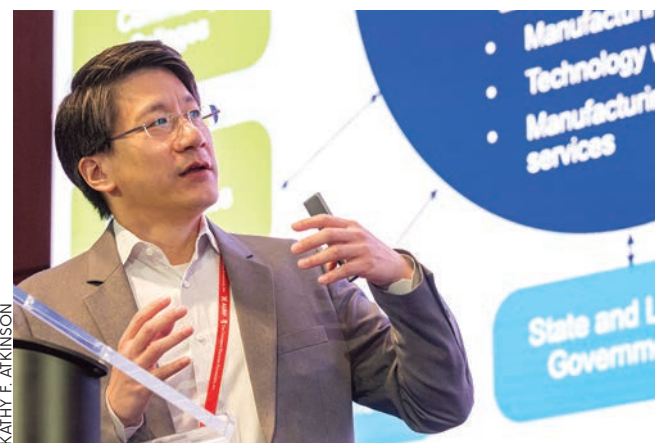
In the control group, men asked for nearly \$17,000 more than women. Participants with salary information for a less qualified or similarly qualified employee asked for more money, and notably, the gender gap virtually disappeared. But male participants who knew the salary of a more qualified employee still asked for higher salaries than women—roughly \$5,000 more.

“Men tend to be aggressive when they feel that their masculinity is threatened,” says Sleesman, noting that some pay transparency information can trigger their competitive instincts. “Well-intentioned efforts to promote pay transparency could unintentionally perpetuate the gender gap because of what information men and women tend to focus on and react to.” 🐦



## UD HOSTS GLOBAL CONFERENCE

UD’s Science, Technology and Advanced Research (STAR) Campus is a shining example of how university-anchored ecosystems can help power the state’s economy, bolster business creation and innovation, and foster workforce-development and student success. Fittingly, STAR Campus was also the site of the 2023 international conference of the Association of University Research Parks, which brought more than 245 global leaders to Newark, Delaware, this fall. AURP visitors had the opportunity to tour leading-edge facilities in biopharmaceutical manufacturing and fintech. They also learned about corporate-university connections like UD’s Spectrum Scholars program, collaboratively developed with JPMorgan Chase to provide workforce pathways for students with autism. Today, more than 3,000 people work at STAR Campus, the site of a former Chrysler automotive plant. Of the site’s 272 acres, more than 10% has been developed—and UD is just getting started. 🐦



KATHY F. ATKINSON

UD's Kelvin Lee addresses AURP conference attendees.



# OUT IN BLOOM

Freddy Krueger terrorizing Elm Street. The Blob wreaking havoc in Arborville. And... harmful algal blooms taking over bodies of water? As far as horror plots go, that third one is lesser known, but just as scary.

These blooms—a result of fertilizer or stormwater runoff—leach oxygen from oceans and rivers and produce toxins that accumulate in the food web, causing illness or death to marine species and humans. And climate change is making them worse.

To help quantify bloom occurrence and distribution across the globe, an international group of researchers—including UD Assistant Prof. Yun Li—recently used satellite observations to map daily coastal algal blooms between 2003–2020.

The resulting paper, which shows both where blooms are occurring and when they will occur—is a tool for policy makers shaping conservation efforts and fishery management. 🐢



# ROCKING SCIENCE

To explain the origins of life on Earth, UD scientists are searching under the sea.

Deep within the North Atlantic Ocean is an underwater mountain called Atlantis Massif. Here, when rocks in the Earth's mantle interact with saltwater, a reaction occurs that produces simple organic molecules—molecules used by microbes to build a sustainable environment, sans sunlight. It's widely believed that life on Earth emerged from an analogous process—and it's possible that Atlantis Massif could be fueling the earliest forms of life.

So, onboard the JOIDES Resolution research vessel, doctoral candidate Kuan-Yu Lin, EOE24PHD, recently sailed to the Atlantis Massif. Over the course of two months, he and a research team drilled a record-breaking hole: 1,268 meters into the Earth's mantle. They also recovered 886 meters of rock to study.

According to Prof. Jessica Warren, the results of the trip are “astounding”—and they’ve sparked excitement within the global scientific community. “This opens up years of research into the physics, chemistry and biology of the ocean floor.” 🐙



*Doctoral student Kuan-Yu Lin worked as an igneous petrologist on the cruise to the Atlantis Massif, describing core samples as soon as they came aboard.*

“This opens up years of research into the physics, chemistry and biology of the ocean floor.”

—Prof. Jessica Warren



# FOR THE LOVE OF TREES

Everyone has a tree story. Just ask UD Prof. Aaron Terry and recent graduate Amir Campbell, AS23. For a project called Seeding Newtopia, the pair have been interviewing people from various Philadelphia neighborhoods about their relationship to nature and trees. The stories take many forms: memories, myths, sometimes even recipes.

Funded by a multi-year grant from the Urban Field Station Collaborative Arts Program, the public arts wing of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, the project has one goal: Save the trees.

"We are opening a dialogue to imagine new and inclusive means of protecting and promoting nature for the benefit of all city residents," says Campbell.

Collecting the stories is an art in itself. At a spring festival in Philly's Germantown section, the duo worked from a handmade cart featuring a compact table where the researchers recorded participants' stories with video. A drumming troupe provided music as kids, adults and even some dogs and goats created woodblock printings on a tree stump.

After such events, the Blue Hens use qualitative research software to code and analyze each recording in pursuit of common themes. They hope to create an online, interactive map highlighting each story and the location where it originates.

Says Terry: "We are teaching our students to look at art broadly—and think about how their art can impact the world around them." 🐦



MARK CAMPBELL

## MAY THE COURSE BE WITH YOU

Christina Carroll, EG24, is up to par.

In August, the senior electrical engineering major and women's golf team member competed in the 2023 U.S. Women's Amateur Championship, the leading golf tournament in the U.S. for female amateur golfers. She is the only Blue Hen in UD history to qualify.

While she did not advance to the match-play phase of the event, held at the Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles, Carroll called the experience "amazing."

"It's been great meeting different people from around the country and around the world," she said between rounds. "These are the best amateur players in the world, so it's been really cool to see their game, too."

Traveling to compete is old hat for Carroll, a native of Bear, Del., since the two-season sport at UD regularly requires leaving campus for tournaments. This means organization has been key to her college success.

"Golf is a big commitment, and so is being an electrical engineering major," she says. "It's really taught me to prioritize my time. It's a lot, but I love doing both." 🐦





## BONING UP

If you've ever worried about osteoarthritis, take heart. There may be hope for preventing the disease.

We've long known that the debilitating condition, affecting more than 32.5 million Americans, occurs when there's a breakdown of articular cartilage, responsible for cushioning the ends of bones. Now, Assistant Biological Sciences Prof. Justin Parreno has discovered that a protein called adseverin helps keep this cartilage healthy. It does so by regulating an important component called F-actin—a type of shield against cartilage stressors.

Current treatments for osteoarthritis include either surgery or pain management. But these findings may open doors to therapeutics targeting the protein. They may also unlock solutions to other musculoskeletal tissue problems.

For Parreno, a longtime athlete, this is personal. "It's partially serving myself," he jokes. "I know I'm going to get osteoarthritis." 🐦

## UNDERSTANDING HPV

Blue Hens are shedding new light on the most common sexually transmitted infection in the world: human papillomavirus, or HPV—the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide.

Recent UD research has confirmed the presence of 25 distinct HPV types in Nigeria. About half of these types have the potential to cause cancer, while others result in sexually transmitted infections such as genital warts.

Professor Sam Biswas, the lead investigator and a professor of medical and molecular sciences, oversaw the research, which involved obtaining samples and subjecting them to next-generation DNA sequencing.

The breakthrough underscores the necessity for region-specific vaccines. The currently prevalent HPV vaccine, Gardasil-9, guards against nine cancer-causing HPV types in the U.S., leaving six out of the 25 Nigerian HPV types unprotected.

Meanwhile, additional research from UD's epidemiology program has found that American women with disabilities are less likely to receive recommended routine cervical cancer screenings using HPV tests.

Nationwide, just over 50% of women with disabilities adhered to American Cancer Society guidelines for cervical cancer screening using HPV testing, Assistant Prof. Tarang Parekh discovered. And women with multiple disabilities or cognitive disabilities have an even higher likelihood of not receiving the advised cervical cancer screening. 🐦



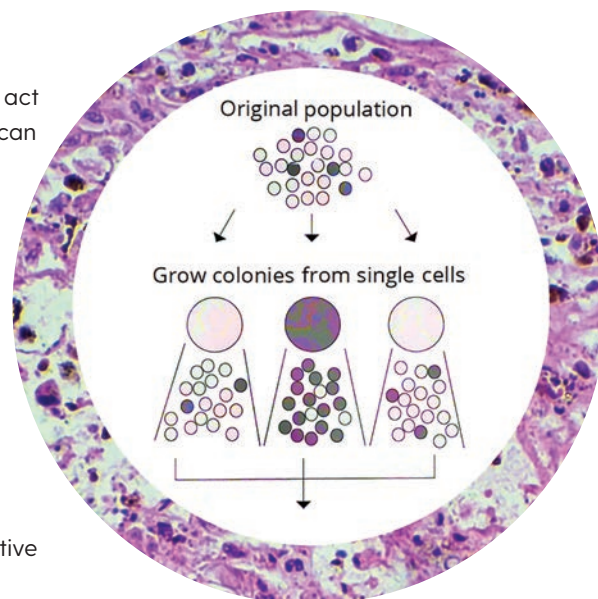
## RESIST NO MORE

Siblings born to the same parents and raised in the same household can look and act vastly different. Cells are like this, too—the same type living in the same environment can turn out differently. This diversity can lead to disease, infection—even drug resistance.

Armed with \$2 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health, Prof. Abhyudai Singh is developing computational tools for understanding the mechanisms behind specific cell states within cell populations. As an engineer, computational scientist and modeler, Singh doesn't do laboratory experiments. But he has several collaborators both locally and across the world who are generating data for him to model as part of this study. Specifically, he wants to know how cells go from being identical... to antibiotic resistant.

"When cancer cells are hit with chemotherapy, we get 'lucky survivors'—a small number that always survive," Singh says. "We want to know how this happens and why."

Once scientists understand the process, they'll be better equipped to design effective therapeutics: "This is the bigger picture." 🐦



# GOING THE DISTANCE

*UD students provide peer mentorship to Florida runner with rare brain tumor.*

On a warm Florida morning in February 2018, Allen Roberson opened his eyes. With blurred double vision, he managed to run a cross-country race, even setting a personal record.

But doctors would soon discover a rare, mixed-germ cell tumor in his brain that would require six surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation and extensive physical and cognitive therapies.

Despite all he's been through, Roberson, 21, remains optimistic. "I'm here and thankful for the journey," he says.

He's still running. And he just became a certified medical assistant, thanks to a little help from Blue Hen friends some 865 miles away.

As part of a service-learning project, three students from UD's top-ranked physical therapy program volunteered to tutor Roberson on his academic journey at Daytona State College—something he wanted to achieve to give back to the medical community.

Adwaita Bhagwat, HS25DPT, Sewina Yu, HS25DPT, and Kaitlyn Welsh, HS26DPT, connected with Roberson over Zoom and were introduced to the Florida runner through UD Associate Professor Ellen Wruble. She had met Roberson virtually through her volunteer work with national nonprofit Keep Punching, which seeks to prevent and eradicate brain cancer.

"When I heard he was a brain cancer survivor, and he was willing to put in the effort to get his certification, I wanted to help him," Bhagwat says.

Some sessions focused on studying, while others were spent shooting the breeze.

"We reshaped bad days back into good days," Roberson says. "The push of support from my peers gave me the confidence to keep going; their help has been life changing."

It's a shared gratitude.

"Allen encourages me to focus on the good, spend more time with family and have a positive mindset," says Welsh.

And while they've never met in person, they developed an unbreakable bond.

"Our students laughed and cried along with Allen and dealt with the ups and downs of life together," Wruble says. "Allen showed them what daily courage looks like, and our PT students learned when life throws you a curveball, you must pick yourself up and try again." 🐦

—Amy Cherry



CHRIS BOYLE/DAYTONA BEACH NEWS JOURNAL



ASHLEY BARNAS

After receiving life-saving care, Allen Roberson (above) decided to become a certified medical assistant. For academic tutoring and mentorship, he turned to UD doctoral students Sewina Yu, Adwaita Bhagwat and Kaitlyn Welsh (Yu and Bhagwat pictured at left).



# Shanghai's Somatas



By Megan M.F. Everhart  
Illustration by Kailey Whitman



## A UD-born musical explores an obscure World War II story and the unifying, healing, “soul-saving” power of music.

It's a little-known story of World War II history: the time 20,000 European Jews fled Nazi persecution and settled in Shanghai, China. With little to no possessions of their own, many refugees earned wages through the one intangible, imperishable relic that remained—their knowledge. In the 1930s and '40s, some Jewish refugee musicians began giving music lessons to Chinese children, an education that launched the country's dedication to and excellence in classical music, which endures almost 100 years later.

UD music Prof. Xiang Gao is a third-generation Chinese musician who has dedicated his life and career to connecting people between the East and West through the unifying power of music. But even he had never heard of this remarkable history. It was only after a 2018 visit to the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, located in the city's former Ohel Moshe Synagogue, that the UD composer and concert presenter realized, “This story needs to be shared globally.”

Gao's quest to do so marks his largest creative project to date—*Shanghai Sonatas*, a full-scale Broadway-style musical that explores the relationship between a Jewish refugee and his young pupil, and how this connection brought the two communities together.

“Music is not just light entertainment; it's a soul-saving pursuit,” says Joyce Hill Stoner, a material culture professor trained in musical theatre, who wrote the lyrics for the *Shanghai Sonatas*, alongside Gao, who composed the music, and book writer Alan Goodson, who developed the storyline. The team drew on their own differences to create the compelling story. “This is very personal to me as a Jew and someone who has known Holocaust survivors,” says Goodson, “but I would never go into a project like this without Chinese collaborators.”


A cosmopolitan city, Shanghai in the 1930s was home to expat communities from around the world, with a vibrant nightlife including theatres, opera and jazz clubs. *Shanghai Sonatas* reflects this melting pot with songs written in various musical styles, from American musical theatre to 1930s jazz and klezmer to Peking opera.

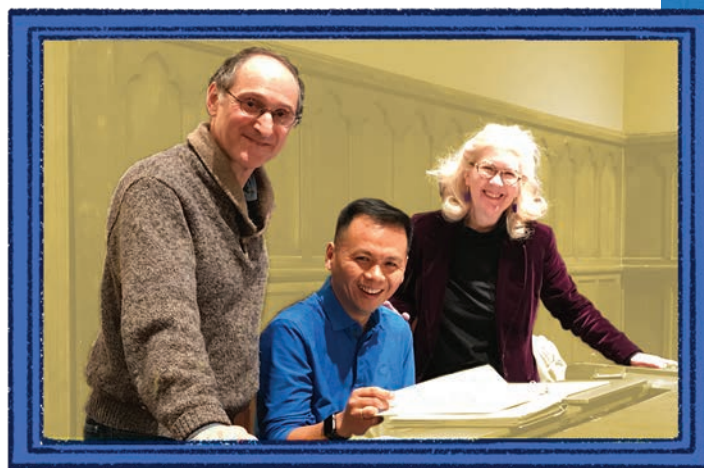
In true unifying power, the production has resonated with audiences of all ages, experiences and backgrounds, including the late Holocaust survivor and Shanghai refugee, Betty Grebenschikoff. Speaking with UD concert attendees, she recalled how her German friends pushed her, insulted her and threw mud at her. In China, under exceptionally difficult circumstances, Grebenschikoff found new community, and hope.

UD's Master Players Concert Series first presented *Shanghai Sonatas* as a staged concert event during its 2019–2020 season. From that initial performance, the musical has been expanded, rewritten, workshopped and produced across the country.

After a well-received concert version in Los Angeles earlier this year, the team spent time finalizing their most recent draft, one that is ready for a fully staged musical production that could find life at a regional or non-profit theatre, or even a Broadway stage.

“This is a story of belonging,” says Gao. “The horrors of humanity stem from a lack of education and connection. That's why artists have a strong and urgent mission to educate, to connect, to share important messages and strengthen our understanding of each other. That's what we're doing here.”

Audiences can learn about upcoming performances at [shanghaisonatas.com](http://shanghaisonatas.com). 



Writer Alan Goodson (left), composer Xiang Gao (center) and lyricist Joyce Hill Stoner (right)




# Finding their True North

Blue Hens discover wonder, adventure and  
a surprisingly robust alumni community in Alaska

*By Diane Stopyra*

N





**D**eep within the Alaskan wilderness, with no place to live and \$50 to his name, Steve Halloran, AS80, went searching for a job. He told an operations manager at Denali National Park—where rugged beauty stretches across six million acres—that he would happily perform grunt work in exchange for a place to sleep and the occasional shower. He was twice turned away before the boss finally relented, offering him \$2.50 an hour as a housekeeper in Denali hotels.

Perhaps this manager had doubts about Halloran's ability to survive in the last frontier. Here was a communication major who'd grown up in Wilmington, Del., a kid accustomed to strolling the Georgian brick pathways of UD, just 25 miles from his childhood home. On the one hand, picking up and moving to Alaska with no savings and no plan may have been a bit... wild. On the other hand, Halloran is a Blue Hen.

Graduates of UD have all the right ingredients for survival in the Land of the Midnight Sun. They are bold. Resourceful. Pathologically curious. And they embody a sense of adventure that—like the alpine tundra of Glacier Bay—cannot be tamed. Today, nearly 100 alumni are scattered across cities and islands, fjords and forest, bound by a shared appreciation for their college years—the period when, so many say, they became Alaska strong.



“You can take the Blue Hen out of Delaware—even to the far reaches of North America,” Halloran says. “But you can never take Delaware out of the Blue Hen.”

Consider David Frey, EHD79. For this Pennsylvania native, Alaskan daydreaming began in high school, when he wrote the state’s commerce department requesting information about a potential move after graduation. In return, he received a flier printed with bold, block letters: DO NOT COME. Turns out, construction of the trans-Alaskan oil pipeline had triggered a Gold Rush-style stampede of migrant workers seeking their fortune. So Frey decided to bide his time—and hone his sense of adventure—at UD.

He stepped outside his comfort zone in myriad ways: refereeing campus basketball games, participating in student government. And he convinced Halloran—the roommate with whom he’d been randomly placed; the roommate who’d never traveled west of Harrisburg—to do the same. During one spring break, the fast friends thumbed it to Myrtle Beach and back. And, thanks to a domestic student-exchange program, they hiked through the lush greenery and majestic waterfalls of Eugene, Oregon, their wanderlust stoked by riveting Alaskan travel stories shared by savvy locals.

After graduation, the duo made separate treks to the last frontier. Frey spent the early part of his career working as a counselor at a facility for juvenile offenders, and he organized what was supposed to be a one-day hiking trip for four kids under his purview. But several miles up the Granite Tors Trail, which climbs more than 3,000 feet, fog descended, and the

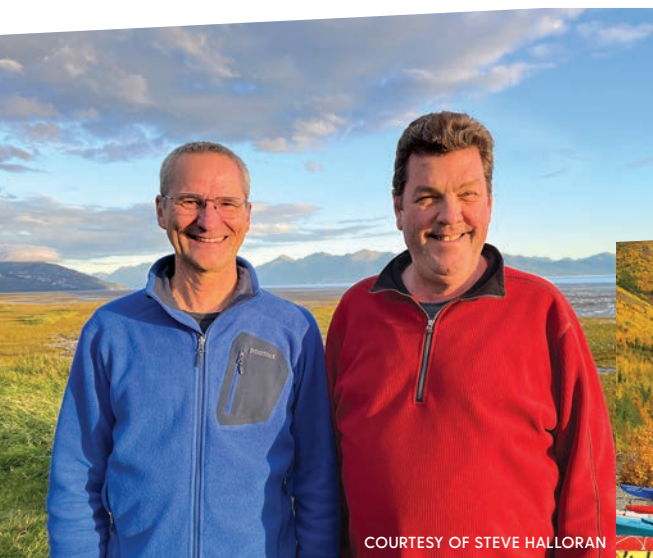


group lost sight of their snowy path. Without any hope of getting back by dark, and with no tent or sleeping bags, they were forced to spend a rainy night amidst towering spires of molten rock. While the youth facility staff feared the worst, and Frey’s wife organized a search party, the unlikely pack built a fire, shared candy bars for dinner and sang old Beatles songs under the moon.

“We experienced the camaraderie that you can only develop in an emergency situation,” says Frey, now a tour guide operator based in Fairbanks. “What should have been a miserable night turned into one of the most memorable experiences of my career.”

Then there’s Lukas Bercy, EG10, who once worked on quality control for a multinational chemical company in Massachusetts, then a biotech company in Seattle. One day, when he’d had enough of gray cubicles in windowless rooms, “I decided I wanted to go fishing.” In 2015, Bercy and his then-girlfriend, now wife, picked up and moved to Kodiak Island in the southwest, where the Blue Hen launched a saltwater fishing and hunting charter company. Now—when he’s detangling lines from a propeller or fixing the broken heater of his 43-foot vessel on a snowy day at sea—he regularly leans on the problem-solving skills gleaned while studying chemical engineering at UD.

“My education taught me that the simplest solution is usually the best solution—whether you’re working in an office or on the open ocean,” he says, adding: “I am so grateful to be in this place.”



COURTESY OF STEVE HALLORAN

From left: Dave Frey, EHD79, and Steve Halloran, AS80; Eklun Lake; Lukas Bercy, EG10, with wife, Tasnah, and daughter, Kailia.



NICOLE GEILS, VAA



COURTESY OF LUKAS BERCEY



# Thinking Twice About Ice

Humans need ice. Not to cool our cocktails—to survive. Arctic sea ice maintains the Earth's energy balance. If it disappears, the planet becomes scary and unpredictable. It's imperative that we monitor the frozen stuff, but several factors (massive size, constant movement, remote location) have historically made that tricky. Enter engineering Prof. Chandra Kambhamettu, who's spent the last 20 years partnering

with institutions—including the University of Alaska, Fairbanks—to advance sea ice analysis. His satellite imagery helps researchers determine where to establish ice-measuring expeditions in Alaska and beyond. And, for better mapping of movement and topography, Kambhamettu built the first camera capable of shooting 3-D images of sea ice. Members of his team have taken three-month research cruises

to the Arctic in 2012, 2013 and 2015, gathering invaluable data—like coded photos of polar bear footprints—to better understand a changing habitat. Most recently, he earned a grant worth more than \$500,000 from the Office of Naval Research to continue analysis that will aid in the building of computer models for predicting extreme weather events. Says Kambhamettu: "This project is close to my heart."

Problem solving is a facet of everyday life in Alaska. Just ask Double Dels Barry, AS80, and Elizabeth Neal, HS80, who report watching their grandson extra closely as he toddles around their backyard in the town of Eagle River, should yet another 1,200-pound moose come ambling through. Or ask William Kanour, ANR80M, a retired commander in the U.S. Navy who spent a portion of last winter so snowed in, he tunneled his dogs through the door of his Nikiski home and hired an excavator to remove 10-foot banks from his driveway.

But for every hardship, there's an equally compelling draw: northern lights that transform the sky into an otherworldly canvas. Majestic ice caves that feel like an aquamarine dream. Fulfilling work opportunities that connect a person to their one true calling.

At least, this has been the case for Monica Shah, AS00M. The University never taught the California-born Blue Hen how to warn off a charging grizzly bear by firing a shotgun into the air—that she learned on her own while conducting archaeological surveys along a rugged inlet in Alaska's remote Shelikof Strait. ("I really thought I was going to die.") But Shah's time in UD's world-class art conservation program did stoke a passion for preservation work—even in the face



REBECCA COOLIDGE, VAA



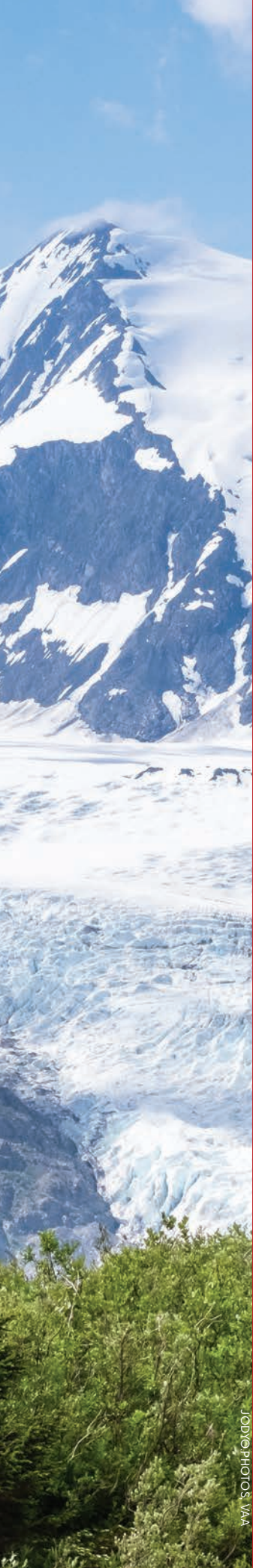
COURTESY OF MONICA SHAH



FRANK FLAVIN, VAA

From left: The Iditarod sled dog race; Monica Shah, AS00M; and the thriving city of Anchorage.





JODYE PHOTOS VAA

of 700-pound obstacles. Today, she serves as deputy director of conservation and collections for Anchorage Museum, where she helps Indigenous tribes connect with their ancestry.

“There is so much culture and diversity of thought within the communities of Alaska, and it’s so rewarding to steward the material culture that belongs to these groups,” she says. “I have my dream job, and I don’t think I’d be here without my UD mentors.”

As for Halloran, after he paid his dues serving as a housekeeper in Denali hotels, he spent 20 years working his way up the ranks—waiter, bus driver, transportation manager—until he took the reins from his boss as head of park operations. Following that, the Anchorage-based Blue Hen applied his communication degree to serving the state in numerous ways: director of tourism for the town of Skagway, board member for an Anchorage visitors bureau and, now, tour guide for a string of companies. Ask him about guiding people through roiling, class-4 rapids, or that time he witnessed a David Attenborough-worthy standoff between a caribou and a wolf, and he’ll tell you his career is all about connecting people—to adventure, to fresh air, to a sense of freedom in the great outdoors.

“A lot of folks have very regimented lives,” he says. “They get up, go to the same office every day. It’s a privilege to see wonder on their faces.”

Today, with the encouragement of his former roommate, Halloran is turning his attention to connecting the alumni who call Alaska home. So far, bringing the group together for happy hour drinks in Anchorage has proven tricky. The state is twice the size of Texas, so travel is difficult, especially during inclement weather—a snowstorm nearly torpedoed the initial effort (read: two attendees). But Halloran hopes to plan another get-together sometime in the future, and he’s confident his peers will embrace this newest adventure.

After all, he says, it’s as clear as water in the famed Egegik River: Blue Hens in the wild are always up for a challenge. 🐔



It’s the nation’s northernmost, westernmost AND easternmost state (that’s because the 180th meridian passes through Alaska’s Aleutian Islands). In other words: This is a massive land of extremes. Navigating this place can be overwhelming. For advice on how to narrow down a travel itinerary, *UD Magazine* spoke with those who know best: the Blue Hens who live there. Read on for vetted recommendations on everything from dining to ziplining. As for what to pack? You can’t go wrong with blue and gold.



Flickr

## DAVID FREY, EHD79:

**WHAT:** Experience the village of Hoonah, home to the Indigenous Tlingit community.

**WHERE:** At the base of White Alice Mountain on Chichagof Island in Alaska's panhandle in the southeast, 30 miles west of Juneau.

**WHY:** To get the full Alaskan experience, you'll want to visit at least one remote village, and this is a super friendly place to begin. Your server may even join you for lunch!

**INSIDER TIP:** Check out one of the world's largest ziplines.

**WHAT:** Take a ride on the Alaska Railroad.

**WHERE:** There's no bad place to board, but Frey recommends the stretch between Anchorage and Seward.

**WHY:** "You can go miles and miles



without seeing evidence of human life," he says. "Just gorgeous views as far as the eye can see."

**INSIDER TIP:** Get there early. Boarding occurs 20–30 minutes before departure.

**WHAT:** Feel awed by Denali National Park.

**WHERE:** Interior Alaska.

**WHY:** Home to Mount McKinley, North America's tallest peak, plus a slew of adventure activities (dog sledding, flightseeing, ATV riding ), this is Alaska's most popular land attraction.

**INSIDER TIP:** Take the Tundra Wilderness tour, or do your own backpacking trip (Frey recommends venturing near—or even through—the Toklat River). Just pack bear spray.

## DELLA HALL, AS13M:

**WHAT:** See the inside of Castner Glacier.

**WHERE:** About three hours south of Fairbanks.

**WHY:** Because it's not just a glacier; it's also an ice cave you can enter (with caution) during winter months.

**INSIDER TIP:** Getting to Castner requires a 2.6-mile hike; consider bringing microspikes for walking on the ice.



## GEORGE BORDERIEUX, EG65:

**WHAT:** Peruse the Anchorage Museum.

**WHERE:** Downtown Anchorage, on the traditional homeland of the Eklutna Dena'ina.

**WHY:** Whether you're interested in art, science, ethnography or ecology, there's no better place to learn about Alaska's many histories. "It's a treasure," says Borderieux.

**INSIDER TIP:** Don't miss out on the 39-seat planetarium.

## STEVE HALLORAN, AS80:

**WHAT:** Hike the 33-mile Chilkoot Trail.

**WHERE:** It stretches from the ghost town of Dyea, in southeast Alaska, to Canada's Lake Bennett.

**WHY:** Considered the world's longest outdoor museum, you'll pass hundreds of artifacts left behind by tens of thousands of people who crossed this way through Alaska's coastal mountains in order to seek their fortunes during the Gold Rush of the late 1800s.

**INSIDER TIP:** Expect a multi-day (and multi-weather) hike.



## WILLIAM KANOUR, ANR80M:

**WHAT:** Explore the small city of Homer.

**WHERE:** On Kachemak Bay, on the Kenai Peninsula.

**WHY:** It looks like a postcard, it boasts an artsy downtown, and it just so happens to be the halibut fishing capital of the world.

**INSIDER TIP:** Order the seafood.





EVAN KRAPE

# FROM CITIES

# TO SPACE



★ By Dante LaPenta, AS12M

Hydroponic food production  
offers glimpse into the future of food



It's a task as massive as it is urgent: feeding more than eight billion humans, including 330 million Americans. The amount of planning, land and labor required is virtually impossible to comprehend, though the pandemic helped shine an alarming spotlight on strained food supply chains and empty grocery store shelves.

Here in Newark, UD faculty and students are tackling this global challenge by approaching food systems with a critical and innovative lens. One key opportunity emerging in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources is hydroponic food production, better known as the science of growing food without soil, with less water and with higher plant yields.

The practice can provide locally grown food year-round and bring healthy food to underserved communities. Imagine a city with no arable land for miles. Growers there don't need to till soil; they can instead place hydroponic systems in underused buildings, rooftops and brownfields.

But how to create the next generation of hydroponic experts?

At UD, students turn to the tutelage of Qingwu (William) Meng, assistant professor of controlled-environment horticulture and instructor of the popular Hydroponic Food Production course. In the hands-on class, students build hydroponic systems, grow (and harvest) crops, manage nutrients, analyze economic viability, collect data and examine societal benefits like urban food challenges.

"I think hydroponics is a big part of making our food systems more sustainable," says Ian Kelly, ANR24, who took Meng's introductory course. In addition to learning how to build a nutrient film technique system (in which students grow plants by maintaining a nutrient solution coating around the roots), Kelly also credited the class with reinforcing concepts in teamwork and problem solving.

It's the kind of education that has students clamoring

for more. In Spring 2024, Meng will launch a new advanced course for both undergraduate and graduate students: Environmental Control of Plant Growth and Advanced Hydroponics.

"We go deeper into what a professional hydroponic grower needs to know," explains Meng. "Students use cutting-edge technologies—lighting, environmental sensors and control systems—to optimize greenhouse production and research, growth chamber plant research and indoor vertical farming. They'll also learn how to apply this knowledge to future graduate research or professional careers."

Outside of the classroom, Blue Hens have founded a new registered student organization, the Hydroponics Club, aimed at showing the UD community what's possible in the world of hydroponics.

The club uses UD greenhouse space to grow leafy green plants and other delicious and nutritious crops. And now others will enjoy the fruits (and leaves) of their labor. The students built a partnership with UD Dining Services that includes aeroponic towers in UD dining halls for all to see and eat. As the students build up their production volume, the group continues the partnerships built by Meng with local restaurant Peach Blossom and on-campus legend Vita Nova.

Advised by Meng, the club is led by students like Kelly, Evyn Appel, ANR25, and Shem Elias, ANR23M, and has attracted interest from across the University, including those majoring in environmental science, environmental engineering and public policy.

"As an organization, the Hydroponics Club provided a platform to talk about sustainable food production with an audience wider than I could have hoped," says Appel, an Honor's student who plans to research policy issues around hunger and agricultural illiteracy. "We've just scratched the surface of its potential."



**By 2050, we will need to increase food production by about 70% to meet the projected calorie needs of the global population if we continue with business as usual.**

*"We go deeper into what a professional hydroponic grower needs to know," says Prof. Qingwu (William) Meng, pictured on the opposite page. One of his students, Shem Elias, ANR23M, pictured above, is working to increase ginger yield in his home country of Tanzania.*



Elias, meanwhile, came to UD by way of Tanzania through the Borel Global Fellowship, a scholarship program that equips African citizens with research and higher education opportunities in the U.S.

As a newly minted Ph.D. student working with Meng, Elias has explored ways to improve the yield of ginger in his homeland. There, the highly coveted medicinal and spice crop yields an average of 2.5 tons per acre, compared to the global average, which ranges from 10 to 30 tons in per-acre production.

"I anticipate perfecting my technical knowledge of controlled-environment horticulture and urban agriculture," says Elias, whose work will focus on helping producers and growers cut down costs associated with hydroponic food production and enhance profitability.

Another Meng mentee is Tommy Kramer, ANR24, who conducts research in UD's Indoor Ag Lab. He's honing his hydroponic craft, learning to diagnose plants' nutrient deficiencies, an interest that began by studying how to best grow strawberries under artificial light (LEDs).

Beyond food is flora. Kramer and Meng recently collaborated on finding the optimal lighting strategies to achieve the most rapid and robust flowering of ornamentals like petunia, snapdragon and coreopsis plants.

"A lot of what we know about growing food crops hydroponically is built upon decades of research on growing floriculture crops in greenhouses," Meng explains.

The stakes are high. If researchers can crack this next-generation farming on Earth, it might help humans colonize space, where soil isn't an option.

In the final frontier, hydroponically grown produce faces daunting challenges, including extreme environmental stressors like radiation and microgravity, and a lack of light (an essential component in turning a seed into a mature plant, as any

viewer of Ms. Frizzle's *Magic School Bus* will recall).

That's where Meng and company will boldly go forth with novel research. As a recipient of NASA's Early Career Investigation grant, the UD professor will investigate light optimization for growing food in space. Specifically, he'll

**Globally, 70% of water usage goes towards agricultural production, largely due to unsustainable irrigation practices.**





examine how changing light conditions over time can optimize lettuce productivity and nutritional quality under superelevated carbon dioxide and low relative humidity.

And more grants are on the way. Meng has earned a New Innovator in Food and Agriculture Research Award from the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research and is working on an Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture Program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

With increasing interest in growing food hydroponically on campus and across the country, UD is expanding its hydroponics capabilities. On top of the existing equipment in on-campus greenhouses, the ground floor of Townsend Hall now boasts lab space for hydroponics and controlled-environment crop production. Armed with an array of colorful and carefully selected LED lights, Meng's team will find ways to reduce costs for indoor hydroponic growers.

As technology improves and knowledge evolves, expect to see sustainably minded Blue Hens across the hydroponic growing arena, conducting crucial research and leading private industry ventures.

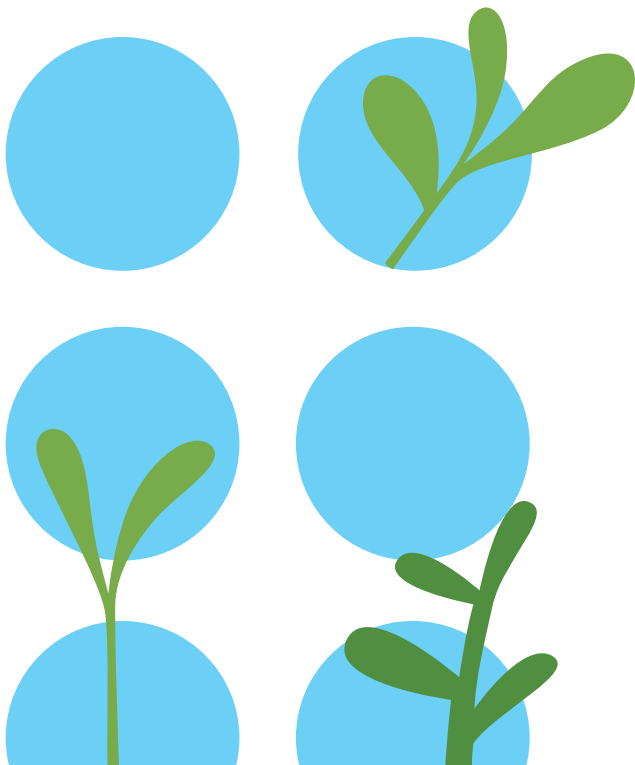
Sounds like it's time to get your fork ready. 🐔

**Currently, 38% of earth's non-frozen land is used for growing food.**



PHOTOS BY EVAN KRAPE AND KATHY F. ATKINSON

PHOTOS BY KATHY F. ATKINSON, EVAN KRAPE AND MONICA MORIAK





# UNAPOLOGETIC CHANGE

**OPERATING AT THE FRAUGHT INTERSECTION OF POLICING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE,  
WENDY GARCIA, AS04, IS OUT TO CHANGE THE WORLD.**

By Diane Stopyra

On a humid September morning in New York City, Wendy Garcia begins her day like the working mother she is. She wakes at 5:45 a.m. and streams an exercise video from a celebrity TV trainer. (“Only 25 minutes!”) She then packs two school lunches—ham and cheese sandwiches with pickles, tomato, ketchup and mayo—and kisses her kids goodbye.

Later, Garcia, AS04, power walks to a meeting with fellow NYPD executives at One Police Plaza—a place where, you might assume, it’s prudent to check those tender instincts at the door. Even the headquarters building, with its brick exterior and brutalist architecture style, reminds passersby of a long-accepted maxim: You have to be tough, hardened even, to make it among New York’s finest.

But Garcia—whose office boasts a book of poetry, a mini fridge stocked with coconut water and a small placard that reads “boss lady” in a swirly font—has never cared much for the status quo. Taking a call as she turns a corner along Park Row, she laughs for no particular reason. (“Veggie wrap,” she says into the phone. “I only have 10 minutes for lunch today.”) She laughs when a scribbling reporter asks for the topic of her meeting—that’s classified. And she laughs as she wraps her arms around the officer walking toward her. This isn’t a close friend; just an acquaintance who sometimes works security at the headquarters parking lot. That doesn’t matter. Garcia is a fan of hugs.

It’s a surprising characteristic, perhaps, for someone who’s earned the right to a hardboiled view of life. As Deputy Commissioner of Equity and Inclusion, a civilian position, Garcia operates at the socially and politically fraught intersection of policing and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). Her job is to create and evaluate strategies throughout the department to ensure an impartial, transparent and discrimination-free environment for all members of the force and, by extension, the community. Within the paramilitary structure at the core of the NYPD, 41-year-old Garcia ranks above 56,000 officers, reporting only to the Police Commissioner. And she’s an outlier in her field. In an organization that’s 30% female, she’s the first Dominican woman to occupy the position.

Pressure? A safe assumption. But Garcia has been preparing for this role since her days as an international relations major at UD, where she acquired tools you cannot find on a police duty belt. Her time as a Blue Hen prepped her for the demands of leadership in a lightning-rod field: “That period helped shape me,” she says. “The best thing I did was attend the University, and I thank God every day that was my path.”

Garcia grew up in Washington Heights, a northern Manhattan neighborhood then labeled by *The New York Times* as “crack epidemic central of America.” But Garcia recalls







# “I realized not everyone lives the same.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WENDY GARCIA



**... I wanted to know why my mother worked three jobs and still had less, why our reality was so far removed. I made myself my own project. I took the time to understand my life.”**



her childhood with nostalgia. At the time, she didn't know the one-bedroom, 700-square-foot apartment she shared with her immigrant single mother qualified as small. She didn't know she belonged to an underrepresented group. She didn't know she was poor.

Then, two years into her high school career, Garcia moved to Delaware (her mother had fallen in love with a man in the area). In this new, middle-class neighborhood in the town of Bear, most other kids were alabaster-skinned. (“What ARE you?” demanded one nosy girl on the first day of school. “Black? White? Everyone is talking about it.”) The district was adequately funded; the houses boasted three, maybe four bedrooms—sometimes even a basement.

“I realized not everyone lives the same,” Garcia says. “I wanted to know why my mother worked three jobs and still had less, why our reality was so far removed. I made myself my own project. I took the time to understand my life.”

Garcia enrolled at UD, where she encountered opportunities to interrogate society's class and racial divisions. As a member and eventual president of HOLA, the Hispanic student organization, she visited area high schools and community centers to encourage kids from underrepresented demographics to apply to UD, and she helped first-generation students decipher the higher ed ecosystem. Garcia requested meetings with University leadership to discuss issues facing the Hispanic student body and ways to improve school culture. And, as a harbinger of things to come, she organized meetings between local police officers and Wilmington's urban youth, to build a greater sense of community.

In her academic life, Garcia spent three months in Central America, translating Spanish for Prof. April Veness and helping to research the migration patterns of Guatemalans to Delaware, as well as the barriers to acculturation upon arrival. She secured an internship with Senator Tom Carper, BE75M, O8H, learning how to effect change on a legislative level, followed by a job with the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition. She regularly set up her office on a Newark city bus, where she educated underprivileged minority women on health-related issues and listened to life stories that touched on recurring themes: hard work, little pay, scant resources. The job stoked a passion inside Garcia—or maybe something more profound.

“I'd say it's a calling,” she says. “The older I get, the more I realize: I didn't choose equity work; this work chose me.”

Following graduation, Garcia set out to make her home city a more egalitarian place. She served as an immigrant research analyst for the nonprofit Rockefeller Foundation, deputy director of the Manhattan Borough President's Northern Manhattan Office, and director of community outreach and partnerships for the city's Department of Youth and Community Development, where she managed contracts with 40,000 nonprofits that benefited millions of young people. Most recently, she served as chief diversity officer for Manhattan's fiscal watchdog unit, the Comptroller's office. During her tenure, government agencies significantly increased their contracts with women and minority-owned businesses—from \$1 million to \$9 million in seven years.

By the time NYPD came knocking, Garcia's resume was formidable. *MUJER*



# WELCOME TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS

VISITORS ENTER



DUFFY HIGGINS

magazine, the Spanish version of *People*, had listed her alongside the Pope and Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor as one of 10 Hispanics impacting the world. Still, this was February 2022, not even two years since the murder of George Floyd—an event that exacerbated tensions between police and the Black Lives Matter movement. A growing contingent called for dismantling the police system. Could anyone make inroads during such a turbulent time? Garcia's colleagues attest: She did so immediately.

"She's a machine," says one sergeant working in NYPD's joint operations center, where 7-foot screens stream flight patterns, incident reports, and a live feed of Times Square. (For safety reasons, *UD Magazine* is not permitted to print officer names.) "The big ideas you think would be impossible to get off the ground, she makes happen. It's been incredible to watch that change in motion."

Since joining the force, Garcia has established lactation rooms for mothers in all precincts, and she's designated spaces for religious practice and meditation. She's built a mentoring program that provides officers from marginalized communities the opportunity to connect with more senior members for guidance on climbing the NYPD ranks. And, in under nine months, she's established a Women's Institute that provides 100 female members of the force per year with specialized training on leadership skills, plus resources for navigating the challenges that disproportionately affect women in blue.

**"I've learned that you can't be good at all things at all times. At any given time, you have to congratulate yourself for the thing you are getting right."**



# “Most change is uncomfortable.”

**Do it anyway. Do it wrong if you must, and improve it later.**

**Make unapologetic change.”**

Garcia doesn't develop programming in a vacuum. At least twice monthly, she accompanies officers on patrol throughout New York City. She's there when they reunite lost children with their parents on the subway; she's there where they open the door to potentially life-threatening situations. She sees when everyday heroes save the day, and she sees when everyday humans need help unpacking biases or blindspots. All of this informs the department-wide training sessions she conducts to advance cultural understanding.

“Most change is uncomfortable,” Garcia says. “Sometimes, you need to take the plunge anyway. There will always be three or four naysayers: *We've never done this before; we don't have the right tools; it's not the right time.* Do it anyway. Do it wrong if you must, and improve it later. Make unapologetic change.”

It's not an easy task. And Garcia is reminded of that every time she experiences what she calls “wide-eye syndrome,” the incredulous faces of strangers at any

given function—people waiting for the deputy commissioner to arrive, only to discover the deputy commissioner is already there: young, female, Dominican. Most of the time, Garcia can laugh it off, but she does cop to moments of self-doubt. Like that time she first experienced the gravitas of sitting at the deputy commissioners' table, located in the NYPD equivalent of the situation room—the youngest woman to claim a seat here. (“I remember thinking: I hope I do my ancestors proud.”)

For Garcia, as with so many working moms, the pressure is exacerbated by duties at home. “I've learned that you can't be good at all things at all times,” she says about the days she misses a swim meet or forgets the pickles on a ham and cheese sandwich. “At any given time, you have to congratulate yourself for the thing you are getting right.”

Later that same afternoon, Garcia power walks to yet another classified meeting—her fourth in a row. She hasn't cracked systemic racism or sexism in the last eight hours. Tomorrow, people in New York City and around the world will still be failing, hurting, harming, abusing.

But Garcia still smiles as she talks, still radiates warmth as she navigates the cold steel gates of One Police Plaza. Perhaps this is just the deputy commissioner's nature: positive in the face of a daunting mission. Or perhaps she's managed to zero in on another, equally reliable fact about tomorrow: People will still be working and trying—to understand, to change, to improve, to heal. And perhaps someday her office of equity and inclusion will become an unnecessary fixture of the past.

“Is it weird to hug this much?” Garcia asks, extending her arms to another of her 56,000 colleagues. “Other people might think so, but this is us. We're just human beings—human beings in uniform.” 🐦



COURTESY OF WENDY GARCIA



DUFFY HIGGINS





UNIVERSITY MEDIA SERVICES

# TO PROTECT AND SERVE

**ON CAMPUS AND OFF, UD'S POLICE DEPARTMENT HELPS KEEP THE COMMUNITY SAFE**

It had been years since Wendy Garcia, AS04, stepped foot on campus. But when the University of Delaware Police Department (UDPD) invited her to serve as keynote speaker at their recognition ceremony in June, the Blue Hen quickly agreed.

"I spent four years watching the way these officers lead with empathy," says Garcia, deputy commissioner of equity and inclusion for the New York City Police Department. "I saw how important the Department is not just to the University, but to the entire state of Delaware. I was proud to come back."

The annual event celebrates milestone achievements, like promotions and retirements, as well as above-and-beyond accomplishments exhibited by officers such as UD's Robert Pappa, recipient of the Lifesaving Award.

While driving into work this May, Pappa encountered a pile of crumpled clothing on Route 896 in Newark. As the police officer drew closer, he recognized the graphic scene for what it was: an unconscious man in his 50s or 60s who had been struck by a car near the Shell gas station. His leg was fractured; his head, severely wounded. In minutes, he would enter cardiac arrest.

Pappa flew into action. He turned the listless body over and, with the assistance of a Newark police officer, performed

chest compressions and maintained the victim's airway until paramedics arrived. When a panicked young driver came running to the scene—he'd been the one to hit the man, he told Pappa—the Blue Hen officer calmly instructed him on where to stand and look: "I didn't want this kid to be any more traumatized than he already was."

Then there's J Protz, AS07, and Patrick Ramone, AS07, recognized as 2023 Officers of the Year. When a 29-year-old



EVAN KRAPE

*Wendy Garcia, AS04, deputy commissioner of equity and inclusion for NYPD, delivers the keynote address at UDPD's annual recognition ceremony.*





EVAN KRAPE

student at a German university began cyberstalking two former Blue Hen classmates, these detectives spent years and countless late nights tracking down the perpetrator's IP addresses. In the process, they helped the FBI uncover another crime: The cyberstalker had also established five fictitious companies to defraud the U.S. government for \$1.4 million in COVID-relief funding. In May, UDPD flew to Germany for his extradition, and he's now in federal custody.

Master Corporal Shannon Hummel, one of several women to receive promotions this year, coordinates the Cadet program, which enlists 40 to 50 undergraduates each semester to patrol campus for hazards, serve as safety escorts and generally help build a bridge between the UDPD and the student body. Hummel is also an instructor with RAD, the Rape Aggression Defense classes that empower women on campus with self-defense training.

"I'm hoping to help change public perception of police," she says. "I'm not here to arrest people or ruin lives—I'm here to help."

UDPD is working with the national 30x30 initiative, which seeks to boost the representation of female recruits 30% by 2030. For now, Hummel, a woman and Asian-American, is a minority on the force. Yet, she says, "I've always felt welcome and supported. I had a baby in 2021, and when I needed a pumping room, my male sergeant emailed me right away to ask what kind of mini-fridge I wanted."

This spirit of community is a common motivator for members of the department. Many take on a mentorship role with student-run organizations. Recently, Chief Patrick Ogden, a former wrestler, led an effort to help the club wrestling team raise \$5,000 for new uniforms.

Excellence is a shared commitment, too. Earlier this year, Lieutenant Anthony Battle, AS16, became the sixth officer in UDPD history to graduate from the FBI National Academy, a prestigious honor reserved for less than 1% of all active law enforcement officers.

"We have students here from all over the world, and they all come with their own impression of policing," says Ogden. "We want them to see our officers as people they can turn to for help, advice or even friendship. We see ourselves as part of the educational mission, with members who think outside the box to keep our community safe." 🐦

**"We see ourselves as part of the educational mission, with members who think outside the box to keep our community safe"**

—Chief Patrick Ogden



# ALUMNI NEWS

## MEET THE UD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION'S NEW PRESIDENT

As a first-generation Blue Hen with little connection to UD after his 1984 graduation, **Bill Luzier, AS78, BE84M**, never dreamed he would one day lead a 177-year-old organization dedicated to strengthening UD's alumni community. "If you had told me then that I would become UDAA president, I would have thought you were out of your mind," he jokes now.

But a chance phone call from UD's Office of Development and Alumni Relations in 2011 sparked Luzier's interest. "I had virtually no recent contact with UD at the time," he says, "but I was open to the idea of reconnecting."

This conversation led to a meeting with the College of Arts and Sciences dean, who invited Luzier to join the CAS advisory council. The alumnus would later join the UDAA Board, serve as an executive mentor for Lerner students and help develop the CAS mentoring program (now the UD Career Mentoring Program).

As a Double Del with Betty Wilber Luzier, AS79, and proud parent of Julie Luzier, AS12, Luzier hopes to "make a positive impact on a school and community that has meant so much to me over the years."

Here, he shares more about his journey and vision.



EYAN KRAPE

### WHAT MOST EXCITES YOU ABOUT THIS ROLE?

Under the leadership of President Dennis Assanis, UD has achieved world-class excellence. But that excellence, experience and connection must not end at graduation. I want all alumni to enjoy their engagement with UD through rich, rewarding experiences.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THOSE EXPERIENCES?

We do a really good job in funding the Blue Hen Networks that hold events around the country. In 2006, UDAA supported eight events; 10 years later, 108 events. The importance of connections never goes away, and these events provide opportunities to connect and network.

### WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

We want to continue making membership (free and automatic upon graduation, by the way!) valuable for all graduates. We aim to bring additional value to our worldwide community and increase and strengthen our alumni connections with departments, professors, staff and University leadership.

### HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UDAA AND BROADER ALUMNI COMMUNITY EVOLVING?

We need to reflect on what we are doing as an organization, stop what is not valuable, continue what is and develop new ideas. The challenge is to deliver networking, career aids, continuing education and event experiences in a more personal way, enhancing connections between alumni across various stages of life. We aim to make the UDAA as best-in-class as UD itself. 🐔

Learn more at  
[udel.edu/alumni-friends/  
connect/udaa/](https://udel.edu/alumni-friends/connect/udaa/)

or connect with Bill Luzier at  
[alumni-association@udel.edu](mailto:alumni-association@udel.edu).



# 2023 ALUMNI ATTITUDE SURVEY RESULTS

Providing alumni with an enriching, lifelong experience is paramount to UD. To do this effectively, UD's Department of Development and Alumni Relations needs input directly from the source—YOU.

In early 2023, the University conducted an alumni attitude survey that provided valuable insights. Here are the results...

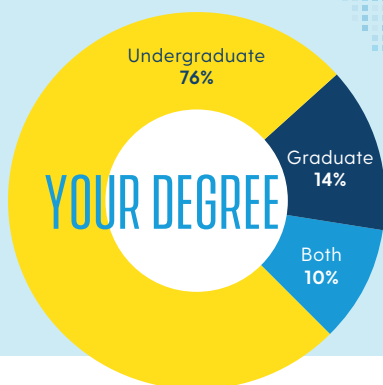
*Note: results are rounded to the nearest percentage.*

## WHO TOOK THE SURVEY

**4,365**  
respondents

## WHERE YOU LIVE

**73%** in Delaware  
**25%** out of state  
2% Undisclosed



**57%** Female  
**43%** Male

## GRADS BY YEAR

1950s 1%  
1960s 8%  
1970s 19%  
1980s 18%  
1990s 18%  
2000s 11%  
2010s 10%  
2020s 8%

7% Undisclosed

## YOUR UD PRIDE POINTS

**9.5 out of 10**

said their decision to attend UD was good or great

Go Hens!



## HIGHEST IMPACT ON YOUR OPINION OF UD

**84%**  
value of degree

**OTHERS WERE:**  
Campus Aesthetics  
History/Tradition  
Accomplishments of Students  
Availability of Scholarships  
A Diverse and Inclusive Environment

## TOP 3 THINGS YOU WANT



Opportunities to help students and alumni secure jobs



Ways to stay in touch to hear about news and events



Chances to host current students for job shadows and internships

# MORE, PLEASE

## WHAT YOUNG ALUMNI WANT

Young alumni, which includes Blue Hens within five years of graduating from UD with an undergraduate degree, are especially interested in:

- More communications about benefits and resources
- More invites to events
- More work done in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion space
- Activities and continuing education that help students and alumni secure jobs

## YOUR GREATEST UD INTERESTS

Respondents indicated that these UD programs or causes align the most with their own interests:



Athletics and Club Sports



Lifelong Learning



The Sciences and Arts

## WHY BLUE HENS GIVE BACK

54%

To make a difference for others

41%

To support the mission of the organization

21%

To receive tax benefits

Respondents could select multiple options.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Office of Development and Alumni Relations is evaluating how to incorporate feedback from the survey into the University-wide Alumni Engagement Strategic Plan, currently in development. Stay tuned for more in spring 2024.

In the meantime, keep an eye out for additional event invitations and communications about job shadowing, mentoring and internship opportunities.

To network with your peers and find the latest resources and events, visit [udel.edu/alumni-friends](https://udel.edu/alumni-friends)

### Questions?

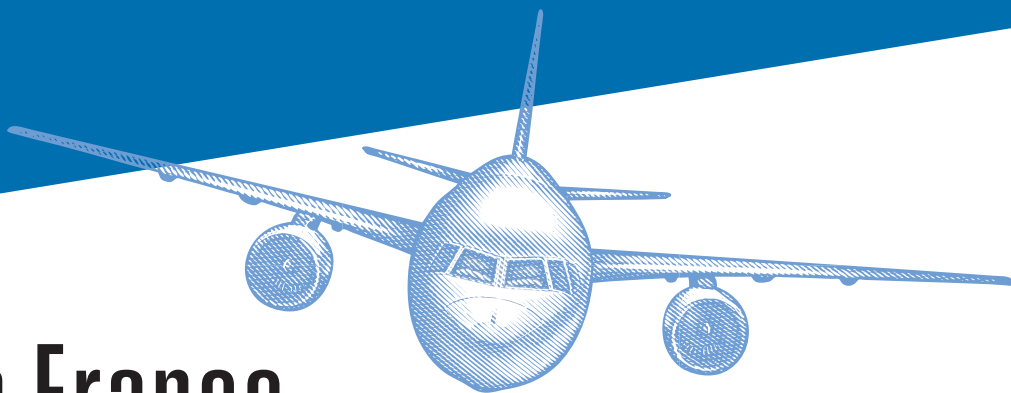
To view more of the stats from the survey, visit [udel.edu/alumni-friends/survey](https://udel.edu/alumni-friends/survey).

If you have questions about the survey and results or would like to provide additional insights into your UD experiences, feel free to reach out to us at [alumnet@udel.edu](mailto:alumnet@udel.edu).

# BLUE HENS FOREVER

## #BLUEHENSFOREVER





# Blue Hens in France

*Alumni travel to Normandy for a week filled with history, culture, friendship and food.*



Lauren Simone, BE95

They didn't have a time machine but, this past July, a group of intrepid alumni visited the past.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of UD's inaugural study abroad program—the first of its kind in the country—Blue Hens headed for Normandy, France.

These graduates, representing the Class of 1973 through the Class of 2005, followed in the footsteps of pioneering peers from 1923. They took in breathtaking scenery, toured historic architecture and, naturally, tasted gastronomic delights.

Here, Associate Vice President of Alumni Engagement **Lauren Simone, BE95**, shares blog entries highlighting some of the trip's standout moments (and standout macarons).

## JULY 2-3: HONFLEUR

*Bonjour, Honfleur!* Located along the estuary where the Seine River meets the English Channel is a charming town that served as inspiration to Claude Monet and other Impressionist painters. It's easy to see why: 17th-century architecture, cobblestone streets and quaint coffee shops... *magnifique!* Of course, we sampled the local macarons, caramels and biscuits before climbing Mont-Joli for a breathtaking view. **Linda Myrick, EG77**, past UDAA president, lived in France for about three years, so she was a big help

with any language barriers when it came to ordering food and making our way through town. The apple tart topped with locally made caramel from the restaurant Le Grenouille was especially divine!

#### JULY 4: ARROMANCHES AND OMAHA BEACH

For a detailed history of D-Day, we visited the Musée Arromanches les-Bains (the Landing Museum). How fascinating to learn about (and see remains of) the temporary floats from which Allied forces unloaded supplies and soldiers in the fight against Hitler. Omaha Beach was an equally sobering experience. The Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial here pays tribute to the 9,388 Americans who lost their lives during D-Day and subsequent battles. The average age of those buried: 24.

#### JULY 5: CHATEAU DU BEC AND MUMA

If you ever get the chance to spend time inside a 10th-century, spectacularly renovated castle, do it. This was our experience in La Havre, a port town on the other side of the Seine River. We walked the beautiful grounds, and even helped an on-site chef prepare a few items for a delicious feast (with champagne, of course) in the gourmet kitchen. With bellies full, we headed downtown to MuMa, the Musée Malraux of Modern Art for more of a visual feast: Impressionist paintings by Monet, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro and Boudin.

#### JULY 6: MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

About two-and-a-half hours from Honfleur is the spectacular Mont-Saint-Michel island and the abbey that perches atop it—by far one of the coolest places I've seen. The UNESCO World Heritage site—so designated because of its outstanding value to humanity—celebrates its 1,000th (not a typo) anniversary this year. From this former fortress/monastery/prison, we sent ourselves a postcard, just to see how long it takes to show up in Newark, Delaware.

#### JULY 7: LE MEMORIAL DE CAEN AND A CALVADOS FARM

On this day, the official anniversary of UD's pioneering study abroad program, we visited Le Memorial de Caen,

which highlights the happenings between World War I and II, the D-Day landings and the battle of Normandy. We then spent some time at a farm that produces Calvados, a world-class apple cider brandy—I made room in my suitcase for two bottles. From there, we visited Bayeux to see the masterpiece of Norman Gothic architecture, the Notre Dame Cathedral, and we saw the embroidered Bayeux Tapestry, a 229-foot-long tapestry made in 1077 depicting William the Conqueror and the battle of Hastings in 1066 through 50 different scenes.

#### JULY 8: AU REVOIR

All good things must come to an end. On our last full day, we hit the Saturday market in Honfleur, which offers meats, cheeses, clothes, bags, handmade wooden treasures, jams, caramels, breads, fresh fruits, vegetables, flowers and more Calvados. Afterwards, a few of us took a bus to the nearby beach towns of Deauville and Trouville, about 30 minutes away. I've had some pretty neat experiences over the last 18+ years of working at UD but this one takes the cake... or the Calvados. I'll forever be grateful. 🐔



## Opa! Olé! Blue Hens in Greece and Spain

The overseas magic continues in 2024 with trips planned to Athens and Kalamata, Greece, on June 21-30, and to Spain and Andalucía on Aug. 29-Sept. 6. Walk in the footsteps of the first Olympians or delight in the dancing of a flamenco performance. These are just some of the activities in store for the upcoming travels. To stay informed of these events—and possibly others on the horizon—visit [udel.edu/alumni-friends/connect/udaa/](https://udel.edu/alumni-friends/connect/udaa/) or email [alumni-association@udel.edu](mailto:alumni-association@udel.edu).



# BLUE HENS FOREVER—WHEREVER

From baseball games to car museums, river tours to Topgolf games, Blue Hens across the country are finding exciting ways to reconnect. To learn more about upcoming events in your area, visit [udel.edu/alumni-friends/blue-hen-networks](https://udel.edu/alumni-friends/blue-hen-networks).



In Baltimore, Blue Hens cheer on the Orioles.



In New York City, Blue Hens cycleboat on the Hudson River.



In Hershey, Pa., Blue Hens tour the Antique Automobile Club of America Museum.



In Los Angeles, Blue Hens "par-tee" at Topgolf.

**CALLING  
ALL ALUMNI  
& FRIENDS**

Share your reunion photos at [magazine@udel.edu](mailto:magazine@udel.edu) or by using [#BlueHensForever](https://twitter.com/BlueHensForever) on social media for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue.

## ALUMNI WEEKEND AND REUNIONS

Your favorite weekend is back! Save the date for May 31 – June 2, 2024, to celebrate Alumni Weekend (for all classes) and reunions for the Classes of 1999, 2014 and 2019. Registration opens in March. Learn how to become a reunion ambassador and more at [udel.edu/alumniweekend](https://udel.edu/alumniweekend).

# CLASS NOTES



1960s



**MARGARET (BARBALICH) DUDA, AS63**, of State College, Pa., published her sixth book and first book of poetry. Entitled *I Come from Immigrants*, the 122-page collection contains poems about her immigrant parents; her bilingual, bi-cultural life as the child of Hungarian immigrants; and meeting and losing her husband, **LARRY DUDA, EG61M, 63PHD**, 17 years ago. Duda, mother of four and grandmother of seven, is a Pushcart-prize nominee who had a short story on the Distinctive list of *Best American Short Stories*. She's also published numerous poems, short stories, articles, and five non-fiction books. For 10 years, she took travel photos for *The New York Times*, and she's traveled to 40 countries and 38 states. Her book is available from Amazon, Kelsay Books, Barnes and Noble, and mduda@ceinetworks.com.

**EDMUND H. SMITH, JR., EG63, 65M**, of The Villages, Fla., co-authored a book with his life partner, Jane Masterson, entitled, *Our Parkinson's Disease Instruction Manual*, designed

to help individuals, couples and family members learn how to continue to live a good life.

**First class:**  
Pyeritz was the first recipient of UD's Alexander J. Taylor Award for Outstanding Senior.



**REED PYERITZ, AS68**, of Wayne, Pa., received the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics. He co-founded the College in 1991 and served as its 2nd president. Pyeritz recently retired as the William Smilow Professor of Medicine from the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. He is a clinical geneticist who led many studies of families with hereditary cardiovascular diseases. Pyeritz also served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps during Operation Desert Storm.

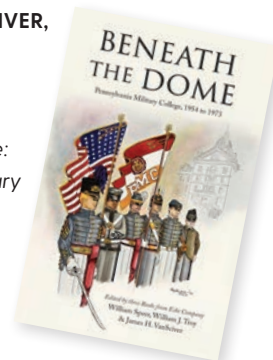
1970s

**SANDY LOBEL, EHD72**, of Coral Springs, Fla., received the 2023 Lynne Johnson Award from the city of Coral Springs for her exceptional service to her hometown. Lobel is a longtime member of the community involved government committee and also serves as a 60th anniversary ambassador for the city.

**JOHN D. BOYKIN, BE73**, of North Palm Beach, Fla., has retired as senior equity partner of the law firm Ciklin Lubitz after 37 years there as a trial lawyer. Boykin is licensed as a lawyer in New York and Florida and a certified public accountant who still represents some longtime clients. He plans to "wind down and actually retire in the next year or so—at least my wife hopes so."

**LISA GOTTSEGEN SELDOMRIDGE, HS76**, of Salisbury, Md., is the new interim dean of the College of Health and Human Services for Salisbury University. She brings to the role more than 20 years of leadership experience as chair of nursing, nursing graduate director, and founding director of the Henson Medical Simulation Center.

**JAMES H. VANSICVER, EHD77**, has published his seventh book, *Beneath the Dome: Pennsylvania Military College, 1954 to 1973*, a 400-page history that details three decades of student experiences.



**Let there be light:** During his time as an undergraduate, Smith was named a distinguished military graduate of the U.S. Army ROTC and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, assigned to the highly classified Army Security Agency, a part of military intelligence. Later, as a graduate student studying engineering at UD, he designed and built the University's first laser, before embarking on a career specializing in research, development and marketing of photonic components, equipment and systems. Today, he has eight patents.





**100 years of study abroad:** In the 1970s, Prof. Trudy Gilgenast's study abroad curriculum included German language, history, music, art and literature of the Baroque Period. Vienna was an ideal location due to the the flourishing of the Baroque style after the defeat of the Turkish siege in 1683

**RICHARD D. BOND, AS79**, of Newark, Del., and **DAKIN J. BOND, AS16**, of Wilmington, Del., have been recognized by their professional peers in *Delaware Today* magazine's 2023 Top Dentists. Father and son practice with Dental Associates of Delaware.

● **SUE HAENLEIN BRUBAKER, EHD79**, of Beaverdam, Va.; **MARY PAT FRAHER LARMAN, EHD77**, of Kent, England; Professor Trudy Gilgenast, of Wilmington, Del.; **ANNEMARIE O'DRISCOLL DUNN, EHD78**, of Collingswood, N.J.; **STEVE RAFFENSPERGER, AS77**, of Leola, Pa.; and **RICHARD BAUER, AS80**, of Excideuil, France, all studied abroad together as part of the 1975 Integrated Learning Semester, a pioneer study abroad program for UD led by Trudy Gilgenast, assistant professor of German, at the Austro-American Institute in Vienna. On June 22, 2023, they held a mini reunion, a spontaneous event and a "fun get-together as the group chatted about their adventures 48 years ago and the impact the semester had upon their lives and future decisions."



## 1980s

**LOUISE SATTLER, AS81**, of Los Angeles, Calif., was a keynote speaker at the World Autism Summit's virtual conference. Sattler is a longtime psychologist who specializes in working with deaf and autistic populations, and her talk focused on safety and communication.

**All that jazz:** Zinn spent all four years at UD performing with the University's Jazz Ensemble. He's pictured here alongside classmates and the great trumpet master, Dizzy Gillespie, who joined the group as a guest artist.



**ROB ZINN, AS81**, of St. Petersburg, Fla., has released his third album, *Anything Can Happen*. Zinn actively tours the country performing at festivals and clubs, as well as some international shows.

**JAMES PETRINO, BE82**, of Yardley, Pa., retired July 1, 2023, as chief financial officer for the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, capping off a 41-year career in government finance. Prior to joining the Bridge Commission in 2016, Petrino served as director of public finance for the state of New Jersey.

**SOHRAB FRACIS, EG83**, of Jacksonville, Fla., won Best Short Story (Fiction) from the International Book Award for his collection of short stories, *True Fiction*.

"There's a perception that government is just a bunch of bureaucrats—and there are. But I was fortunate to make a mark and feel like I was serving the public well."

**A good sign:** As owner of Signing Families, Sattler provides sign language education and support to families across the world. But her own interest in the topic began in UD's Pencader Residence Halls, after being impressed and inspired by her friend, **Kim Murray, BE81**.



**CORINNE M. LITZENBERG, EHD84**, of Forest Hill, Md., has received accolades for her 13th book, *L is for Lewes: An A to Z Maritime History*, which won first place in nonfiction history from the Delaware Press Association's 2023 Professional Communications Contest and honorable mention from the National Federation of Press Women. Litzenberg's books are all environmental and historic. Her next will explore the blizzard of 1888 and the surfmen of the Lewes Life-Saving Station.

**ROBIN WEITZ, AS84**, of Syracuse, N.Y., has spent nearly four decades building his career as a public relations writer in Los Angeles, mostly Beverly Hills, creating materials for a breadth of corporate, lifestyle and entertainment brands, from Fortune 500 companies to some of the best-loved celebrities in the world. Clients include Sony, Google, Dell, Netflix, Sandals/Beaches Resorts, Tommy Bahama, the United Nations Development Program, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and more. Talent clients include the likes of Adam Sandler, Gal Gadot, Melissa McCarthy, Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Lopez, Alanis Morissette, John Legend, Mariah Carey, Gene Simmons, Ziggy Marley and Weird Al Yankovic.



**ADAM ZUCKER, AS85**, of Blue Bell, Pa., received the Vista Award from Angel Flight East, an organization that coordinates flights on private aircrafts for individuals who need long-distance medical care. Zucker, an attorney and founding shareholder of Mudrick and Zucker, PC, served as past president of Angel Flight East.

**Rockin' out:** In his spare time, Weitz is lead vocalist and keyboardist for the classic-rock cover band *Wayback Daddies*. Since 2019, the group has played all over Southern California, including large music/arts festivals and the Los Angeles Marathon. Says Weitz: "Our band is distinguished by a dollop of tomfoolery, with me dressing up like Freddie Mercury, Elton John, Billy Joe Armstrong of Green Day, ZZ Top and more."



**ERIK SILLDORFF, AS88, 93PHD**, of Phoenix, Md., has published a biology textbook, *Mechanisms and Logic in Human Physiology*, for undergraduates.

## 1990s

**JOEL ALPERSTEIN, BE90**, of Owings Mills, Md., has been named chief financial officer for XP Health, a health tech startup focused on eye exams and eyewear.

**MICHAEL K. CHONG, AS91**, of Hoboken, N.J., has been selected as a 2023 honoree and recipient of the In-House Counsel Impact award for significant accomplishments and general excellence from the *New Jersey Law Journal*. Chong serves as general counsel to multiple privately held corporations based in the U.S. and abroad, where he works with corporate management in handling diverse legal matters.

**DEB (HUBBARD) NYLEC, EHD91**, of Frederick, Md., has co-authored an epistolary book, *From Michigan To Mekong: Letters On Life, Learning, Love and War*, which features a collection of her father's letters, written during his tour of Vietnam. The book won a bronze medal from the Military Writers Society of America.

**DAVE CHAMBERS, AS92**, of Smyrna, Del., is a marketing specialist with the Delaware Public Archives and an abstract expressionist painter whose work can be seen at davidwadechambers.com.

**DAMAN HARRIS, EHD96**, of Upper Marlboro, Md., has published his first book, *The Antiracist School Leader: What to Know, Say and Do*. He also celebrated his 27-year anniversary with wife **TRACIE (SMITH) HARRIS, HS96**, whom he met in the Christiana Towers.

## 2000s

**BRIAN KENT, AS00**, of Ambler, Pa., co-chaired the Perrin Conferences Sexual Abuse Litigation and Coverage Conference, where he spoke about the impact of non-disclosure agreements on victims of crime.

**PETER BAILEY, AS02**, of Hallandale, Fla., has been named one of the top-15 Living Legends of Culture in the St. Thomas – St. John District of the U.S. Virgin Islands by



Michael K. Chong, AS91



Dave Chambers, AS92



Brian Kent, AS00

**Words of wisdom:** Earlier this year, Chambers and **Nicholas Eveleigh, AS89**, returned to campus to speak with current art majors. "The main thing we wanted the students to take away was to never give up," says Chambers. "With persistence and determination, it is possible to make it as professional artists."







Lina Miller, EHD03

the 175th Emancipation Commemoration Committee. Bailey is founder and CEO of NiteCap Media, a multi-media content creation company.

**LINA MILLER, EHD03**, of Warminster, Pa., has published *Decode by Heart*, a book series for new and struggling readers centered on two characters, Jax and Ren. The project stems from Miller's classroom experiences teaching children how to read.

**DUSTIN SUTTON, AS03**, of La Jolla, Calif., has expanded the Black Commercial Real Estate Network (BCREN.org), which he founded in 2020 to improve representation and create a supportive community for fellow Black professionals in the industry, to include a mentorship program. He is also founder of Sutton Real Estate Advisors (SuttonREA.com), a commercial advisory firm that focuses on emerging technologies and sustainability.

**HENNA (MERCHANT) PRYOR, BE03**, of Landenberg, Pa., published her first book, *Good Awkward: How to Embrace the Embarrassing and Celebrate the Cringe to*

*Become the Bravest You*. Pryor is a workplace performance expert and global keynote speaker who completed two TEDx talks in 2022.

**LISA MANDRACHIA, HS04**, and **KYLE ANGLIN, AS12**, of Newark, Del., welcomed son William James on June 8, 2023.

**MELISSA HELLER, EGO5**, of Middletown, Del., and her brother, **JAMES PITTMAN, EOE07**, of Washington, D.C., trained to summit Mt. Rainier, making it 11,200 feet before weather derailed their ascent. The siblings plan to return in 2024.

**HEATHER BOYD, AS06**, of Drexel Hill, Pa., won a seat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to represent the 163rd Legislative District during a special election on May 17, 2023.

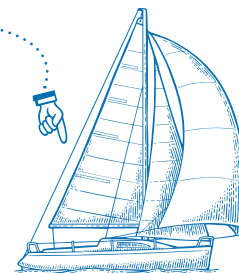
**ANNE CROWN CYR, AS06**, of Rehoboth Beach, Del., has published *Evergreen*, a love story with twists and turns. In addition to writing, Cyr is an artist whose work can be viewed at annecrownstudio.com. Two of her paintings were recently exhibited at the Peninsula Gallery in Lewes.



**LARRY GRIFFITH, EHD06M**, of Bowie, Md., has been promoted to executive vice president for programs and student services for the United Negro College Fund. Griffith previously worked at UD as director of admissions and assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

**ELIZABETH CHAMBERS-HICKMAN, AS07**, of Cherry Hill, N.J., is an associate at the law firm of Rawle and Henderson, where she works as a trial attorney, defending clients and insurance carriers in various types of liability cases.

**ALISON LYNCH, AS08**, of Santa Cruz, Calif., received the Henry L. Alder Award for Distinguished Teaching from the Mathematical Association of America. This award recognizes young faculty members whose effectiveness in teaching undergraduate mathematics is shown to have "influence beyond their classrooms."



**Ahoy:** As students, both Heller and Pittman participated in UD's Sailing Clubs. "We've always loved the outdoors," says Heller.



Larry Griffith, EHD06M

**Famous fans:** Pryor's book was endorsed by NFL Quarterback Russell Wilson and former *Harvard Business Review* editor Karen Dillon and received the 2023 Kirkus Star by Kirkus Reviews for Excellence in Writing.





Bride Dana Rathfon, EG08, 10M, celebrates with her favorite Blue Hens.



Morin Denise Stewart, AS09, and Caron Johnson, AS10



Double Dels Daniel Russel IV, BE10, and Amy Killian, BE12, and their Blue and Gold guests

**DANA RATHFON, EG08, 10M**, of Chambersburg, Pa., married Brandon Kohler on Nov. 12, 2022 and celebrated with her favorite Blue Hens.

**MATTHEW O'NEAL, AS08**, of Smyrna, Del., has been promoted to executive cruise director at Disney Cruise Line.


**ERIC JAMES BUCHANAN, AS09**, of Aledo, Texas, has been promoted to Lieutenant in the Fort Worth Police Department.

**MORIN DENISE STEWART, AS09**, of Randolph, N.J., and **CARON JOHNSON, AS10**, of New Brunswick, N.J., were married on Oct. 28, 2023.

national disasters. Kates works as senior business continuity advisor for Wawa.

**DANIEL RUSSELL IV, BE10**, and **AMY KILLIAN, BE12**, of New York, N.Y., wed on May 13, 2023, surrounded by Blue Hens.

**LAUREN BOND, HS12**, of Newark, Del., earned her master of science in nursing from Wilmington University and is a new member of the New Castle County Regional Alumni Club.

**BRIAN KERDASHA, BE13**, of Baltimore, Md.; **RON KERDASHA BE84**, of Baldwin, Md.; **RANDY CERCE, BEK83**, of Morristown, N.J. (holding granddaughter and "future Blue Hen" Lea Giacopelli, daughter of **TARA CERCE, EHD16**, 

and **MATTHEW GIACOPELLI, EG16**, of Morristown, N.J.); **CHUCK HERAK, EG85**, of Atlanta, Ga.; **JAMIE FERRARO, AS86**, of Madison, N.J.; **DAVE GONZALEZ, EG88**, of Dublin, Ohio; and (not pictured) **MIKE EPSTEIN, BE85**, of Riverdale, N.J., are UD tennis players who reunite every year to play and then attend the U.S. Open in Flushing, N.Y.

**ROXANA BUSTAMANTE, HS13**, of Teaneck, N.J., received her doctorate in nursing practice from Yale School of Nursing, where she successfully completed her project, "Implementing Prediabetes Screening During Hospitalization in an Internal Medicine Unit."



Justin Kates, AS10



Dakin Bond, AS16, and cousin Lauren, HS12, at a New Castle County alumni tiki cruise.

## 2010s

**KATIE BASS, BE10**, of Palmetto Bay, Fla., wed Adam Schick on Oct. 16, 2021, with many Blue Hens in tow.

**JUSTIN KATES, AS10**, of Wilmington, Del., was appointed to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Advisory Council, which advises the FEMA administrator on all aspects of emergency management for

**Blue Hen mentors:** Lynch credits UD Profs. Robert Coulter, David Bellamy, Terry Harvey and Kathy McCoy for inspiring her own teaching methods and practices.





**I'm just another  
Hen hangin' loose.**



**LEAH (VANDE POELE) FARELLA, HS14, 16DPT**, and **ROBERT FARELLA, EG14**, of Wilmington, Del., welcomed their first child, Natalie, on May 12, 2023.

**NICHOLAS, ANR16, 19M**, and **EMMA JOHNSON, ANR16**, of Newark, Del., were married in May at Terrain at Styers in Glen Mills, Pa.

**RACHAEL (PIORKO) TRASK, AS16**, of Nashville, Tenn., was recently awarded four awards from the American Advertising Federation for the marketing campaigns she created as the designer for The Orion Amphitheater, a brand-new music venue in Huntsville, Alabama.

**KRISTEN YOUNG, AS18**, of Fairfield, Conn., has been

appointed the first director of performing arts for MoCA [Museum of Contemporary Art] Westport. In this role, she will curate the Museum's performing arts experiences, foster collaborations with other music programs across the region and provide music education opportunities for constituents.

**RACHEL MULDERRIG, BE19**, of Newark, Del., has joined Belfint, Lyons and Shuman, where she works as an accountant in the firm's tax and small business practice group.

**HUNTER RIVERA, HS19**, of Newark, Del., and **MIA BARKEL, AS19**, of Hillsborough, N.J., were engaged on Nov. 23, 2022, at the Grand Canyon. The



Rachael (Piorko) Trask, AS16



Kristen Young, AS18



Rachel Mulderrig, BE19



couple met their sophomore year when both participated in Puppy Raisers of UD. 🐶



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# IN MEMORIAM

**ROLAND M. MILLS, HS51**, Aug. 3, 2023

**D. NICHOLAS VITALE, EG51**, May 25, 2023

**DONALD E. BARDO, EHD52**, July 23, 2023

**R. WILLIAM ANNONIO, AS54**, June 15, 2023

**PATRICIA EMMOTT CHAPPELL, AS54**, April 21, 2023

**GEORGE M. HARLAN, EG57**, Oct. 10, 2020

**DONALD C. CARSON, EG58**, Dec. 16, 2022

**RALPH T. TILLELI, EG59**, Feb. 28, 2021

**WILLIAM H. WALSTON JR., EG59, 61M, 64PHD**, Aug. 12, 2023

**DONALD G. SCHNETZER, AS62**, May 25, 2023

**HOWARD M. PECKHAM, EG65**, Oct. 4, 2021

**KENNETH C. SCHILLING, EHD66, BE74M**, Oct. 8, 2022

**GEORGE F. BROSKE II, AS70**, Oct. 14, 2022

**TIMOTHY D. O'BRIEN, EG71, BE78M**, Sept. 22, 2022

**WILLIAM B. LEWIS, EHD72, 76M**, March 15, 2023

**LINDA ROSE O'BRIEN, AS74**, Sept. 21, 2022

**DAVID R. FORREST, BE77**, June 14, 2023

**MORIS AMON, EG82PHD**, Oct. 10, 2022

**LEE CANNON ALEXANDRAKIS, AS88**, Nov. 19, 2022

**BETH L. MCGEE, AS88M**, June 4, 2023

**CREIGHTON H. MILLER, AS88**, June 15, 2023

**DAVID M. WOLFENDEN, BE88, OOM**, Feb. 21, 2023

## FACULTY AND STAFF

**MATT DORAN, AS09PHD**, *assistant professor of psychology*, Nov. 27, 2022

**CARL GERMAN**, *retired Cooperative Extension agent*, Aug. 23, 2023

**ROBERT HILL**, *professor emeritus of theoretical physics*, May 11, 2023

**VYTAUTAS 'VIC' KLEMAS**, *founding director for Center for Remote Sensing and professor emeritus of geography*, April 24, 2022

**PAUL T. MCFARLANE**, *associate professor of sociology*, Oct. 17, 2022 🐦

## ERIC BRUCKER

**ERIC BRUCKER, BE63**, who served as an economics professor, department chair and dean of the Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics in the 1970s and 1980s, died Friday, July 28, 2023. He was 81.

Mr. Brucker's greatest joy was teaching. He always taught a course, even as a dean, and delighted in hearing from former students. He developed a course for Dean's Scholars, a small class thinking about big issues that gathered informally, often at his home. After retirement, he continued to teach, first at UD and then at UD's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

Mr. Brucker was also known for identifying a department or school's shared vision, empowering people to build better programs. While at UD, he enthusiastically helped create a summer reading program with discussion groups in the fall. Both faculty and staff led discussions with students—an innovation appreciated by staff who felt included and who brought different perspectives.

When participating in a Keizai Koho Center program in Japan,



Mr. Brucker often encouraged program leaders to deal with their labor shortage by tapping into the "other" half of their population: the women. When introducing the first computer lab in UD's business school, he discovered, to his delight, that the secretarial staff (mostly female) could teach the faculty (mostly male) how to use WordPerfect.

At the University of Maine, he worked with U.S. Secretary of State William Cohen to establish a Center for International Engagement. After he retired as dean at Widener University, the Pennsylvania Legislature awarded Mr. Brucker a grant to survey and report on elder health and wellbeing in the state. He later shared the results of this research with the AARP.

In his free time, Mr. Brucker was a devoted UD alumnus, a lifelong Phillies fan and an avid Duke basketball fan. He served as an elder in the Presbyterian Church. He enjoyed building model ships and reading widely. His best friendships were developed working with colleagues at universities and sharing ideas with book discussion groups.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions to: Brucker Scholarship in Economics, UD Development and Alumni Relations, 83 East Main St., Newark, DE 19716-2128 or American Kidney Fund, 11921 Rockville Pike, Suite 300, Rockville, MD 20852. 🐦

—Erica Brockmeier

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## A CONVERSATION with...

In an era of autonomous cars and luxury space capsules, railroads are sometimes misunderstood as a transportation system of the past. But this fuel-efficient, tech-powered industry is essential for 21st century life. Making sure it's safe and sustainable long into the future is **Prof. Allan Zarembski**, director of UD's railway engineering and safety program. A world-renowned expert on railway derailment and maintenance planning, he's a pioneer when it comes to applying big data for the betterment of the industry. All aboard!

---

### Were you a kid who played with trains?

Never model trains; only big ones when I grew up.

### Was this always the path, or were you... derailed?

I was in the aerospace industry, but when I went back to school for my doctorate in engineering at Princeton, the professor who supported me was conducting research funded by the Federal Railway Administration. I ended up doing a railway-related thesis. Then I spent more than 40 years in the industry.

### What development has you most excited?

Railways are a hub of tech. There are probably 30–40 different types of inspection technologies alone—like multi-million dollar, automated track geometry cars that measure dozens and dozens of parameters on the track.

### What are you working on now?

Using machine learning to look at hundreds of thousands of railroad cross-ties, to analyze how they degrade. I just finished another project with a Ph.D. student using machine learning on train-mounted camera images to look at the risk of landslides and rockslides.

### What's the most surprising cause of train derailment?

These are extremely rare—one every couple million gross ton miles. We have about 200,000 rail defects that are found and removed every year—we catch 99.999% of them. We're aggressively trying to figure out a way to detect the remaining .001%. People often ask me about the event in East Palestine, Ohio, in February 2023. That

was due to an overheated bearing that managed to overheat in the time it took to go the 25 miles between the track-mounted hot bearing detectors. No one died. Death by train is less likely than death by lightning strike.

### Why don't Americans travel by rail to the extent that Europeans do?

The U.S. operates close to 25 percent of the world's railroad traffic, and U.S. freight is widely considered the best in the world. But when most people think of railroads, they think of passenger service. For shorter distances, America's system is alive and well. But because we're so spread out, we've historically had issues with a long-distance operation. Most people—including me—would rather take a plane for six hours to get from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, than a train for three days.

### But... airline delays! Shrinking leg room! Will demand for high speed rail reach a tipping point?

We're already seeing movement in that direction. California is building its high speed rail system, and the private company Brightline just opened up high speed rail from Miami to Orlando, with plans for another between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Short answer: If California is successful in its implementation, we'll see other corridors opening up.

### You've traveled by train on six continents. Greatest adventure?

I was once called out to deal with a problem in Alaska, where snowbanks on either side of the railroad can be 10 feet high. I came upon a log on the track that turned out to be a moose leg.

### What does the U.S. railway industry look like in 50 years?

People will always need to transport goods, and railroads will continue as the backbone of that system. In 50 years, you'll be looking at a sophisticated, sustainable, energy-efficient industry that's on the edge of technology.

### Favorite fictional locomotive? Orient Express? Polar Express? Thomas?

*The Little Engine that Could*—I love reading it to my grandkids. 🐘

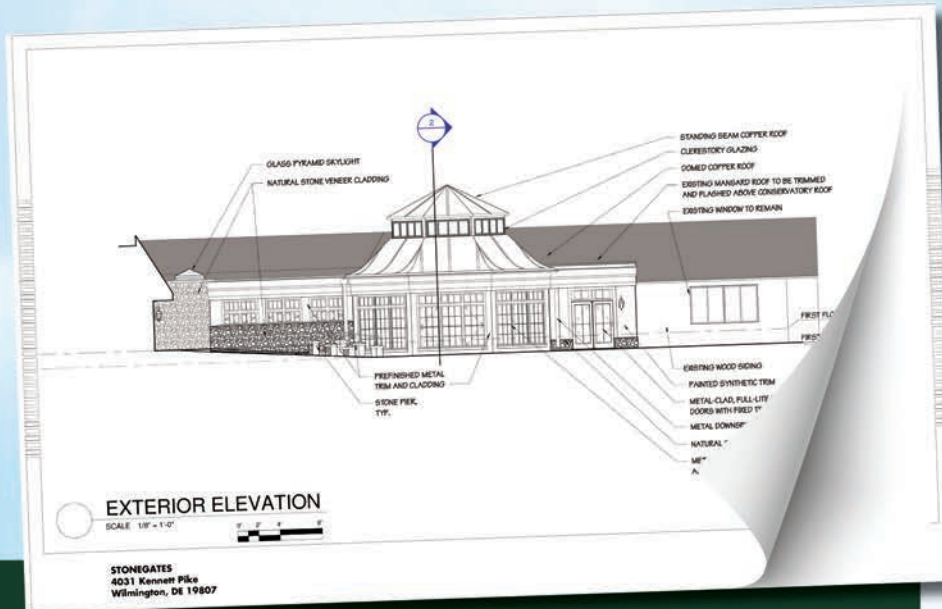


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# Warm Wishes to Blue Hens far and wide

