

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

Alan Shawn Feinstein College of
Education and Professional Studies

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Educators & Innovators

**GLOBALIZING TEACHER
EDUCATION:** URI is building
partnerships across the world

Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies

This newsletter includes the latest news and feature stories about our programs, faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

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Cover: GLOBALIZING TEACHER EDUCATION: URI is building partnerships with schools in West Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic, where global education and partnerships coordinator Colleen Rossignol photographed this mural.

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Q&A

with Danielle Dennis, Interim Dean

How would you assess your first academic year as the head of the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies?

In 2021–2022, I shared five goals for the academic year:

1. Improve college communication.
2. Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (DEI).
3. School of Education accreditation.
4. Providence Campus as an innovation incubator.
5. Setting strategic priorities.

Due to the development of a new URI strategic plan, I tabled the fifth goal so we can align to the new plan once we receive it. As for the other four, I believe we made great progress in each area.

Working with our marketing and communications team, we have developed a robust communication plan to roll out this year, with goals for timely information, transparency, and celebrating our community.

Faculty and staff across the college are engaged in several DEI efforts, many of which launched this past year and continue to grow.

Thanks to the work of the School of Education, all our initial and advanced licensure programs received full accreditation from the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation.

We made great strides with our Providence Campus in building and strengthening partnerships with the local community. There are big things on the horizon that I plan to share soon!

What do you see as the strengths of the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies and how will you build upon their successes? What areas need further development?

We have wonderful people in the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies, and I consider myself fortunate to work with our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. When one of your strengths is your people, you are off to a great start! Based on our recent accreditation

success, as well as our rising enrollment, it is clear our School of Education is doing excellent programmatic work. The School of Education is now looking to develop deeper partnerships with several school districts, specifically with more of our urban districts. In doing so, the School of Education will also be developing field experiences in new and exciting ways.

Our Providence Campus has great potential to evolve into an innovation incubator that conceives of higher education in more dynamic and nimble ways and brings in partners from across the state to learn state-of-the-art skills that URI is uniquely positioned to offer.

What are your plans to foster an atmosphere of diversity and inclusivity in the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies?

I have several and will focus on three for now. First, my priority is for us to engage in authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. Too often, initiatives in these areas are performative and can be more harmful than helpful. To this end, the second plan is to conduct a review of all DEI initiatives currently operating in the college and work to bring the leaders of those programs together to look for overlap and areas where they can support each other. Finally, as we look to our hiring plan for the next few years, I want to learn about practices that lead to both recruiting and retaining more diverse faculty and staff.

Take us back in time and share an anecdote about a moment from your undergraduate or graduate school years that sparked your interest in higher education leadership.

I had two incredible mentors at the University of Minnesota Duluth, where I completed my master's degree. Just before graduation, as I was considering my next career move, one of these mentors asked me to step into his role as the director of the Outdoor Education Program while he was on a one-year appointment to a different position.

Not only did I take on that leadership role, but I also shared an office with my mentor



and continued learning from him daily. In that role, I had the opportunity to develop new programs, offer professional development to our staff, and serve in a leadership capacity for the college. Although my career took me in many different directions after that year, I know it shaped me as a leader in higher education.

Looking ahead, what are your top priorities for the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies?

As with most units across campuses, we will focus on developing priorities for the college that are aligned with the new URI strategic plan. I view this as an opportunity to re-imagine how we approach our work and the ways to nurture and develop partnerships, and offer the chance to develop a stronger culture.

What is some of the best advice you ever received?

When I finished my master's program, my thesis advisor gave me a card with the John A. Shedd quote, "A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." At that time in my life the quote was a powerful reminder to trust my internal map and compass and explore big ideas.

Today, a mantra I remind myself of often comes from Peloton: "Progress not perfection." It's a reminder to focus on what we can control to make progress with the understanding that there will always be more to do. I think that is an important message as we shape into the college we want to become.



Globalizing Teacher Education at URI

BY COLLEEN ROSSIGNOL

URI's Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies is connecting its students, Rhode Island classroom teachers, and schoolchildren with peers from around the world through innovative programs to improve educational opportunities and cultural awareness, building partnerships with schools in West Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean.

"In order for our children and youths to develop global and international perspectives, their teachers and education leaders need to advance their own intercultural competence," said Diane Kern, director of URI's School of Education.

Since 2020, the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies has taken active steps to build global partners that will provide both virtual and in-person education-abroad opportunities for URI education students in Sierra Leone, Germany, and the Dominican Republic. Investing in the globalization of teacher education provides pre-service teachers with cultural skills and practical life experiences they can draw upon to help meet the needs of their students in this economically, socially, and technically interconnected world.

A 2008 Longview Foundation study, titled, "Teacher Preparation for the Global Age: The Imperative for Change," found that today's students will need "extensive knowledge of the world and the skills and dispositions to engage with people from many cultures and countries.

"They will need these to be responsible citizens and effective participants in the global marketplace of the 21st century," the study's authors wrote. "Few teachers today are well-prepared to educate students for this new global context."

Sierra Leone, West Africa: International Science Collaboration

In spring 2022, URI built a partnership with Njala University's School of Education in Sierra Leone. The West African university had struggled with recruiting, preparing, and supporting science teachers because it lacked experiential science education materials and equipment. Njala's science lab was destroyed during the country's 1991–2002 Civil War, the equipment never replaced.

URI's GEMS-Net (Guiding Education in Math and Science Network), the School of Education, and Njala University's science faculty decided to collaborate on an online international learning science education pilot project that would bring together fourth-grade classrooms in Rhode Island and Sierra Leone for an interactive science investigation about soil in the schoolyards.

Launched in the fall of 2022, this pilot program is supported by the Village Link, a U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit with operations in Sierra Leone and a solar-powered education center in the Sierra Leonean town where the primary school is located. The center will be used to hold virtual classroom discussions with their U.S. counterparts.

The joint science investigation's foundation originates from the fourth-grade Rhode Island science curriculum, from which students from both countries will explore and answer such questions as, "What can we learn about our schoolyard soil?" and "What is soil?" The students will examine soil from different parts of their schoolyards and look for similarities and differences, ultimately helping them identify the components that make up all soils.

A fun experiential way to learn about science, it will also serve as an in-service teacher capacity-building initiative. The pilot structure is designed to mirror participants on both sides of the Atlantic at all levels:

- URI and Njala University science faculty will collaborate to build the science syllabi and work with in-service teachers.
- Pre-service teaching students from both institutions will have the opportunity to observe lesson plans and support faculty.
- Fourth-grade teachers from each school will deliver the science instruction to their classrooms and collaborate virtually.
- Fourth-grade students will classrooms and can present their findings virtually to their partner class.

Other project goals include:

- Developing cross-cultural awareness across shared learning environments.
- Supporting Njala University in its efforts to recruit, prepare, and support science teachers in an experiential format.

Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany: Joint Research Project and Exchange Program Development

URI's partnership with Germany's Technische Universität Braunschweig (TUB) began in 1987 as part of the University's flagship International Engineering Program.

In the spring of 2021, the Feinstein School of Education and TUB's School of Education discussed expanding this long-lasting partnership to education students, providing students from both countries an exchange opportunity to compare the education systems and participate in practicums.

In June 2022, members of the Feinstein College of Education traveled to Germany to conduct research, further establish the partnership, and discuss how an exchange program could work between the schools.

Professor Rabia Hos and her Ph.D. student, Chiara Deltito, conducted research focused on teacher education, with a specific emphasis on academic and social programs and strategies to support newcomer immigrant and refugee students.

Their objectives included:

- Identifying variations in practice across German and American teacher preparation for the education of immigrant and refugee students.
- Identifying common practices across German and American teacher preparation for immigrant and refugee student education.
- Generating a common list of best practices and recommendations for augmenting teacher preparation both in Braunschweig and the U.S.
- Strengthening the relationship between URI and TUB and exploring additional future joint programs.

Braunschweig and Rhode Island's urban core share the common thread of diversity. More than 10 percent of the total Braunschweig population identifies as non-German immigrants, which is mirrored in Rhode Island where 13 percent of the total population identified as foreign-born immigrants as of 2018. Educators in both regions are tasked with the similar and complex job of teaching immigrant and refugee students, many of whom may have experienced significant interruptions to their formal education. Education is essential to the life chances of these students as they resettle within their new countries, so research of best practices in this area is a critical field of study.

Building on the initial research activities with this partnership, senior university officials met to work through a detailed plan to develop a teacher-student exchange program and conducted a formal site visit to TUB. The goals of this partnership are to offer U.S. students international learning opportunities to:

- Live and experience life in another country.
- Compare an international education system to that of the United States.
- Develop cultural awareness and curiosity.

Dominican Republic: A Cross-Cultural Comparison and Contrast of Educational Challenges and Interventions

Dominican immigrants make up the second-largest Caribbean immigrant population in the United States, and Rhode Island has one of the largest Dominican populations per capita at just over 5 percent, which is why URI chose this region of the Caribbean to establish its first faculty-led program.

URI is partnering with Entrena, a Dominican Republic leader in youth and community programs, to launch its first Winter J-Term faculty-led program for education students, scheduled to run in January 2023.

Entrena was founded in 1982 by John Siebel, a Peace Corps volunteer, with a mission to "generate positive, sustainable change in individuals, communities, organizations, and countries through learning, training, and empowerment experiences." Entrena was selected as the college's third-party provider and partner because of its long-standing commitment to supporting vulnerable Dominican communities and populations through education and its experience working with U.S. higher education institutions to co-develop culturally immersive educational programs.

Tashal Brown, URI assistant professor of urban education and secondary social studies, will lead the program. She brings her experience as a former educator in New York City public schools and her commitment to advocating for girls of color and changing the social conditions that impact their lives to this program. Her collaborations with youths, educators, and community-based organizations demonstrate an unwavering commitment to equity and cultivating critical and transformative educational spaces—spaces designed for innovative teaching and chances for students to engage critically and creatively.

This exchange of ideas and experiences is essential to fostering equity-oriented edu-

cational spaces that support the holistic well-being of youths from diverse backgrounds," Brown said.

This program will include:

- A look at female youth empowerment through education in the Dominican Republic and the U.S.
- Direct observation, participation, and interaction with educators and students, nonprofit and higher-education faculty and students.
- Engaging in a service-learning project with Dominican Republic partners.
- Classroom discussions, lectures, and readings.

Feinstein College students will learn about the education and social sector systems, life, and culture of the Dominican Republic and develop a deeper understanding of what it is like to live in another society. More specifically, they will get an up-close look into the challenges Dominican female youths face, observe interventions used to combat these challenges, and learn how they impact their education and futures. In addition, faculty and students will share their experiences, research, and knowledge of youth female empowerment in the U.S. and participate in cross-cultural experiences with various people and organizations from the Dominican Republic.

Together with Entrena, Brown will lead a group of URI students to the Dominican Republic in early 2023 to be immersed in Afro-Latina-Caribbean culture while learning about social challenges many female youths and stateless Haitian communities face, how it impacts their education, health, and future, and the interventions in place to support these communities.

"Students in the United States—especially those in low-income and minority communities—leave high school without the knowledge and skills to engage in the world effectively and responsibly," the Longview Foundation study's authors wrote. Looking at Rhode Island's demographics, many of its classrooms are multicultural with a large portion of students from lower-income families.

The Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies supports these communities and is working to prepare Rhode Island students for a more international 21st century workforce by globalizing its teacher education programs.

'Moving Hurdles' of Higher Ed

Collaboration Is Key for Associate Dean Vaccaro

In the February 2018 issue of *Inside Higher Ed*, Patricia Ann Mabrouk wrote that the “indispensable associate dean is often overlooked.”

Annemarie Vaccaro doesn't see it that way. She believes that the position gives her “the power to empower.”

Vaccaro was named associate dean of URI's Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies in January 2022, after serving as a professor and program director for URI's College Student Personnel program. Inspired by a passion for socially just education, Vaccaro's scholarship focuses on inclusion and critical perspectives to inform her work. She has published extensively about the experiences of diverse college students, faculty, and staff.

“Every single person has a talent. Good leaders can figure out how to cultivate those talents and remove the roadblocks so they can grow and thrive,” she said. “Collaboration, sharing experiences, and thinking holistically will help us meet our challenges.”

Vaccaro, who holds a Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of Denver, has come “full circle” in assuming the role of associate dean, she said.

“College student personnel faculty are often tapped to be associate deans, provosts, and other senior administrators in college settings because we teach and learn how higher education systems work,” she said.

Typically, associate deans are responsible for overseeing and coordinating programs and activities that support student recruitment, education, and retention in the college.

But Vaccaro wants to widen that scope to create opportunities for practitioners, policy-makers, business leaders, and community agencies to develop partnerships that help students learn beyond the classroom.

“This is how we will be able to teach and learn in cutting-edge ways,” she said.

Faculty can sometimes feel isolated, working independently, she said, which is



Annemarie Vaccaro

why she is working to connect people who build partnerships that will translate across campus and disciplines.

“This kind of collaboration is good for all students and educators,” she said.

To foster creative thinking and collaboration, Vaccaro asks, “What are people doing that is so incredible that can be developed into a program or event or new curriculum? What are they doing and want to do more of, and how can we turn that into a tangible experience?”

Vaccaro hopes this kind of thinking will inspire faculty, staff, and students to do the things they were meant to do. She believes it is her job to encourage people to understand their passions and foster their talents.

“We have so many talented faculty, staff, and students in the college. When they feel supported and encouraged, there is no limit to what they can accomplish.”



Study: U.S. Grads Unprepared as Leaders

URI Professor, Research Partner Find Graduate Student Affairs Programs Lacking

BY JANE FUSCO

Are graduate students in student affairs programs prepared to serve as leadership educators?

According to a recent study, the answer is no.

Jonathan Kroll, a lecturer in URI's School of Professional Studies, and research partner Joseph Guvendiren of Central Michigan University's Leadership Institute, researched the type of courses, programs, and training graduate students are receiving in colleges and universities across the country. They presented their findings in the article, “Student Affairs Practitioners as Leadership Educators? A Content Analysis of Preparatory Programs,” published in the October 2021 *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*.

Their conclusion: There is much work to be done.

“Based on this study, across the field, we are inadequately preparing student affairs practitioners to serve as effective leadership educators,” Kroll said.

Master's-level student affairs preparatory programs, they found, are not providing necessary foundational leadership knowledge and facilitation skills to would-be practitioners.

The authors said the analysis was designed to understand the landscape of

leadership courses in student affairs preparatory programs, specifically at the master's level. “Ultimately, our grand vision for this inquiry was to better understand if budding student affairs practitioners, through these courses, are inherently prepared to serve in the leadership educator capacity.”

‘Based on this study, across the field, we are inadequately preparing student affairs practitioners to serve as effective leadership educators.’

—Jonathan Kroll

Kroll and Guvendiren reviewed 285 university program websites from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators graduate directory to analyze course titles, descriptions, core curriculum requirements, or electives.

Almost 60 percent of master's-level student affairs programs do not require their students to take a leadership course, either because a course is not offered or the courses that are offered are part of a track or elective, the authors found.

The study was also designed as a thematic analysis to better understand what was being taught in these courses based on the course descriptions. Most of the leadership courses focus on practice, not the theoretical foundations of leadership.

“More so, it is rare, if ever, for these courses to prepare graduates to facilitate the leadership development of others,” said Kroll.

Kroll and Guvendiren agree there is significant work to do to provide the necessary training. The authors propose that leadership scholars, in conjunction with traditional student affairs scholars and practitioners, help create and teach leadership courses for budding student affairs educators.

If student affairs educators do not have the requisite leadership, knowledge, dispositions, and facilitation skills, then future leaders will be ill-prepared to navigate the challenges that await them, they concluded.

‘This is how we will be able to teach and learn in cutting-edge ways.’

—Annemarie Vaccaro

When Leadership Fails

Course Explores Spectrum from Ineffective to Toxic Bosses

BY JANE FUSCO

We've all experienced it. Horrible bosses who make our blood boil, management decisions that leave us shaking our heads, and the uncertainty of working in a toxic environment.

But what can be done about it?

That was the theme of instructor Jonathan Kroll's Winter J-Term instructor SPC 495 special topics course, Bad Leadership, in which students explored what constitutes bad leadership and developed techniques to avoid bad leadership practices and challenge the poor leadership of others.

Dissonance—when behaviors do not align with beliefs—is the default, said Kroll. Where there is dissonance there is bad leadership.

"With dissonance, there is a disconnect between the values we espouse and the leadership we practice. Dissonance is essentially the inability to manage our emotions, attitudes, and behaviors due to a failure of connecting with ourselves," he said.

The course uses leadership literature, personal experiences, and a virtual retreat to understand bad leadership, how it manifests in practice and how to shift leadership practices from dissonance and toxicity to resonance and healthy engagement.

As part of the course, students also record a 20-minute group podcast on their experiences and reflections of bad leadership.

Jonathan Hammond '22, a professional sailor and military veteran student, told the class of his experience in boot camp as an example of a poor leadership atmosphere, where being belittled and berated is the norm and doesn't translate to the business environment.

Hammond said the class helped him recognize the symptoms of bad leadership and toxic environments, empowering him to analyze a situation and take steps to rectify it before it becomes a problem.

"It is important to study bad leadership, because if we don't, it becomes harder to recognize. It was helpful to analyze the real-world situations presented in class," he said.

Aaron Fitzsenry '25, a professional chef and professional leadership studies major, said the coursework has helped him to "manage up" and shape a direction that benefits his leaders and his own career path.



Clockwise from top left, Michelle Santos-Garcia, Aaron Fitzsenry, and Andrew Kupke discuss bad leadership during a student podcast.

"We don't always spot bad leadership for what it is and often enable it unknowingly. We then become bad followers," he said.

Fitzsenry said his first encounter with bad leadership was as a young cook working for a person he describes as a "madman chef," always yelling at the restaurant staff and drinking on the job. At the time, he said, it was fun to work that way.

"Experience has taught me that what is fun in the moment may not be so much fun in the long run," he said. "As an adult, I now understand how relationships can lead to productivity and that I need to be aware of the people around me."

In their podcast—a mock radio broadcast—classmates Michelle Santos-Garcia and Andrew Kupke interviewed Fitzsenry and asked him pointed questions about self-improvement.

'We don't always spot bad leadership for what it is and often enable it unknowingly. We then become bad followers.'

—Aaron Fitzsenry '25

"I realized I wanted to become a better leader after I yelled at someone for smoking in the back of the building. He dropped his cigarette in a pail that had a pile of leaves in

it, and it started a small fire. The look of panic on his face was unforgettable. I felt so bad. This isn't who I wanted to be," Fitzsenry said.

Santos-Garcia, a professional leadership studies major, worked as a customer service representative in a factory environment for a supervisor who had no managerial experience.

"I think in the past I lacked courage to guide the leader. This may have led me to be an enabler in some ways. Now I know that there are different ways of being a bad leader," she said.

She also stressed the importance of healing and recovery, much the same as an athlete does after an injury, taking care of physical and mental health.

In their podcast, Fitzsenry, Kupke, and Santos-Garcia challenged their classmates to choose a leadership practice discussed in class and put it into practice.

Hammond said the podcast helped him identify examples of bad leadership and relayed instances of posturing among professional sailors who "presented themselves as more of an authority figure than they actually might be."

In identifying bad leadership, the students also studied why people are attracted to bad leaders.

People are attracted to bad leaders, Kroll said, for both individual reasons and group needs.

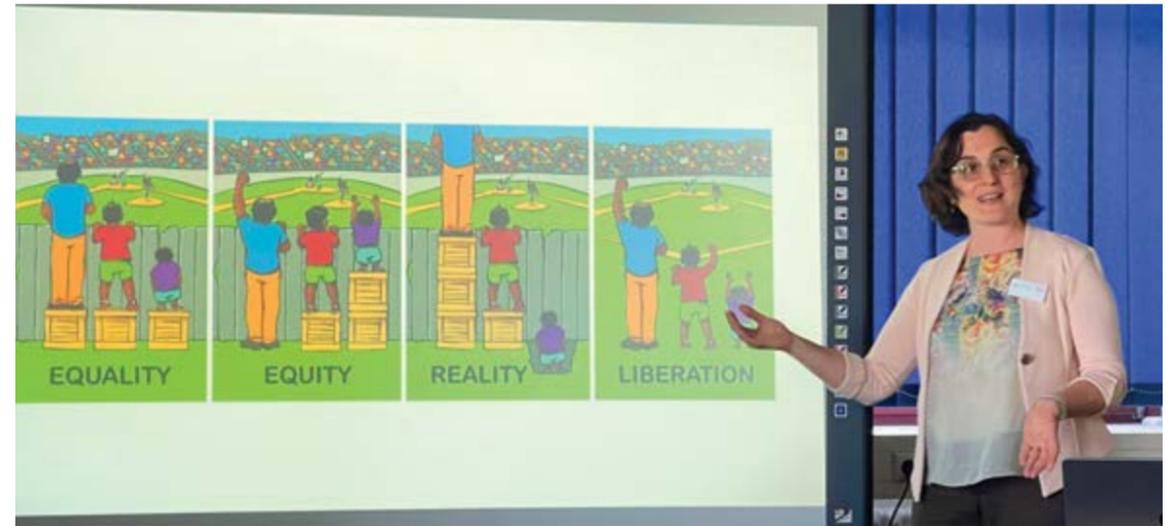
"We often follow bad leaders because we want to keep our jobs to protect our way of life. It is often easier just to follow bad leaders because we know what we are getting. We don't know what the next leader will bring, so we follow bad leaders because the unknown often provokes more fear than the known."

At the group level, bad leaders often provide order and cohesion and let us know where we stand with one another. If the bad leader changes, group engagement may also change.

"We follow bad leaders because we have an affinity for this group's identity and work—no matter how bad the individual leader is," Kroll said.

In their podcast, Kupke signed off with, "Be well, lead well."

Fitzsenry said he now has the emotional intelligence and self-awareness to do just that.



Rabia Hos trained teachers to become mentors in 32 regions of Lebanon.

Empowering Women

Professor Selected for Prestigious English Language Specialist Project in Lebanon

A URI professor worked this past spring with an organization in Lebanon that will support women in rural areas of Lebanon, empowering them to make a difference in their communities.

The U.S. Department of State selected Rabia Hos for an English Language Specialist Program that focused on training teachers of English language learners and empowering women in rural communities in English language learning, in partnership with the Universally Specific Purposes of English and Knowledge (USPEaK) organization in Lebanon. Hos is an associate professor of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and/or bilingual dual language immersion in URI's School of Education.

USPEaK promotes equal rights for all and supports women and youths in education, entrepreneurship, and livelihood skills, using the power of dialogue to prevent violent extremism and different forms of conflict.

Hos' project ran virtually for three months, from March to May, and trained teachers in the Teaching Women Enhanced English program to become mentors in 32 regions of Lebanon. The training included workshops, teaching mixed ability classes, and verbal and nonverbal communications.

"This project let me work with an organization that supports disenfranchised and historically marginalized groups in other countries. It also helped to empower women to

make a difference in their communities through access to quality education," Hos said.

The English Language Specialist Program is the premier opportunity for leaders in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) to enact meaningful and sustainable changes in the way English is taught abroad. Through projects developed by U.S. embassies in more than 80 countries, English language specialists

'This project ... helped to empower women to make a difference in their communities through access to quality education.'

—Rabia Hos

work directly with local teacher trainers, educational leaders, and ministry of education officials to exchange knowledge, build capacity, and establish partnerships benefiting participants, institutions, and communities in the United States and overseas.

"(Professor) Hos is a leading scholar in the field of TESOL, and her commitment to

language education as a pathway to equity and social justice serves as a driving force in her teaching and scholarship. As part of this opportunity, she has contributed to the empowerment of women in Lebanon," said Danielle Dennis, interim dean of the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies.

Since 1991, the English Language Specialist Program has supported in-country, virtual, and mixed projects in which hundreds of TESOL scholars and educators promote English language learning, enhance English teaching capacity, and foster mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries through cultural exchange.

During their projects, English language specialists may conduct intensive teacher training, advise ministries of education, participate in high-level educational consultations, and offer plenary presentations at regional, national, or international TESOL conferences. The projects selected represent the best of the U.S. TESOL community. In return, the program provides professional development opportunities to help participants experience different cultures and build skills that can greatly enhance their TESOL careers at home.

The English Language Specialist Program is administered by the Center for Intercultural Education and Development at Georgetown University.

Diversity and Inclusion in America's Narrative

Grand Challenge Courses Examine Diverse Groups That Struggle for Equality

BY JANE FUSCO

Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Thoughtful, committed students are the foundation of grand challenge courses at URI’s Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies, inspiring them to focus on contemporary issues defining today’s world. At the forefront of these issues is social justice and a commitment to defy the social, cultural, and economic inequalities imposed on individuals and groups of people.

The college offers two grand challenge courses that hold a mirror up to the status quo of equity and inclusion in society, urging students to analyze ideology as well as their own preconceptions and prejudices, to become advocates for equitability.

A social justice advocate is one who visibly and clearly makes a difference to an oppressed and/or marginalized population, group, or individual.

The School of Education’s EDC 103G grand challenge course, Education and Social Justice, focuses on race, cultural diversity, socioeconomic status, disabilities, and sexual orientation, prompting students to examine their own stereotypes and learn how to be social justice advocates.

The course enables students to examine their own lives and identities relative to race, culture, socioeconomic status, family dynamics, ability, gender identity, and sexual preference. As students scrutinize their unique identities, they begin to recognize the sources of their values and belief systems, while identifying the potential sources of their biases.

Autobiographies are a course requirement and a means to self-reflection.

“As the students share autobiographies with classmates, they recognize that many facets of their own identities are shared with others, while some things remain individual. This overlapping of elements of identity is called intersectionality,” said education professor and course instructor Susan Brand.

In education, the ability to understand intersectionality enables students to expand

their thinking and viewpoints to end stereotyping and bias against any group or individual, she added.

“Using intersectionality, we acknowledge each individual’s uniqueness while we also realize that each individual—regardless of race, culture, socioeconomic status, family dynamics, ability, gender identity, and sexual preference—shares much with other individuals. As educators, we strive to find common ground while simultaneously welcoming the unique combination of assets and qualities and the related contributions and viewpoints of all,” Brand said.

A position paper that explores a social justice topic with personal implications is also a course requirement, as well as a service-learning project in which students put their knowledge into practice.

Position papers have explored such topics as police brutality, abortion, transgender restrooms, the welfare system, gay rights, gay marriage in America and abroad, equal pay for women, Black Lives Matter, school funding for oppressed and/or urban populations, workplace discrimination, accessible health services for all, sports teams’ rights for transgender individuals, support for students with disabilities, incarceration, the death penalty, urban social justice and the gentrification debate, censorship of books, and teaching critical race theory in schools, Brand said.

Some students have donated supplies for Kenyan orphans and women at a women’s shelter and toys for homeless children living in shelters as part of their service-learning projects. Others read to residents in nursing homes, collected books for children in urban schools, celebrated with LGBTQ+ youths at an after-school Gay-Straight Alliance culminating celebration, helped youths with disabilities ride horses at a local farm, and tutored students in their homes during the pandemic.

“It is one of the few courses on campus that allows students to open up about themselves and their identities,” Brand said. “We learn that some students have experienced food insecurity and homelessness, students have families in other countries, many repre-

sent traditionally marginalized races. Most of the students have some disability or other, ranging from physical to academic to mental challenges, and several are members of the LGBTQ+ community. Through this open sharing, we learn that we are part of a diverse and yet united group.”

Ben Carleen ’22, a psychology major, said he took the course because of its emphasis on social justice and selfless endeavors.

“When you examine your own stereotypes and prejudices, you are not just examining simple flaws about yourself or the way you have been raised. Rather, understanding what prejudices you harbor internally can allow you to better know the areas in which you are most vulnerable or uncomfortable,” he said. “The first step to improving in this area is acknowledging that there is any bias or stereotypes coming from you at all; once this has been done, it becomes a lifelong journey of putting yourself in the shoes of individuals, cultures, and heritages that you otherwise may have no personal connection to.”

Jake Nelson ’22, a biotechnology major, said the course helped him become more empathetic. “It is important to listen to the people who are living through injustices, to better understand our role in helping solve the problem,” he said.

The School of Professional Studies offers SPC 319G, Negotiating Difference: Diversity and Inclusion in America’s Narrative, a grand challenge course that examines contemporary and past differences of culture, race, gender, class, and ideology of diverse groups in America that struggle for inclusion, equality, and social justice.

By studying America’s historic conflicts, students will have the context to better understand today’s struggles for inclusion and social justice. Students in this course are required to analyze two case studies, defend an actionable plan, and write a biography explaining and analyzing the efforts of an individual or group to remediate inequality and promote social justice.

“What makes this course powerful is that we intentionally examine the historical roots of inequality in American society and the institutions and social norms that perpetuate



Susan Brand

‘It is one of the few courses on campus that allows students to open up about themselves and their identities.’

—Susan Brand

inequality. It is an important and critical examination of how our historical systems and structures, rooted in inequality, manifest into contemporary systems and structures, embedded with inequality,” said Jonathan Kroll, instructor in the School of Professional Studies.

Kroll explained how redlining—a discriminatory practice that denies loans, insurance, or services to certain areas of a community, based on the racial characteristics of the neighborhood—affects education for people of color who live in these areas and are denied resources for better educational opportunities. Even the scholastic aptitude tests (SATs) were originally written for a traditional white audience, not diverse populations, he said.

“From a leadership lens, many of our organizations are headed by white men of



Daymyen Layne

‘We are pushing students to care about the human condition.’

—Daymyen Layne

power and privilege. These leaders want to mentor others who are like them. We need to include more diverse voices, break down what was familiar and comfortable, and challenge these practices that have been so exclusive,” said Kroll.

For Angel Berrios ’22, an interdisciplinary studies student in health administration, who has experienced exclusion and bias, this course was personal.

“As a Puerto Rican male, I have experienced many prejudices and assumptions working as an occupational therapy assistant. The field is 80 percent white and 90 percent women. Early in my career, I found myself eating alone and having limited interaction with my coworkers. I ended up taking my breaks with the cleaning staff.

“I ended up feeling it was necessary to dispel all our negative stereotypes. I found myself repeatedly attempting to prove my intelligence and skills, so as not to give anyone a nugget by which they could slide into the comfort of confirmation bias,” Berrios said.

Daymyen Layne, course instructor for the summer session of SPC 319G, sees social justice as an individual’s internal struggle, while institutions of higher learning experience a collective struggle to, “move the proverbial needle in terms of cultural humility and empathy.”

“We are pushing students to care about the human condition,” he said. “Recognizing that everyone that engages in this work on different levels means that you constantly find yourself starting from the baseline and scaffolding the work from there.”

Layne added that there are usually no socio-systemic solutions for social justice learning. “This learning is usually relegated to a class or a major and not geared toward the development of an entire organization. Higher education must look at its entire culture,” he said. “People need to continually examine their equity stances in order to sustain social justice efforts.”

As students examine the differences throughout history, they examine their own identities and intersections in relation to present-day societal oppression.

“Examining the past helps us to know how we got to where we are. We take a look at and honor the movements that changed the ways in which Western society operates in terms of liberation. Examining the past also helps to illuminate who are the gatekeepers of outdated and hateful ideologies of the present so we can all utilize whatever privilege we have to move our current society forward,” Layne said.

Brand agreed that systems of power and oppression are very much alive today as in the past, and individuals as well as societies need to continually re-examine these inequitable systems and strive to recognize that all people deserve equal and equitable treatment.

Layne summed up the true value of the courses: “Difference is something that we cannot get away from and is something that, in America, we’ve seen resurge in very tangible ways. Social justice movements of the past have shaped, and can shape, the ways that we fight for and understand equity and justice today.”



The first cohort of participants from the Emerging Leaders Development Program

Training With Impact

BY LORI HERZ

As professionals, we have most likely been through training programs. Once completed, we put the binder or booklet on the shelf and resume business as usual.

Did the training fail us? Or did we fail the training?

Given the investment required to provide training, in terms of employee time away from the job, trainer fees, training materials, a venue or space for in-person offerings, and possibly refreshments, it is frustrating to employers that most participants will not automatically integrate what they learned into their workplace tasks. So, what can organizations do to maximize the impact of training? Let's look at the Rhode Island Black Business Association (RIBBA) story, as an example.

RIBBA is a nonprofit group, "dedicated to advancing the business opportunities and vitality of Black-owned and minority businesses in Rhode Island through access to capital, contracting, business development resources, entrepreneur training, business advocacy, meaningful investor services, and

'I feel the Emerging Leaders Development Program, especially, has really empowered me as a leader of color.'

—Marjorie Dellile

workforce development," according to its website, ri-bba.org.

Through a statewide needs assessment, RIBBA determined there is a great need for leadership development programming to prepare high-performing Asian, Black, Hispanic or Latino, Indigenous, and multiracial professionals for senior leadership and executive roles while raising their visibility as a force within their organization and community, ri-bba.org/emergingleaders.

RIBBA partnered with URI's Office of

Strategic Initiatives (OSI), and six months later, the Emerging Leaders Development Program was born. The inaugural cohort participated from October 2021 through March 2022, with 25 participants graduating, receiving microcredentials, and 70 percent experiencing job growth.

"I feel the Emerging Leaders Development Program, especially, has really empowered me as a leader of color," said Marjorie Dellile, senior project and program manager at the R.I. Office of Health and Human Services. "I'm confident that the way that you walk in won't be the way that you leave."

Participant Farouk Ajakaiye created a video with several participants sharing one word describing how they felt after completing the leadership program. (A word cloud representing their collective feedback appears on the next page.)

How did RIBBA and OSI achieve such high impact?

By providing the right content to the right people with the right support. Sounds easy, right? Let's unpack each element.

The Right Content

The most successful training is based on needs derived from data collection, which can include needs assessment surveys, focus groups, gap analyses, employee-engagement surveys, knowledge assessments, organizational effectiveness assessments, and environmental scans. RIBBA collected a mix of data to determine the need for leadership development training, including statewide surveys, interviews, leadership program assessments, and data on the state of diversity in business.

"Far too often, talented professionals of color have ceilings placed on their growth potential in corporate environments," said Izzy Rodriguez, assistant director, digital marketing at Brown University and Emerging Leaders Development Program participant.

"We are often told to 'be patient' or 'wait your turn' as we're passed over for opportunities that we are more than qualified to flourish in. RIBBA and the Emerging Leaders Development Program aim to not only break through those ceilings; we aim to completely shatter them," he added.

The next step was for RIBBA to engage an educational partner to develop and deliver the content. OSI was selected for that role.

OSI provides concierge-style services to its clients, matching content to organizational needs, selecting instructors with the expertise and demeanor to best engage participants, and providing continuous improvement through program evaluation. In addition, OSI was able to offer state-of-the-art training space at the Feinstein Providence Campus, which, when combined with expert instruction on leadership best practices, enhanced participants' learning of that targeted content.



Lisa Ranglin, RIBBA founder and president, and instructor Daymyen Layne give a thumbs-up after a presentation.

The Right People

Equally important to determining the right content is to target the right people. RIBBA recruited participants for the Emerging Leaders Development Program through an application and interview process, ensuring that

participants were at the right stage in their leadership journey and motivated to take ownership of their development. As a result, participants demonstrated leadership in their learning process by participating in all aspects of the program, engaging fully in the in-person training sessions, embracing and implementing concepts learned, yearning for more information, and sharing their experiences.

Even if an organization does not have the capacity to recruit using an application and interview process, there are ways to ensure that program participants are set up for success in their learning process. Communication is key—before, during, and after the

program. Before the program, a high-level overview of the content and the desired outcomes should be shared with constituents. During the program, supervisors should check in with their employees on their learning progress. And after the program, supervisors or other leaders should continue to support their employees with coaching as they implement what they have learned.

The Right Support

The Emerging Leaders Development Program participants come from a mix of professional backgrounds. Some are entrepreneurs, some work for nonprofits, others for private or public institutions. No matter their affiliation, all participants are supported during the program. The OSI instructors provide pre-work ahead of the academic sessions, engage them in multiple activities, offer small and large group discussions during the sessions, and provide additional resources for continuous learning beyond the classroom. Participants also receive executive and career coaching to help them develop their "leadership brand," are offered the support of advisors from their own organizations and RIBBA, and are invited to participate in networking opportunities. Some from the inaugural cohort even took advantage of volunteer or civic projects coordinated by RIBBA. These supports enabled participants to showcase and practice their strengths and newly acquired knowledge and skills and build relationships.

A second cohort of the OSI and RIBBA Emerging Leaders Development Program began in October 2022 and runs through April 2023. Evaluation data was reviewed and used to guide curriculum revisions and program structure, while application and interviews took place, and advisors and coaches were brought on board.

All of this ensures that OSI and RIBBA offer the right content to the right people with the right support.

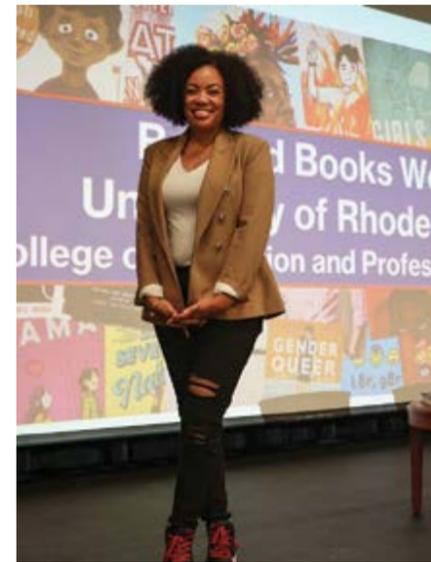




"Papa Marc," center, with colleagues at the URI Drag Queens and Kings Book Reading at the Providence Campus Library



Keynote speaker Tiffany D. Jackson, author of 2021 banned book *Monday's Not Coming*



a list of the Top 10 Most Challenged Books to inform the public about censorship. The lists are based on information from media stories and voluntary challenge reports from communities across the United States.

Banned Books Week is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read and spotlighting current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools. Typically held during the last week of September, Banned Books Week highlights the value of free and open access to information.

Bringing together the entire book community—librarians, booksellers, publishers, journalists, teachers, and readers of all types—in shared support of the freedom to seek and to express ideas, even those some consider unorthodox or unpopular, Banned Books Week focuses on efforts across the country to remove or restrict access to books and draws national attention to the harms of censorship.



"Papa Marc"

'Books Unite Us, Censorship Divides Us'

Implications of Censorship Explored During Banned Books Week

BY JANE FUSCO

'When our freedom of speech is gagged, our rights are being eviscerated.'

—Steven Pennell

Book-banning, particularly with children's books, is one of the most widespread forms of censorship. Censors assert that readers will be swayed by a book's content or if the material is considered to be sexually explicit, is unsuitable for a particular age group, or contains offensive language.

To celebrate and encourage the freedom to read, the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies held a weeklong series of events during Banned Books Week, Sept. 19–23, to shine a light on censored and challenged books.

Launched in 1982, national Banned Books Week was a response to a sudden surge in the number of challenged books in schools, bookstores, and libraries.

"Banned Books Week celebrates our right to read. Censorship has devastating consequences. Reading allows us a glimpse into others' worlds. We experience perspectives vicariously through submerging ourselves in topics with which we have little experience," said Theresa Deeney, professor of reading, language, and learning disabilities in URI's

School of Education and one of the organizers of the weeklong event.

"Who should dictate those topics?" she asked. "Ask yourself, 'Who is the arbiter?' When a small group becomes the arbiter for the rest, we lose our freedom to make decisions for ourselves. I'm thrilled that URI is standing up for our right to read."

Tiffany D. Jackson, a filmmaker and *New York Times* bestselling author of young adult fiction, including *Monday's Not Coming*—a 2021 banned book about a missing child that examines issues of abuse, gentrification, and the marginalization of people of color—spoke about the importance of writing about such controversial topics at a Sept. 19 event at URI.

A two-day Drag Queen Story Hour event at the Providence Campus library on Sept. 22 and 23 included URI alumni and faculty who performed with Out Loud Theatre ensemble, reading from currently banned children's books.

The drag performers included Siobhan LaPorte-Cauley, Ottavia De Luca, Marc Tiberiis, also known as "Papa Marc," and

Patricia Tulli-Hawkrige.

An open forum of teachers, school librarians, and information specialists included discussions on censorship and navigating the challenges of contested books and subject matter.

"When our freedom of speech is gagged, our rights are being eviscerated," said Steven Pennell, coordinator of URI's Arts and Culture Program and one of the event organizers.

"As an educator and a performance artist, I believe that the idea of any important issue is remote unless we make an experiential connection," he said. "Censorship—having your voice and your needs dismissed—is very real and very dangerous. Exploring the reality through the words of a banned author, through the experience of classroom teachers, from the vantage point of drag performers and members of the LGBTQ+ community, and seeing the evidence in poster form is so much more impactful."

Every year, the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom compiles

- **Gender Queer: A Memoir** by Maia Kobabe
Banned, challenged, and restricted for LGBTQ+ content and because it was considered to have sexually explicit images.
- **Lawn Boy** by Jonathan Evison
Banned and challenged for LGBTQ+ content and because it was considered to be sexually explicit.
- **All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto** by George M. Johnson
Banned and challenged for LGBTQ+ content and profanity and because it was considered to be sexually explicit.
- **Out of Darkness** by Ashley Hope Perez
Banned, challenged, and restricted for depictions of abuse and because it was considered to be sexually explicit.
- **The Hate U Give** by Angie Thomas
Banned and challenged for profanity and violence and because it was thought to promote an anti-police message and indoctrination of a social agenda.
- **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie
Banned and challenged for profanity, sexual references, and use of a derogatory term.
- **Me and Earl and the Dying Girl: A Novel** by Jesse Andrews
Banned and challenged because it was considered sexually explicit and degrading to women.
- **The Bluest Eye** by Toni Morrison
Banned and challenged because it depicts child sexual abuse and was considered sexually explicit.
- **This Book Is Gay** by Juno Dawson
Banned, challenged, relocated, and restricted for providing sex education and LGBTQ+ content.
- **Beyond Magenta: Transgender and Nonbinary Teens Speak Out** by Susan Kuklin
Banned and challenged for LGBTQ+ content and because it was considered to be sexually explicit.



Aaron Fitzsenry preparing for a cooking demonstration at the Free Farmers Market

Fruitful Results

Free Farmers Market Inspires Independent Study Project

BY JANE FUSCO

A summer 2021 collaborative program that offered free food to the campus community became the inspiration for an independent study project for Aaron Fitzsenry '23.

The weekly Free Farmers Market, originally organized by Amanda Missimer from URI's Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences and sports nutrition specialist Kelli Kidd offered locally grown produce, cooking demonstrations, and useful tips and recipes students could make in their residence halls, such as an apple compote using a mug and microwave.

Fitzsenry used the event as the basis for his SPC 490 Independent Study project.

The SPC 490 Independent Study course allows students to take on a project of their own design that can translate into a meaningful life experience or enhance their professional goals.

Fitzsenry, a leadership studies major and professional chef in URI's Dining Services, organized volunteers to harvest produce from nearby URI research farms. He worked

with Kidd and Missimer to determine which items to offer each week and created cooking demonstrations to show participants new ways to prepare the produce.

"I took a concept and turned it into an interactive teaching scenario," he said. "Returning the literal fruits of URI's labors to the campus community quickly became a reinforcing cycle of sustainability as its popularity grew each week."

Fitzsenry used the experience to observe how teams and relationships are built across various disciplines on campus and to study the group dynamics of people working together and relating to each other to turn the event into his independent study project.

With the help of Jonathan Kroll, SPC 490 instructor, Fitzsenry was able to refine his concept to obtain maximum results. Kroll said the project prompted Fitzsenry to draw on his professional abilities as a chef and engage students on campus.

"Following (Professor) Kroll's advice, I began to reach out to different people to

build relationships and then connect those people to other people. Sharing with others became the soul of the project," he said.

The program's success caught the attention of university leadership as well as potential benefactors for future iterations of the market.

URI President Marc Parlange's wife, Mary, joined Fitzsenry on an apple-picking trip and helped with a cooking demonstration.

"His cooking demos were fabulous," Mary Parlange said. "Using a one-burner stove and simple, healthy ingredients like butter and honey, he transformed items from the market like apples and spinach or chard into delicious concoctions."

"I think it's really important for people to see that they can use produce in creative ways that don't have to be complicated to taste good. Finding ways to encourage people to eat whole foods like this is so important—for both physical and mental health," she said.



Fitzsenry wanted his demonstrations to emphasize how simple ingredients make good food. Salads, especially, became a mainstay of his demonstrations, since they use ingredients found at the market and are easy to prepare at home. He prepared such recipes as beet salad marinated in cider vinegar, Swiss chard with warm apple-cranberry dressing, and an apple-lemon-honey compote to pour over chicken. Even melted salted caramel gelato, available at the dining halls, was made into a sauce for a dessert topping.

Visit: uri.edu/dining/crashculinary for videos of simple recipes that even students can make in a residence hall or apartment with just basic equipment.

said, but Kroll's guidance proved to be exactly what Fitzsenry needed to transform it into a focused study.

"Aaron's project was very practical, and his proposal was very strong. The independent study gave him the incentive to get the project off the ground," Kroll said.

For their independent studies, Kroll's students craft their own syllabus and study plan and keep a journal of notes, reflections, and meetings.

Independent study projects provide students something different than traditional classroom instruction. "In leadership studies, our belief is that leadership is about doing good in our communities," Kroll said.

Fitzsenry said he also learned that saying "yes" to opportunities creates more opportunities.

"My goal was to observe how relationships are made, but the synergies from all of the people and groups involved opened up more doors for me," Fitzsenry said.

The project has made Fitzsenry something of a rock star on campus. He has been a guest speaker in a URI 101 class; he has helped first-year students discover healthy food options; he has created info-videos for Missimer's Food Recovery course; and he has spoken to Jeff Johnson's EDC 278 class on adapting work/life experiences to academic applications.

Fitzsenry has also created instruction videos of simple recipes that can be made in a residence hall or apartment using basic equipment. Videos can be found at: uri.edu/dining/crashculinary/

Fitzsenry hopes to continue the success of the Free Farmers Market and expand on his in-person cooking classes.

Can a visit from celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay be far behind?

'His cooking demos were fabulous. Using a one-burner stove and simple, healthy ingredients ... he transformed items from the market like apples and spinach or chard into delicious concoctions.'

—Mary Parlange

He asked participants to make the dishes at home and come back to the market to let him know how they turned out.

Turning the market into an independent study project was challenging at first, he

Independent Study Project Wins Gold Sustainability Award

Aaron Fitzsenry's independent study project, which offered free locally grown food, recipes, and cooking tips to the campus community, has won the Gold Sustainability Award for Outreach and Education from the National Association of College and University Food Services.

The award recognizes colleges and universities that provide information on sustainability efforts to students and the campus community and acknowledges leadership in promoting and implementing environmental sustainability as it relates to campus dining services.

Fitzsenry '23, a professional chef in URI Dining Services and student in the professional leadership studies program, helped organize the Free Farmers Market for the campus community and offered free organic produce grown in the campus gardens and cooking demonstrations of recipes students could make in their residence halls or apartments.

Jonathan Kroll, instructor in the professional leadership studies program, said, "Aaron undertook an ambitious, collaborative, independent study project that included many university stakeholders from diverse corners of the institution and crafted an experience that can and will undoubtedly serve as a model for other students. With this recognition, the project has been celebrated at the highest level of food services professionals."



Visitors to the Free Farmers Market on campus receive free, fresh, organic produce grown in the campus gardens.

What Is Art?

BY STEVEN PENNELL



Peace is Here, sculpture, by Mimi Sammis

I don't get it!

What is it about?
Is art necessary?
Why should I care?



DiPasquale Square, by Ian Mohon '10

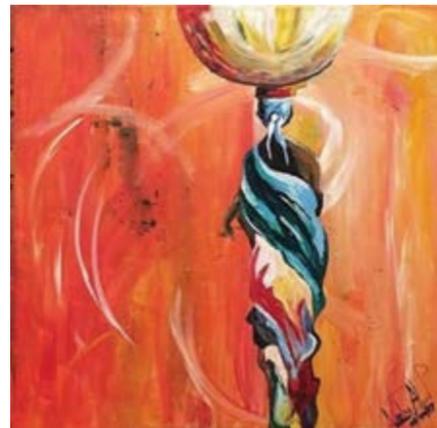
Art is an essential means of exploring and communicating what it is to be human—to express creativity, to exercise the imagination, to discover, a tool for self-expression, and a vehicle of sharing one's story.

But is that it?

In fact, art is an integral part of education. It raises consciousness to social justice issues (poverty, homelessness, teaching the constructs of racism of specific groups of people and diseases), challenging and inspiring change. It is also a tool used in social work and psychiatric counseling, allowing clients to express conditions, feelings, and experiences that are too painful to verbalize. Art is an instrument that calls attention to environmental issues, sharing facts, and inspiring behavioral change.

Sadly, visual and performing arts are often an afterthought, the first subject cut as “nonessential” from the school curriculum or a program budget. They are rarely recognized as being an economic engine with the power to attract tourism, bringing people from other cities, states, and countries to visit, to stay in hotels and spend money on dining and sightseeing, or as a commodity in and of itself.

Over the last 25 years, URI's Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies Arts and Culture Program has been committed to raising issues through monthly exhibits and performances. The



Cultural Remembrance, acrylic, by Nadine Almada '15

program has focused on such topics as domestic violence, racism, poverty and homelessness, the experiences of veterans and their family members, literacy, and incarceration. It has illuminated the history of the 1915 Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the LGBTQ+ community.

The program also has:

- Highlighted the need for training teachers in Africa.
- Explored such topics as cancer, genetic testing, gerontology and aging, anxiety, depression, and bullying.
- Examined the impact of climate change on the ocean, wildlife, food sources, and recreation.
- Explored the urban landscape and urban wildlife.

The Arts and Culture Program has celebrated aspects of women's history, Black history, Indigenous heritage, and Hispanic, Italian, Irish, Portuguese, and Cape Verdean heritage through art, artifacts, music, dance, theater, and film. And it has featured professional and community-based artists from URI, the local area, and around the world.

During the 2022 season, the URI Arts and Culture Program celebrated:

- The 25-year career of Haitian-born artist Nixon Leger.
- Women artists in our community.
- The accomplishments of art in the curriculum for K–12 artists.
- “The State of the Arts”—faculty, student, and alumni artists from the URI, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island.
- “The Synergy Project: Beneath the Surface II.”
- The impact of banned books and censorship.
- The need to find peace within our world.
- The plight of homeless veterans.
- The efforts of several organizations to create “little houses” out of used storage containers presented in visual and performing arts.

What is art?

Art is beautiful, moving, and educational.

Here is a sampling of alumni artists who are making their mark in their chosen medium and also exhibiting their works at the URI Feinstein Providence Campus gallery:



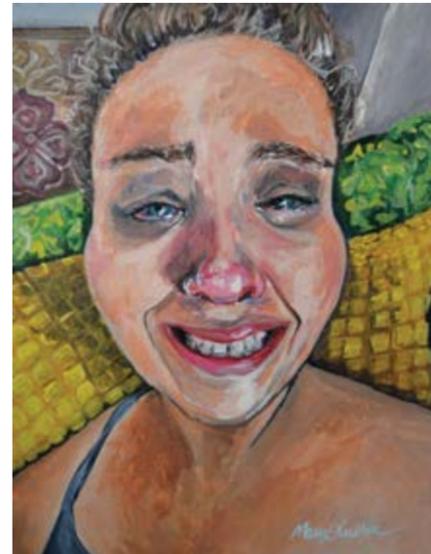
Coral Flush, by Michael Stricklin '77



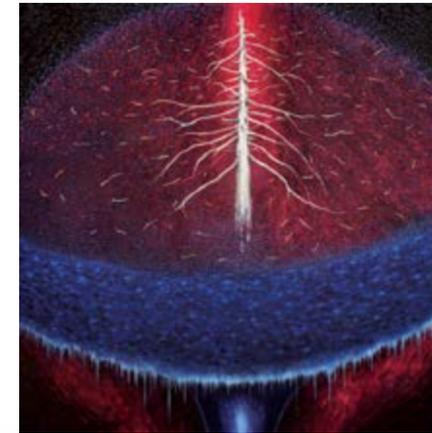
On the Waterfront, by David DeMelim '09



Chance of Rain, Sprague Farm, Cindy Wilson '78



Optimistic, acrylic, by Mary Kudlak '07



Levitating Aqueous, by Brian O'Malley '95



Gods and Monster, by Kira Hawkrigde '12 and Marc Tiberiis II '14



Trash Is Ugly, by Aislin Aylward



Colors Conversation, oil, by Nixon Leger



Rose Bud, by Eric Lutes '91



Briana Scalisi earned Bachelor of Science degrees from URI in kinesiology and education.

Scalisi Named National ‘Major of the Year’ by SHAPE America

‘Receiving this award from SHAPE America is a great honor, and I am proud of the hard work and dedication I have put toward my health and physical education degree during my time at the University of Rhode Island.’

—Briana Scalisi '22

Briana Scalisi '22 has been chosen as a Major of the Year recipient by the Society of Health and Physical Educators, known as SHAPE America. The award celebrates outstanding undergraduate students in the health, physical education, recreation, and dance professions.

A double major in kinesiology and K–12 health and physical education at the University of Rhode Island, Scalisi was honored in April at the organization’s 136th National Convention & Expo in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Professor Furong Xu, coordinator of URI’s health and physical education program in URI’s School of Education, nominated Scalisi for the award.

“Briana is one of our great students who is highly motivated and academically strong,” Xu said.

A native of Clarkstown, New York, Scalisi earned Bachelor of Science degrees in kinesiology and education. She served as vice president of URI’s Health and Physical Education Club, which creates a network for current, former, and future health and physical education students. She also was game supervisor for the Intramural Sports Program and a peer resource and was an undergraduate teaching assistant for kinesiology and physical education courses. She student

taught during the 2022 spring semester at two Rhode Island schools—Frenchtown Elementary School in East Greenwich and the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School in Coventry.

“Receiving this award from SHAPE America is a great honor, and I am proud of the hard work and dedication I have put toward my health and physical education degree during my time at the University of Rhode Island,” said Scalisi. “I look forward to the future as I plan to continue my education in order to grow as an educator.”

SHAPE America is the nation’s largest membership organization of health and physical education professionals.

Founded in 1885, the organization’s national standards for K–12 physical education serve as the foundation for programs across the country. SHAPE America provides programs, resources, and advocacy to support health and physical educators at every level, from preschool to university graduate programs.

“The outstanding achievements of future professionals like Briana are integral to the future of SHAPE America and our profession,” said SHAPE America President Terri Drain, founder and coordinator of the Health and Physical Education Collaborative.

R.I. Teacher-Leader Receives Educator of the Year Award

BY JANE FUSCO

A Providence schoolteacher has been recognized for her work on the environment through her school’s partnership between URI’s School of Education, scientists, and engineers.

Stacy Gale, a fourth-grade teacher at the Paul Cuffee School in Providence, was named Educator of the Year by the Rhode Island Environmental Education Association (RIEEA) at its annual summit on April 30.

“Stacy’s dedication to environmental literacy shows in her science teaching and her leadership role within her own school and throughout the state,” said Kelly Shea, doctoral candidate and Guiding Education in Math and Science Network (GEMS-Net) specialist at URI, in her nomination letter.

“Stacy has committed many years as a teacher leader in the GEMS-Net program and is consistently engaged in research that moves environmental education forward,” Shea continued.

Most recently, Gale and her fourth-grade team participated in research exploring virtual field experiences with the Roger Williams Park Zoo.

Gale, who is a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) specialist, has partnered with the GEMS-Net program since 2016. The Paul Cuffee School joined the program in 2015.

As a teacher leader, Gale supports the program’s workshops and professional development in science education and collaborates with other teacher leaders from around the state to implement high-level strategies to prepare teachers to be STEM education leaders.

Teacher leaders receive advanced professional development through monthly meetings and an intensive summer institute each year.

Sara Sweetman, director of the URI GEMS-Net program, stressed the importance of the award, noting that environmental education embodies best practices in teaching and learning and empowers students to use their passions and knowledge to improve their communities.

“It transcends the classroom walls, builds collaborations, and provides meaningful outcomes for teaching and learning,” Sweetman said. “We need children to be able to critically evaluate the needs of their communities and feel empowered to act. Stacy is providing that for the children of Providence.”

When children learn to love their environment, appreciate the natural world, and solve challenging issues, the world will be a safer place, Sweetman added.

GEMS-Net is a partnership between the URI’s School of Education, scientists and engineers, and public-school districts, supporting STEM teaching and learning for kindergarten through eighth grade.

As partners, school districts receive ongoing professional development for all teachers, curricula recommendations that align with the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, and leadership development for teachers and principals.



Stacy Gale

‘When children learn to love their environment, appreciate the natural world, and solve challenging issues, the world will be a safer place.’

—Sara Sweetman

Fulbright Awardee Receives Fellowship To Continue LGBTQ+ Research in Finland

BY DAWN BERGANTINO



Meg Jones in Oslo

University of Rhode Island doctoral student Meg Jones, who uses the pronoun they and last year was awarded a prestigious Fulbright grant to work alongside faculty at the University of Helsinki and its AGORA for the Study of Social Justice and Equality in Education group, will be returning to Finland to continue their research. Jones has received a fellowship from the American-Scandinavian Foundation enabling them to complete their doctoral research on global approaches to queer and trans inclusion in teacher preparation programs.

Jones' focus is on queer- and trans-inclusive practices within the broader context of the Finnish educational system, specifically, how teacher education addresses queer and trans topics and how these topics are addressed in educational research. Jones wanted to learn more about what one of the best education systems in the world is doing to push the boundaries of what is typically thought of as inclusion.

What Jones has found in the past year is a motivated group of educators—both educators in training and those now practicing—who had been through similar experiences growing up as the students they would be teaching. While not all who participated in Jones' study were Finnish, the majority were European.

"While my study was open to everyone, an overwhelming proportion of the educators who chose to participate were queer or trans themselves," said Jones. "Growing up, they didn't see themselves represented in the classroom. They weren't aware of any trans or 'out' educators, and there really was this common sense of not feeling as though they belonged as young people. Their experiences from their youth are driving them to possibly be more 'out' as educators and to

break the common stereotypes of what an educator is."

Representation Matters

In the United States, suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young people ages 10 to 24, and LGBTQ+ youths are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. Yet even in Finland, a nation with one of the most highly regarded education systems in the world, queer youths, when surveyed, relay they face similar percentages of discrimination, mental health issues, and suicide ideation as their U.S. counterparts.

Echoing this, Jones was recently in Norway presenting one small finding from their overall study at the Nordic Youth Research Symposium. In interviewing Finnish pre-service teachers who were also queer or trans-identified, participants shared how their experiences as young people in the Finnish education system impacted their identity development in relation to gender and sexuality and how that has helped to solidify their intention to act as inclusive, out, representative teachers in the future. While there is a commitment among many educators—in Finland and elsewhere—to be more inclusive, there is still work to be done worldwide.

Jones, whose work has been well-received, has been invited to present at several conferences and events and collaborate on papers. The fellowship will enable them to finish their dissertation and continue some of the work they have been involved in that is both related to and in addition to their research—including providing training and lectures for the faculty in the Education Sciences Department at the University of Helsinki on queer and trans inclusion, working with faculty at local high schools to assist

them in meeting curriculum requirements related to queer and trans topics, and assisting the International Red Cross to work with young Ukrainian refugees on their literacy skills.

They hope their additional time in Finland will enable them to continue collaboration with their Finnish counterparts and collect more longitudinal data. In addition, they have been able to extend their visiting researcher contract with the University of Helsinki and will be joining the department's equity group and its subcommittee focused on providing professional development and training. They also hope to open the lines of communication between URI and some of the groups they have been working with in Finland—particularly to ensure that student voices are heard and amplified.

"Integrating myself into this community of scholars and starting to understand the culture and nuance of Nordic educational research has really been a highlight for me," said Jones. "Being able to attend these conferences and share my work, spreading the URI name and sharing this message of queer and trans inclusion in a space where it has been assumed for a long time, but never directly addressed, has been exciting. Seeing the work resonate and hearing from fellow scholars that these are issues we need to talk about more has been extremely gratifying."

The American-Scandinavian Foundation supports cultural and educational exchange between the Nordic region (Denmark, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Finland, Norway, Sápmi, and Sweden) and the United States. Their fellowships are awarded in all fields, help further academic scholarship and scientific research, and encourage expression in music and the creative arts. URI students and recent graduates who are interested in applying should contact the URI Office of National Fellowships and Academic Opportunities for more information.



Danielle Dennis, left, interim dean of URI's Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies, and Yune Kim Tran, dean of Providence College's School of Professional Studies, attend the July 20 consortium for teacher education institutions, held at the Paff Auditorium at URI's Feinstein Providence Campus.

Globally Competent Teachers

URI, PC Team Up in Project Funded by Longview Foundation

The University of Rhode Island and Providence College (PC) are teaming up to build a consortium among teacher education institutions and local K–12 community partners, to bring into focus global initiatives that guide teacher practices.

The project, Preparing Globally Competent Teachers—Rhode Island and Beyond, began in March and is funded by the Longview Foundation for international teacher education, with a grant award of \$24,959.

Rabia Hos, associate professor of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL)/bilingual-dual language education at URI; Laura Hauerwas, professor of elementary/special education at PC; and Nuria Alonso Garcia, professor of global studies at PC, are the leaders of the grant and the collaborative.

"We, as educators in teacher preparation at Providence College and the University of Rhode Island, intend to lead the conversation about globalizing education in Rhode Island and are committed to reframing global engagement through a local lens," Hos, Hauerwas, and Alonso Garcia said in a joint statement.

Hos said the project is a great opportunity to collectively embrace shared responsibility and accountability for actions that impact both local and global education communities, while engaging in "glocalized"—reflecting

both local and global considerations—dialogue, and striving for sustainable and

'We, as educators in teacher preparation at Providence College and the University of Rhode Island, intend to lead the conversation about globalizing education in Rhode Island and are committed to reframing global engagement through a local lens.'

—*Rabia Hos, Laura Hauerwas, Alonso Garcia*

socially just education futures for all.

- The intent of the project is threefold:
- To advance practices that account for and reflect the cultural wealth and expertise of our local communities.

- To foster reciprocal school-community partnerships.
- To create a consortium among K–16 educators that connects disciplines and provides opportunities for mentoring and growth.

An inaugural summit was held in July in a hybrid format for K–16 educators and community members, Hauerwas said.

"We work toward an education system that disrupts inequities and prepares students to be global citizens who take action for the common good in local and international communities," Alonso Garcia said. "This transformation requires a change of mindset and (teaching, starting) with intentional and sustained professional development for faculty, education leaders in our underserved communities, and Rhode Island Department of Education professionals."

The Longview Foundation seeks to build a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world by equipping youths with a global perspective and understanding of political, social, and environmental issues worldwide, by supporting teacher preparation, state initiatives and coalitions, and innovative programs focused on "internationalizing" in the United States. Founded by William L. Breese, the Longview Foundation has been helping young people in the United States learn about world regions and global issues since 1966.



Focus on Partnerships, Collaboration

*URI Office of Strategic Initiatives Is
Mission-Driven Success Story*

BY CHRISTINE P. DOLAN

The Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI), an entity within URI's Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies, harnesses the power and success of educational partnerships that link education with training and career development to support Rhode Island's workforce in the 21st century.

Working with adult learners, OSI considers all educational pathways for personal and professional growth and improvement, connecting with the university community and businesses across the state to advance professional development opportunities and support lifelong learning.

OSI's focus is on collaboration and offering and/or creating both credit and noncredit

educational programs. Its experience with adult learners and university resources allows OSI to develop programming—including budgets, schedules, and locale—that meets business and industry needs.

A notable example of how OSI creates and fosters partnerships can be seen in its relationships with other colleges within the University. Achieving a Bachelor of Science in nursing for practicing nurses with an associate's degree is both a sought-after nursing goal and an important professional milestone in the nursing profession.

Around 2013, the federal government implemented a new mandate for hospitals that required 80 percent of their working nurses to hold B.S. degrees in nursing. Part-

nering with the College of Nursing, OSI immediately acted to provide a two-year program for Rhode Island hospitals to consider this program for their nurses. In the fall of 2013, OSI committed to its first strategic partnership with Care New England (CNE) and launched its B.S. in nursing academic program for its nurses. Ten years later in spring 2022, we celebrated the graduation of a final cohort of nurses. In these 10 years, the triple partnership of CNE, College of Nursing, and OSI saw the successful completion of four cohorts of nurses. In total, 65 CNE nurses completed their B.S. degrees, with an additional special cohort of 24 nurses completing their master's degrees in nursing with an administration specialization.

Secret to Success

OSI's programs are modeled to support expeditious completion at a guaranteed cost. CNE agreed to this by providing two other key supports for its nurses:

- Allowing its accepted nurses to attend two classes per semester for one day a week, regardless of their work schedule.
- Providing a sizeable percentage of the funding for the program costs.

In general, OSI noted that the average age of the nurses participating in the B.S. degree program was 37, with each having at least 10 or more years of experience. These nurses are some of the most valuable employees in health care with first-hand experience that can easily be connected to their new learning within a similar cohort group.

The cohort learning model brought employees from a large organization together to share in the learning of new knowledge and skills and created enduring internal connections for the nurses. A nurse working at Kent Hospital may not easily or regularly engage with a nurse working at Butler Hospital. However, learning together on their educational journey allowed them to connect with each other and exchange knowledge about their different areas of nursing.

This spontaneous aspect of the program was seen as a tremendous added value by their employer. By providing other supportive aspects—classes that met once a week on the same day and at the same times throughout the program, classes that met at a location with easy access, and utilizing employer financial support—OSI saw a 100 percent completion rate for every cohort.

South County Hospital was another partner that adopted this same model for 23 of its successful nurse graduates in their learning cohort. They utilized the same supportive structures from their employer of one-day classes and financial support for the costs. Even within a smaller hospital setting, connecting nurses who work in different departments and on different shifts is not an easy task. Nurses in the URI/South County Hospital cohort were able to learn together, fostering new relationships and assisting in the transfer of new knowledge and skills throughout the hospital system.

Using the strength of partnerships, collaboration, and flexibility, OSI works with many entities to manage off-campus programs and provide an exclusive level of customer support for the multiple cohorts of enrolled students.

The B.S. in nursing degree is one academic program that became a powerful professional success model, helping Rhode Island's health industry meet both its internal requirements and those of the new federal mandate. There was a large return on investment for the nurses who could more easily afford to earn their B.S. degrees and who had an opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills for their nursing practice. Not only were these professional nurses supported by their employers through the cost and time of earning at least 40 college credits, but the collaborative partnership between the University and these hospital systems provided the added benefit of URI's positive economic and educational impact for our state.

Another important partnership is with URI's College of Business. Its highly successful M.B.A. program has seen students from many industries earn their degrees. The College of Business has offered its M.B.A. program to the Pfizer pharmaceutical company since 2010, with 154 Pfizer employees graduating with M.B.A. degrees from URI, including 19 who graduated in May 2022. This last group of students comprised OSI's 11th cohort of students. A new cohort began in fall 2022. Working in partnership with the College of Business, OSI offered collaboration, flexibility, and concierge services needed to support these working professionals.

The College of Business is now also successfully delivering an important global educational partnership with its M.B.A.

program with students from Széchenyi István University in Hungary. The triple partnership accepted its third cohort of students in fall 2022.

In spring 2022, OSI graduated its first cohort of 10 Hungarian students, eight of whom traveled to the United States to attend their URI graduation ceremony.

Additionally, the College of Business, in partnership with OSI, launched a Doctorate in Business Administration, a new specially designed program for experienced working professionals, enrolling leaders from across the globe in all industries. This program began in fall 2020, and cohort three was welcomed in fall 2022.

In its partnership with URI's College of Engineering, OSI is currently offering a master's degree in engineering, in partnership with Raytheon Technologies. OSI is delivering this program to Raytheon's employees, incorporating many of the same details that have worked so successfully with other academic programs and businesses.

Using the strength of partnerships, collaboration, and flexibility, OSI works with many entities to manage off-campus programs and provide an exclusive level of customer support for the multiple cohorts of enrolled students.

Whether or not an employer is subsidizing an employee's enrollment costs, OSI programs are designed to incorporate three essential elements:

- The cohort learning model.
- An expeditious program timeframe to completion.
- A guaranteed cost price for the duration of the program.

These elements allow businesses and students to best plan their successful path to completion. This targeted approach results in the tremendous success of a 100 percent student retention rate. It also allows businesses and URI colleges to engage and collaborate in very creative ways.

OSI easily and quickly works with all URI colleges and statewide industries to meet the ever-changing challenges of our state's economy, while addressing new federal and state mandates, pressing business needs, educational initiatives, and newly developed local and global partnerships to train and enhance the workforce in our state, the country, and around the globe.



Adapted Aquatics: URI Students Run YMCA Program for Adults with Disabilities

BY JANE FUSCO

Students in Emily Clapham's EDC 588 Disability Sports course don't come to class with a notebook or laptop. Instead, they bring towels and swim gear.

issues, some are in wheelchairs, but all take part and enjoy the therapeutic experience. Caregivers can also participate.

"It is important that people with disabilities

'A pool offers an environment where everyone can move freely and be more independent.'

—Emily Clapham

Since April, Clapham, associate professor of health and physical education, meets her students on Wednesday afternoons at the South County YMCA to conduct an adapted aquatics program for adults with disabilities. The URI students manage the program and lead the exercises. They receive fieldwork credit, which is required for completion of their coursework.

The program—made possible by a \$4,000 grant from the John E. Fogarty Foundation for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities—combines socialization and fitness.

Most of the participants have mobility

feel included. This gives them that opportunity with a class and a community," said Clapham.

Clapham, a leader in fitness transformation, designed the program because there wasn't a place for adults with disabilities to exercise.

"A pool offers an environment where everyone can move freely and be more independent," she said.

Additionally, the YMCA offered more pool availability and is a central location so people in the community could participate.

Clapham has also worked extensively with children with disabilities, having devel-

oped surfing and ocean therapy programs as part of URI's Xtreme Inclusion program. Some of the children who participated in her programs are now adults participating in the adapted aquatics program.

Clapham's students are training to become health and physical education teachers. Along with her students, she has created elective courses in dance and weight training; yoga in elementary schools; adventure education in high schools; and jogging and walking clubs before and after school.

Student Roma Gaschler recalls how one participant always asked her a question that made her day.

"Every Monday when I would walk in, John would always ask me, 'Are you happy?'" she said. "He was willing to explore different exercises and routines, which made me excited. He was willing to challenge himself, and I've never been so proud."

Clapham wants to inspire her students to transform the physical education class experience. She hopes they will implement a version of the adapted aquatics program in the communities and schools where they will eventually work and teach.

Alumni Spotlight

A History Teacher Looks to the Future

BY RENEE BUISSON

Caroline Ricci '72 credits her URI education as the catalyst for her successful and fulfilling career as a high school history teacher in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

"I loved studying history, and I had a wonderful experience at URI," said Ricci. "The University changed dramatically while I was in school, as did all of society. It was a very turbulent time, but I have a lot of terrific memories, like attending the Renaissance Ball that Professor Charles Daniel used to arrange."

Sometime after graduation, the University recruited Ricci to call fellow alumni to make contributions.

"I realized that it would be important for me to demonstrate my commitment, so I started to give," she said.

"I was lucky when I went to URI," she added. "My parents paid the tuition for me and my brother. When I was teaching in

"I decided I wanted to set up an endowed scholarship to help students graduate from URI without a lot of debt. I want them to be able to start their lives and build their wealth rather than pay off student loans."

Over the years, Ricci has supported various areas within the University, with scholarships always as her primary focus. She consistently supports women's basketball and athletics, even though she was never an athlete.

"I have found that students who participate in athletics are very focused, and the teamwork seems to build character. I have contributed to the band because I see the commitment of those students, and I have given to (the) immediate use (fund) because I realize that the University needs the flexibility to support projects or students, as needed."

"The people I have met who work at the University of Rhode Island Foundation & Alumni Engagement listen to what I want to accomplish and have been very helpful in directing my gifts."

Ricci returns to campus regularly, often to attend a basketball or football game. Once, she and her brother even brought a friend who had not been back to campus in almost 50 years.

"He was incredibly impressed by how much the campus has changed—he almost didn't recognize it. The new buildings and the changes to the older buildings are amazing. I am so proud of how URI has built its academic reputation, of all that has been accomplished, and its plans for the future. I want to ensure that students have access to this wonderful University."

If interested in investing in the future of URI and its students, consider including the URI in your legacy plans. Contact Linnell Bickford at 401.874.2647 or ljbickford@uri.edu to learn more.

'The people I have met who work at the University of Rhode Island Foundation & Alumni Engagement listen to what I want to accomplish and have been very helpful in directing my gifts.'

—Caroline Ricci '72

Lincoln, I would see students waving their acceptance letters with excitement and I'd hoped that they would not have big loans to repay after they graduate."

Now, 35 years later, Ricci—still a contributor to URI's areas of greatest need through the RodyNow annual giving program—has decided to leave a gift in her will to establish an endowed scholarship.



Caroline Ricci '72



Degree Started as Teen, To Be Finished as Grandmother

Life sent Julie Smith in directions that made completing the degree she started as an 18-year-old challenging. But today, nearly 35 years later, she is on track to graduate from URI in May 2023, thanks to persistence, dedication, and help from URI's Professional Leadership Studies degree program.

BY JULIE SMITH '23

At 52 years old, it's time to finish what I started when I was 18 and get that college degree.

I am grateful to be at URI, selecting classes, learning, and engaging with others. I am grateful for the support and encouragement from my family, friends, and mentors to guide me. Most importantly, I am grateful that I never gave up!

After all, like many older students, getting here hasn't been easy. In fact, at some points in my life, a college degree seemed nearly impossible.

I was an inquisitive child who loved school, and attending college certainly was the plan. But life happened and plans changed. I planned to graduate high school in 1988, but I was 16 and expecting a child. Teenage pregnancy has a way of changing your trajectory in life. After trying for a time to navigate being a student and a young mother, I withdrew from high school, brokenhearted.

When I chose to stay home and raise my child, I decided that at 18, I would take my general equivalency exams and enroll in

CCRI the following fall. Although I wasn't in class as a traditional student, it was important to me to start college with my graduating class.

I took the exams and walked across that stage to accept my GED, eight months' pregnant with my second son, as my 2-year-old son cheered me on from the audience. "That's Mommy," he said, as I accepted my diploma, feeling an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment for both of us. I wanted to continue my studies, so I took two classes at CCRI and a few more the next

semester. Then life took over. Again. I was in a difficult marriage, raising children, and the stress of life was taking its toll. It became increasingly difficult to keep up with my coursework. I had to take a leave from college.

My life became all about keeping my family together. Although I loved being a mom, I had unfinished business. I longed to be in the classroom to continue my education.

I needed to focus on my personal growth as a woman, learn about the world around me, and gain the necessary skills for a career. I enrolled in URI's Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies program, part time, when my youngest child turned 3. Finally, something that was for me. I dove into reading books by Maya Angelou, Elie Wiesel, and Professor Stephen Grubman-Black. I wrote feverishly about what I was reading, as I couldn't get enough of the stories they told. It was at this time I found myself relating to the authors and their plights, and I was hooked once again. But, once again, I couldn't stay.

Over the years, I would attend classes when I could, switching majors, and colleges, until the inevitable happened—I got divorced. I was now completely on my own, with three boys to care for, a mortgage, and bills to pay, so I needed to work full time. I'd take classes when possible, and when the pressure became too great, I would stop again. I was in a never-ending cycle of enrolling, attending, and pausing my degree while trying to navigate my life and career as a single parent. I didn't have a clear path ahead.

Until now.

Today, my boys are adults, and I'm remarried to a wonderful man. I am still employed at the same company 22 years later.

But it wasn't enough. I needed to finish what I began so long ago.

In the fall of 2021, I applied to URI's Professional Leadership Studies degree program.

I enjoy learning about the different leadership styles and practices, especially authentic leadership and mindfulness practices and how they manifest in us within the business setting. I totally get this! And although we'd like to avoid the topic, it is interesting explor-



'I am grateful to be at URI, selecting classes, learning, and engaging with others. I am grateful for the support and encouragement from my family, friends, and mentors to guide me. Most importantly, I am grateful that I never gave up!'

—Julie Smith '23

ing traits that constitute bad leadership, while dissecting the dynamics of how and why this happens and what we can do as leaders to avoid the pitfalls of bad leadership. This program has opened my eyes to my own leadership philosophies and competencies while allowing for my own personal growth and career development. The small class sizes give us ample time to have thoughtful and insightful conversations with one another, and, because we are mostly adult learners, we bring a wealth of experience into the classroom.

But as my younger years have proven, going back to college as an adult learner is not an easy feat when you have a full-time career, family obligations, and a busy lifestyle.

Many of my weekends are spent reading, reflecting, and writing or working with other students.

There are some days I have to decline invitations and pass on opportunities so I can complete my class projects. But this will only be temporary.

This year, I took the extra step and applied to be a peer mentor for 2022. I was accepted, along with two fellow students.

During the application process, I was asked, "Why do you want to be a peer mentor?"

My answer: "Although these are exciting times and we look forward to jumping right in, returning to college as an adult learner while juggling a career and family life can be quite intimidating. Navigating through the path of our college career, selecting a degree, meeting with advisors, understanding course requirements, and time management can be daunting. Knowing there is someone, a fellow student to help along the way, one who understands the journey, is invaluable. Just knowing there will be someone to greet you for Orientation may be the extra nudge to get you there. I often found myself trying to go it alone and ultimately withdrew, needlessly. It's important to feel supported, and I'd like to be that someone for another student."

During my independent study class, my advisor Jeff Johnson asked, "Why is it every time I see you here, you have a great big smile on your face?"

I replied, "Jeff, I am just so happy to be here and grateful to have this opportunity to finish my degree."

Every time I say those words, my eyes well up because, finally, after all this time, I can actually see my graduation coming to fruition with each class I take and every assignment I turn in. In May 2023, I plan to proudly walk across that stage to get my long-awaited diploma, with my husband, children, and grandchildren in attendance.

I hope my grandchildren will say, "That's my Nana."

And yes, I will be smiling!



Stefanie Argus, right, as a Brownie (second level of Girl Scouting) at age 8, holding her troop's banner.



Stefanie Argus

In her newest role as chair of the Western Hemisphere Regional Committee, Argus will be part of an 18-member board for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, responsible for overseeing the programs in 152 countries, serving a total of 10 million girls and young women worldwide.

And what about the famous Girl Scout cookies?

"Selling Girl Scout cookies is the first entrepreneurial opportunity for many Girl Scouts, who are at the helm of owning their own small businesses," Argus said. The money from the cookie sales stays local and helps Girl Scouts participate in experiences including travel opportunities and Girl Scout camp.

Argus also proudly points out that three Girl Scout cookie flavors are rated among the U.S.'s favorite cookies: Thin Mints, Caramel Delights (aka Samoas), and Peanut Butter Patties (aka Tagalongs).

With all her studies and job responsibilities, Argus plans to keep "a very organized schedule."

"It's not just a commitment, it is a promise to be part of writing this next chapter for our international organization," Argus said.

With this promise, Argus will focus her doctoral research on centering the narratives of women who are working toward antiracist activism in academic and professional work.

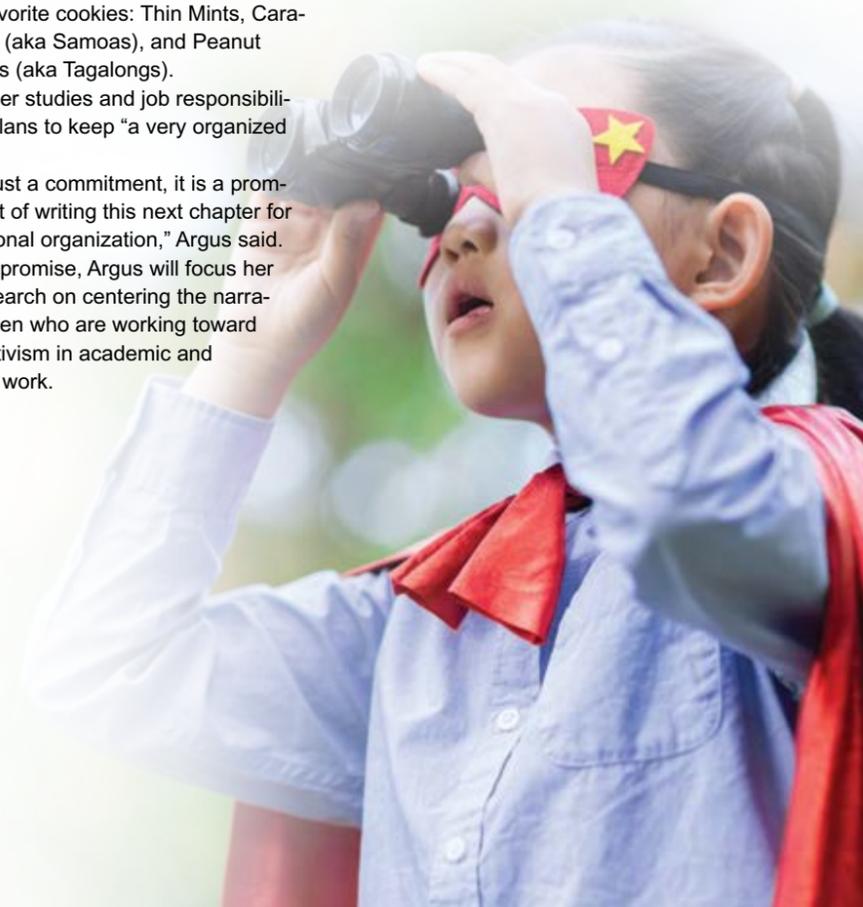
ogy from Mount Holyoke College, a master's degree in adventure education from Prescott College, and is certified as a pre-K-2 educator and TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) instructor.

In her newest role as chair of the Western Hemisphere Regional Committee, Argus will be part of an 18-member board for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, responsible for overseeing the programs in 152 countries, serving a total of 10 million girls and young women worldwide.

On the national level with Girl Scouts of USA, Argus has supported strategic planning, fund development and coaching, developing new programs for young girls, and creating domestic and international travel opportunities for older girls.

"I'm really honored to serve the movement in this capacity," she said. "I am especially anxious to support additional countries to become full members. The region is specifically working with Nicaragua and St. Kitts and Nevis."

Argus is no stranger to the value of such programs, having participated in Girl Scouts until she was 18, when she received the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest honor a Girl Scout can receive, for the development of an after-school mentoring and activities program for students in grades four through six who wouldn't typically have access to such opportunities.



Changing the World

Ph.D. Student Sees Power, Resilience in Girl Scouting

BY JANE FUSCO

Stefanie Argus, Ph.D. '23, has been involved with the Girl Scouts of the USA since she was 5 years old and has continued her commitment to the organization for three decades, most recently being named chair of the Western Hemisphere Regional Committee, which manages governance and operations for 35 countries across North and South America and the Caribbean, serving nearly 2 million girls and young women.

Argus is also a graduate assistant in URI's Women's Center for the 2022-2023 school year and a doctoral student in URI's education program, hoping to one day use her combined skills to teach at the college level and empower her students with the same confidence and innovation that Girl

Scouting experiences gave to her.

"Girl Scouts and Girl Guiding are braided into my identity," she said, having worked for the organization in various capacities from volunteer to local and national assignments up to the global level. "The leadership skills I learned are relevant and helped build resilience."

In 2016, Argus was hired for a staff position with the Girl Scouts and relocated from Nevada to Rhode Island, which, she said, immediately "felt like home." Since she had planned on pursuing her Ph.D. once she settled in, URI became her first and only choice. Argus has worked in nonformal educational settings for more than 10 years and holds a bachelor's degree in education and psychol-

'Girl Scouts and Girl Guiding are braided into my identity.'

—Stefanie Argus

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Fishermen's Memorial, Camp Cronin
by Mike Bryce '94

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