THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**April 30, 2026**
**3:00 pm**
Edwards Auditorium,
Kingston Campus

*Reception 4:00 - 6:00 pm*
*Robert J. Higgins Welcome Center*

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## HONORS TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Associate Teaching Professor Hanan Mogawer**
*Department of Chemistry,*
*College of Arts and Sciences*

Dr. Hanan Mogawer is an associate teaching professor of chemistry at the University of Rhode Island whose work exemplifies the transformative power of inclusive, student-centered teaching. She has her masters and PhD in chemical engineering from URI and with a master's degree in chemistry education from Brown University, she brings both disciplinary expertise and pedagogical innovation to the classroom.

Known for her dynamic and collaborative approach, Dr. Mogawer creates learning environments where curiosity thrives and every student voice is valued. She views teaching as a reciprocal process, emphasizing that she learns from her students as much as they learn from her.

Her commitment to inclusive excellence extends beyond the classroom. Dr. Mogawer has developed interdisciplinary lessons that make chemistry accessible and relevant, while also helping students build confidence and a sense of belonging. She co-secured a Champlin Foundation grant to establish a cutting-edge laboratory, providing hands-on learning opportunities for hundreds of students and strengthening connections between chemistry and engineering education.

Through her innovative teaching, mentorship, and dedication to equity, Dr. Mogawer has had a profound impact on student success and engagement at URI. She is widely recognized for cultivating classrooms that are not only intellectually rigorous but also welcoming and empowering for all learners. In recognition of these contributions, she was honored with the Faculty Excellence in Inclusive Teaching Award, The General Education Award and now the Honors Teaching Excellence Award, celebrating her lasting influence on students, colleagues, and the broader university community.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Associate Professor Doug Reed**
*Department of Philosophy,*
*College of Arts and Sciences*

Dr. Doug Reed, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Rhode Island, is honored for his outstanding contributions to the university's general education program [through his course PHL 110G: Love and Sex]. Specializing in Ancient Western Philosophy and ethics, Dr. Reed brings philosophical inquiry into contemporary life, helping students examine complex questions about relationships, identity, and human connection.

In his classroom, philosophy becomes a practical tool rather than an abstract discipline. Dr. Reed creates a dynamic and intellectually engaging learning environment where students explore topics such as love, desire, commitment, consent, and betrayal through philosophical frameworks. His course blends rigorous academic content with personal relevance, encouraging students to apply philosophical reasoning to real-world questions that are often deeply meaningful and sometimes difficult to discuss.

Central to Dr. Reed's teaching is his ability to foster an inclusive, respectful classroom climate where all students feel heard and valued. He intentionally integrates diverse perspectives and creates space for students to engage in open, thoughtful dialogue around issues of identity, relationships, and ethical responsibility. Students consistently describe his course as transformative, noting increased confidence in participating in discussions and a lasting impact on how they understand themselves and their relationships.

By positioning philosophy as a practical tool for navigating life, Dr. Reed helps students develop critical thinking skills that extend far beyond the classroom. His approach exemplifies excellence in general education by creating a unique and impactful learning experience, connecting theory to practice, and supporting equitable, student-centered learning.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT WRITING EXCELLENCE AWARD
## THE THEME OF HOPE

**Brooke Gallant**
*Department of Biological Sciences,*
*College of the Environment and Life Sciences*

Brooke Gallant is a dedicated first year student, majoring in Biological Sciences with a minor in leadership skills on a medical track at the University of Rhode Island. Over the past year, Brooke has achieved significant accomplishments, including being named Event Manager Coordinator in the club Purpose For Paws, becoming recognized as a member of the sorority Sigma Kappa, and now most importantly earning the URI 2026 Writing Excellence Award. Through these efforts, she has not only excelled personally but has also contributed to the growth and success of her peers. Beyond academic and professional achievements, Brooke is committed to making the world a better place through community service. Whether through trash cleanups or gathering donations for those who need it most, she strives to create a lasting, positive change. Today, we recognize Brooke Gallant not only for outstanding achievements, but for her journey marked by purpose and impact. Please join us in celebrating this well-deserved honor.

Forty-three Seconds
By: Brooke Gallant

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## GRADUATE STUDENT WRITING EXCELLENCE AWARD
## THE THEME OF HOPE

**Ariel Leahy**
*Department of Natural Resource Sciences,*
*College of the Environment and Life Sciences*

Ariel Leahy is a PhD candidate in the Comparative Ecophysiology of Animals Lab (CEAL Lab) in the Natural Resource Sciences Department at URI. Broadly, her research investigates the adaptations marine mammals have evolved to tolerate and manipulate the marine environment. She works at the intersection of several physiological disciplines including anatomy, biomechanics, and gas dynamics to answer questions about the evolution of aquatic maneuvering capacity and diving capabilities in marine mammals. She particularly enjoys comparing these physiological adaptations across marine mammal taxa. Ariel is also an artist and often combines her passions for art and STEM by incorporating hand drawn illustrations into her presentations and publications. Beyond her research, Ariel is a cat mom, and a lover of dancing, conversation, and good food.

The poem “My WOMEN” was written about the power of female friendship. During the darkest point of her life, Ariel’s best girlfriends rallied around her, absorbed her grief and hoisted her out of the void. Her friends’ unyielding love and support gave her hope that things would become brighter one day. And things did, eventually become brighter. Ariel wrote this poem as a way to process the complex and contradicting emotions of her emptiness and grief with the fulfilled gratefulness poured into her by her best friends.

My WOMEN
By Ariel Leahy

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## PART-TIME FACULTY TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Part Time Faculty Michael J. Nedwidek**
*Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education*

Michael Nedwidek is a dedicated educator whose career in health and physical education spans more than four decades. After 38 years of teaching at the middle- and high-school levels in the Chariho School District, he joined the University of Rhode Island in 2017 as a part-time faculty member in Health and Physical Education. Since then, he has become an invaluable member of the HPE program, teaching nine different courses across 12 consecutive semesters and supervising student teachers and residents in the field.

Mr. Nedwidek brings to URI a rare combination of deep expertise, genuine enthusiasm, and an unwavering commitment to student success. His classes—ranging from introductory courses for freshmen to advanced field placements for seniors and graduate students—are consistently praised for their engaging structure, supportive environment, and practical relevance. Student evaluations are consistently strong, reflecting both his teaching excellence and his ability to connect meaningfully with learners. Many former students continue to seek his guidance long after graduation, a testament to his lasting impact.

Beyond the classroom, Mr. Nedwidek has contributed significantly to the growth and vitality of the HPE program. He has participated in accreditation efforts, advocated for student resources, mentored emerging educators, and supported program operations in countless ways. His colleagues value his optimism, humor, collaborative spirit, and thoughtful approach to feedback.

With his extensive field experience, compassionate teaching style, and steadfast dedication to the profession, Michael Nedwidek is an exceptional educator whose influence continues.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH MENTORING EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Associate Professor Samantha A. Meenach**
*Department of Chemical, Biomolecular, and Materials Engineering,*
*College of Engineering*

Samantha Meenach is an Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering and the Victor J. Baxt Endowed Chair at the University of Rhode Island. With joint appointments in chemical engineering and pharmaceutical sciences, her research in aerosol therapeutics also serves as a foundation for transformative undergraduate research training.

Since 2013, she has mentored more than 70 undergraduate researchers, involving them as full contributors in original, publishable scientific work. Her students have earned major national honors, including Goldwater Scholarships and NSF Graduate Research Fellowships, as well as top conference awards, and have progressed to leading doctoral programs.

Her mentorship approach emphasizes intentionality, inclusivity, and sustained engagement. As Principal Investigator of the NIH-funded ESTEEMED program and former Director of the RI-INBRE Training Core, she has developed accessible research pathways, particularly for students from underrepresented backgrounds. These programs help students build early research identity, confidence, and long-term academic success.

A certified facilitator in evidence-based mentoring, Dr. Meenach combines rigor with empathy, shaping students into independent thinkers, collaborators, and future scientific leaders.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## ACADEMIC IMPACT EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Clinical Professor Anita N. Jacobson**
*Department of Pharmacy Practice,*
*College of Pharmacy*

Dr. Anita N. Jacobson is a clinical pharmacist, educator, and nationally recognized public health leader whose work advances the University of Rhode Island's mission as a student-centered, land- and sea-grant research institution dedicated to the public good, diversity, sustainability, and global impact. With over 25 years of experience, she has built and led innovative, interdisciplinary programs that address the opioid crisis through education, outreach, and systems-level change.

As Program Director and Principal Investigator of the Community First Responder Program and the Northeast Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Center, Dr. Jacobson has secured and managed significant state and federal funding to expand overdose prevention efforts across Rhode Island and New England. Her initiatives have trained more than 18,000 individuals in overdose response, distributed over 225,000 naloxone kits, and conducted over 500 outreach events, dramatically increasing public readiness to respond to opioid-related emergencies.

Dr. Jacobson's work is deeply collaborative, bringing together healthcare systems, public health agencies, first responders, educators, and community organizations to build sustainable, community-centered solutions. Her leadership also spans policy and professional engagement, with contributions to statewide overdose prevention strategies, service on the Rhode Island Opioid Fatality Review Committee, and elected roles in both local and national pharmacy organizations.

In addition to her community impact, Dr. Jacobson is a dedicated educator in the Doctor of Pharmacy program, where she integrates patient-centered care, motivational interviewing, and harm reduction principles into training the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Through her leadership, scholarship, and service, Dr. Jacobson exemplifies the power of academic expertise in action by improving lives, strengthening communities, and advancing public health at scale.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## URI TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Professor Theresa A. Deeney**
*Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education*

Dr. Theresa Deeney is a professor of literacy education and coordinator of the Master of Arts in Education/Reading Education and the Graduate Certificate in Dyslexia Knowledge and Practice programs at the University of Rhode Island, where she has been a cornerstone of teacher preparation for nearly 25 years. Her teaching is grounded in a deep understanding of reading research and best practices, and she is widely recognized for her ability to translate complex literacy concepts into engaging, practical learning experiences for future educators. Students consistently describe her as both highly rigorous and deeply supportive, fostering confidence alongside competence. A hallmark of Dr. Deeney's work is her commitment to bridging theory and practice.

Through initiatives such as the URI Afterschool Literacy Program and Reading Clinic, she has created sustained, hands-on learning environments where undergraduate and graduate students provide individualized literacy support to children in local communities. These experiences not only strengthen students' instructional skills but also reflect Dr. Deeney's dedication to equity and access in education.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Deeney has demonstrated significant leadership in advancing literacy education. She developed Rhode Island's first approved Graduate Certificate in Dyslexia Knowledge and Practice and has played an influential role in shaping state-level literacy initiatives. Her work has also reached educators internationally through professional development efforts focused on equitable literacy instruction. Deeney's impact is both immediate and enduring, shaping not only the educators she teaches, but the countless children and communities they go on to serve.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## OUTSTANDING DOCTORAL RESEARCH AWARD

**Juliana Agudelo Areiza**
*Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences,*
*College of Pharmacy*

Dr. Areiza earned her Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences at URI, specializing in Pharmacology and Toxicology. Her research examines how PFAS, persistent environmental toxicants, accumulate in tissues, disrupt protein homeostasis, and contribute to adverse health outcomes. Her work includes studies on neonatal neurotoxicity following maternal PFAS exposure, trends in PFAS accumulation across human liver samples, and paired liver-serum analyses exploring individual variability.

She led a major study quantifying PFAS in human livers collected across the United States from 2000 to 2024, identifying declining legacy compounds alongside rising emerging PFAS and highlighting the roles of age, sex, and liver disease.

Juliana has also developed innovative laboratory methods and computational tools for large-scale data analysis. As a postdoctoral fellow at URI, she serves as laboratory manager and scientific lead, directing PFAS research across human, rodent, and fish models.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## OUTSTANDING MASTER'S THESIS RESEARCH AWARD

**Anna Cetera**
*Department of Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering, College of Engineering*

Ms. Anna Cetera is a graduate student in Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering pursuing a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering. She earned dual degrees in Biomedical Engineering and Spanish through URI's International Engineering Program, combining technical training with global experience.

In the Translational Neurorobotics Laboratory, her master's research focuses on developing noninvasive brain-computer interfaces to decode brain activity during visuomotor tasks. Guided by Dr. Reza Abiri, she studies the neural mechanisms underlying upper-limb movement, examining how the brain coordinates and executes motor processes. Using advanced signal processing and deep learning, she identifies frequency-specific brain patterns linked to hand movements and motor intent.

Her work supports the development of clinically accessible brain-machine interfaces and neuroprosthetic technologies aimed at restoring hand function and improving independence for individuals with paralysis. By integrating neuroscience, engineering, and data-driven modeling, her research contributes to the advancement of next-generation assistive neurotechnology.

# UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## OUTSTANDING GRADUATE MENTORING AWARD

**Professor Nicole H. Weiss**
*Department of Psychology,*
*College of Health Sciences*

Dr. Weiss is a Professor of Psychology and Director of the STRESS Lab, recognized for fostering a rigorous, collaborative, and highly supportive training environment. Since 2017, her graduate mentees have co-authored more than 150 publications, with over 65 as first authors, and have led numerous competitive grant submissions, including six NIH F31 awards.

Dr. Weiss integrates scientific excellence with a strong commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in her mentoring. She emphasizes culturally responsive research and prepares trainees to work effectively with marginalized and systemically excluded populations. Her mentorship has been recognized through her selection to the URI Graduate School Graduate Mentoring Committee and national honors, including the Outstanding Mentorship Award from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies and the Nancy Petry Mid-Career Award from APA Division 50.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT
## SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND HUMANITIES

**Francesca Fontaine**
*Department of Nutrition,*
*College of Health Sciences*

Ms. Francesca Fontaine is an undergraduate researcher and student at the University of Rhode Island, where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Public Health with a minor in Nutrition and Food Science. Expected to graduate in 2026, she has earned Dean's List recognition while building a record of research, leadership, and academic excellence.

Fontaine is an active member of the Sustainable Dietary Innovations (SeDI) Lab under the mentorship of Assistant Professor Isaac Agbemafle, where she has contributed to research projects focused on sustainable food systems and dietary behavior. Her work includes validating an Excel-based diet solver using USDA food composition data and comparing it to commercial tools such as Cronometer. She has also led the development of a sustainable eating assessment tool for use in URI dining halls, a project funded by a competitive undergraduate research grant. Through these experiences, she has demonstrated analytical, methodological, and problem solving skills.

In addition, Fontaine has played a key role in research examining food sustainability knowledge and behaviors among college students, contributing to survey design, data analysis using R, and interpretation of findings. She has presented her work at the College of Health Sciences Research Night and will present at the American Society for Nutrition conference.

Beyond research, Fontaine serves as an undergraduate teaching assistant in the Nutrition Department and mentors fellow students in the lab. With her academic foundation and passion for sustainability and public health, she is well prepared for future graduate study and a career as a registered dietitian nutritionist.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT
## LIFE SCIENCES, PHYSICAL SCIENCES, AND ENGINEERING

**Terran AlbergoMcGovern**
*Department of Mathematics,*
*College of Arts and Sciences*

Mr. Terran AlbergoMcGovern is an accomplished undergraduate scholar at the University of Rhode Island, where he is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics with a minor in Physics. Expected to graduate in May 2026 with a 3.95 GPA, AlbergoMcGovern has distinguished himself through exceptional academic performance in advanced coursework, including graduate studies in Complex Function Theory, Abstract Algebra, and Matrix Analysis.

Known for his intellectual curiosity and deep engagement with mathematics, AlbergoMcGovern consistently demonstrates originality and insight in his work. He frequently develops his own approaches to complex proofs and contributes thoughtful, high-level questions that reflect a genuine passion for mathematical discovery. Faculty widely recognize him as a standout student whose abilities exceed typical undergraduate expectations.

Beyond the classroom, AlbergoMcGovern has built an impressive record of research and leadership. As an Undergraduate Research Lead in the University AI Lab, he implemented automated data extraction systems, applied analytical models to survey data on artificial intelligence usage, and developed and delivered nine workshops on AI.

He is also a recipient of a URI Undergraduate Research and Innovation Grant for his project on constructing PS3-based supercomputer clusters.

AlbergoMcGovern is equally committed to teaching and mentorship. He has served as a teaching assistant for data science and physics courses and worked extensively as a mathematics and physics tutor, helping students master challenging material. Through his scholarship, research, and dedication to supporting others, AlbergoMcGovern exemplifies academic excellence and is well prepared for advanced study and a career in mathematics or related fields.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## GRADUATE STUDENT
## SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND HUMANITIES

**Michelle A. Stage**
*Department of Psychology,*
*College of Health Sciences*

Ms. Michelle A. Stage is an emerging scholar in social and health psychology and a doctoral candidate in the Behavioral Science Ph.D. program at the University of Rhode Island. Her research focuses on critical public health challenges, including stigma, identity disclosure, patient-provider communication, and structural inequities in healthcare, with a particular emphasis on LGBTQ+ populations. By integrating social and health psychology with policy-relevant inquiry, she examines how environmental cues and institutional systems shape health outcomes among marginalized communities.

Stage has demonstrated exceptional scholarly productivity, authoring eight peer-reviewed publications, including first-authored articles in leading journals such as Translational Issues in Psychological Science and Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy. Her research is both theoretically rigorous and applied, aiming to improve real- world healthcare experiences. As a principal investigator, she has secured competitive funding from organizations including the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues and the Society for Health Psychology, as well as NASA-affiliated Space Grant Consortiums.

Her work has earned national recognition, including the 2025 Graduate Student Research Award for Health Disparities. She was also selected for a prestigious NRSA- sponsored T32 Postdoctoral Fellowship at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, reflecting her strong potential as a future leader in interdisciplinary health research.

Beyond research, Stage is a dedicated educator, mentor, and leader. She has served as an instructor of record, mentored student researchers, and held key leadership roles promoting diversity and inclusion within her department. Her work reflects a deep commitment to advancing equity in both psychological science and healthcare.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## GRADUATE STUDENT
## LIFE SCIENCES, PHYSICAL SCIENCES, AND ENGINEERING

**Dalton L. Stein**
*Department of Mechanical, Industrial and Systems Engineering, College of Engineering*

Mr. Dalton L. Stein is a Ph.D. candidate in Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics at the University of Rhode Island, where he has distinguished himself as an innovative and productive researcher in nonlinear dynamics and computational mechanics. His dissertation focuses on model order reduction of nonlinear mechanical systems, addressing a fundamental challenge in accurately simplifying complex dynamic systems while preserving their essential behavior. He is on track to complete his doctorate in May 2026.

His research broadly focuses on finding linear mappings to reduce large systems of nonlinear ordinary differential equations, emphasizing physical interpretability and computational efficiency. His efforts have led to peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations at major venues such as IMAC and NODYCON. He has authored and co-authored more than seven publications, including a 2024 paper in Nonlinear Dynamics which was recognized in the journal's Editor's Choice Collection for having special significance in the field.

Beyond his dissertation, Stein demonstrates exceptional initiative and leadership. He conceptualized and drafted a successful $441,000 Office of Naval Research grant and developed a numerical continuation code that serves as a state-of-the-art tool in his research lab. Outside of his lab, he contributes to Sandia National Laboratories research efforts, focusing on computational methods for large-scale nonlinear systems.
After completing his degree, he will continue at Sandia as a postdoctoral researcher. Committed to education and outreach, Stein has taught as a teaching assistant and lecturer while supporting STEM initiatives for underrepresented students, demonstrating scholarly excellence and meaningful community impact.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## EARLY CAREER FACULTY
## SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND HUMANITIES

**Assistant Professor Laura Hamman-Ortiz**
*Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Bilingual Education,*
*Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education*

Assistant Professor Laura Hamman-Ortiz is of TESOL and Bilingual Education at the University of Rhode Island, where she has built a distinguished and rapidly growing program of research since joining the faculty in 2022. She earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2018.

Hamman-Ortiz's scholarship sits at the intersection of education and applied linguistics, with a focus on advancing equitable learning environments for multilingual students. Her research explores translanguaging theory and pedagogy, bilingual program design, student identity negotiation, and teacher learning and agency. She is widely recognized for her contributions to understanding how bilingual learners navigate language, identity, and schooling, and for developing innovative, equity-centered approaches to teaching and learning.

A highly productive scholar, Hamman-Ortiz has authored a substantial body of work, including a co-authored book, seventeen peer-reviewed journal articles—thirteen as first or sole author—and multiple book chapters and policy reports. Her work has been published in leading journals such as TESOL Quarterly and Modern Language Journal and has earned significant national and international recognition.

Beyond her research, she is deeply committed to community-engaged scholarship, collaborating with schools, educators, and policymakers to improve bilingual education practices and policies. She is also the founding Director of the URI Translanguaging Lab, which supports research, mentorship, and professional development on multilingualism and multilingual learning. Through her teaching, leadership, and advocacy, Hamman-Ortiz continues to make a meaningful impact on TESOL and bilingual education at local, national, and global levels.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## EARLY CAREER FACULTY
## LIFE SCIENCES, PHYSICAL SCIENCES, AND ENGINEERING

**Assistant Professor Ryan Poling-Skutvik**
*Department of Chemical, Biomolecular, and Materials Engineering, College of Engineering*

Assistant Professor Ryan Poling-Skutvik is of Chemical, Biomolecular, and Materials Engineering, where he has established himself as a leading in soft matter physics and complex fluids. At URI, his research focuses on understanding how soft materials behave and how they can be engineered for advanced applications in areas like biomaterials, energy systems, and industrial processing.

Poling-Skutvik has built a highly successful and well-funded research program, securing over $4 million in external funding from organizations including the National Science Foundation and the American Chemical Society. His work has resulted in nearly 40 peer-reviewed publications in leading journals, which have been cited more than 1,000 times, demonstrating its growing national and international impact. His research contributions include the development of innovative rheological techniques and landmark findings on the mechanical behavior of soft materials.

In addition to his research achievements, Poling-Skutvik is a dedicated educator and mentor. He teaches across the chemical engineering curriculum and is known for his engaging, student-centered teaching style, consistently earning outstanding evaluations. He has mentored numerous graduate and undergraduate students, many of whom have contributed to publications and received academic awards.

His accomplishments have been recognized with prestigious honors, including an NSF CAREER Award and designation as a Cottrell Scholar. Through his research, teaching, and service, Poling-Skutvik continues to advance both his field and the broader scientific community.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## ADVANCED CAREER FACULTY
## SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND HUMANITIES

**Professor Maling Ebrahimpour**
*Supply Chain Management Area,*
*College of Business*

Professor Maling Ebrahimpour is a distinguished scholar, academic leader, and internationally recognized expert in operations and supply chain management. He currently serves as Professor of Operations and Supply Chain Management and Coordinator of OSCM Innovation Initiatives at the University of Rhode Island (URI), where he continues to contribute to research, teaching, and global accreditation efforts.

Over a career spanning several decades, Ebrahimpour has built an exceptional record of scholarly impact, in influential publications in quality management, operations strategy, and global supply chains. His work has shaped both academic research and industry practice, earning him recognition as one of the most highly cited scholars in his field.

In addition to his research, Ebrahimpour has demonstrated transformative leadership in higher education. He served 20 years as dean at multiple institutions, including URI, where he led significant program expansion, fundraising efforts exceeding $25 million, and the creation of innovative academic offerings such as doctoral, and interdisciplinary business programs.

A dedicated mentor and global contributor, he has played a major role in advancing business education through his extensive service with AACSB International, guiding institutions worldwide through accreditation processes. He has also held prominent leadership roles in the Decision Sciences Institute, including serving as its President. Widely respected for his leadership, scholarship, and service, Ebrahimpour's career reflects a lasting commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and the advancement of the global business education community.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## ADVANCED CAREER FACULTY
## LIFE SCIENCES, PHYSICAL SCIENCES, AND ENGINEERING

**Professor William E. Van Nostrand**
*Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, College of Pharmacy*

Professor William E. Van Nostrand is a distinguished neuroscientist and internationally recognized leader in the study of Alzheimer's disease and related cerebrovascular disorders. He serves as the Herrmann Professor of Neuroscience and Professor of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Rhode Island (URI), where he is also Co-Executive Director of the George and Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience.

Van Nostrand's research focuses on the molecular mechanisms underlying amyloid protein accumulation in the brain, particularly in Alzheimer's disease and cerebral amyloid angiopathy (CAA). Early in his career, he achieved a major breakthrough by being the first to purify and characterize the amyloid precursor protein, a key component in the formation of amyloid-β peptides associated with neurodegeneration. His work has since expanded to explore how these proteins interact with the brain's vasculature and contribute to disease progression.

Since joining URI in 2017 Van Nostrand has built a highly productive research program, developing innovative transgenic and gene-edited animal models that have advanced understanding of disease mechanisms and enabled preclinical testing of therapies. He has secured substantial federal and foundation funding and authored over 160 peer- reviewed publications, reflecting his significant impact in the field.

In addition to his scientific contributions, Van Nostrand is a dedicated mentor and collaborator, supporting junior faculty and trainees while fostering interdisciplinary partnerships worldwide. His leadership, scholarship, and commitment to advancing neuroscience research have made him a vital contributor to URI's growing reputation for research excellence.

# RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## INNOVATION: TRANSLATIONAL IMPACT AWARD

**Associate Professor Brennan T. Phillips**
*Department of Ocean Engineering,*
*College of Engineering*

Associate Professor Brennan T. Phillips has demonstrated exceptional leadership in moving deep-sea exploration technology from the laboratory to real-world applications, addressing the critical need for more portable and cost-effective oceanographic tools. His translational work centered on overcoming the limitations of traditional, large-scale equipment by engineering a miniaturized fiber-optic cable as thin as a fishing line, yet capable of transmitting high-bandwidth signals, including live video, from the deep ocean. Through strategic collaborations, he developed a high-strength braided tether and a suitcase-sized winch system that drastically reduced the weight of subsea deployment systems from tons to pounds, securing a joint patent for this groundbreaking innovation.

This technology has successfully transitioned to the commercial sector through its licensing to Nautilus Defense and with Juice Robotics, a startup founded by Phillips' former colleagues dedicated to disruptive ocean data sensing and collection. The cornerstone of this commercialization effort is the HIGH DIVE system (patent pending), which integrates an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) with the patented fiber winch to create a rapid-response ocean-sensing and real time video feed platform. Capable of being deployed from the trunk of a car or a small boat, the HIGH DIVE system represents another milestone of Phillips' translational impact, providing a scalable solution for defense, energy, and scientific research that bridges the gap between academic innovation and market-ready subsea intelligence.

Brennan Phillips is actively engaged in URI's innovation and translational research ecosystem, with participation as an inventor on two URI issued patents and additional pending patent applications. He also leads COE's Engineering Entrepreneurship Minor program.

# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
# UNITED STATES ISSUED PATENTS

JASON DWYER

JAMES HAGAN

*Photoswitchable Binary Nanopore Capable of Detecting Single Molecules*
Associate Dean of Research Jason R. Dwyer, James Hagan
Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island
Grace G. D. Han, Alejandra Gonzalez, Brandeis University

JIMMIE OXLEY

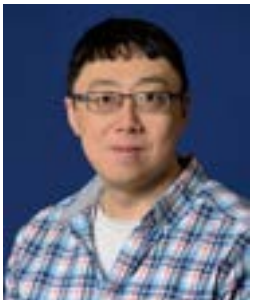
JAMES SMITH

*Apparatus and Methods for Preparation and Introduction of Trace Samples Into an Ionizing Detection System*
Professor Jimmie C. Oxley, Professor James L. Smith, Alexander Yevdokimov
Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island

*Fragmentation Resilience Energy Mass Spectrometry (FREMS)*
Professor Jimmie C. Oxley, Professor James L. Smith, Alexander Yevdokimov, Kevin Colizza
Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island

*Polymer Immobilization Matrix for Containment of Hazardous Materials and Methods of Using the Same*
Professor Jimmie C. Oxley, Professor James L. Smith, Gerald Kagan, Robert Ichiyama
Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island

# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
# UNITED STATES ISSUED PATENTS



FANG WANG

*PNictogen-Containing Heterocyclic Compounds and Their Use*
Assistant Professor Fang Wang, Bradley M. Lipka, Daniel S. Honeycutt
Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island;
Jacob M, Goldberg, Colgate University

---

YANA RESHETNYAK

OLEG ANDREEV

ANNA MOSHNIKOVA

*Fluorescent Compound Comprising a Fluorophore Conjugated to a pH-Triggered Polypeptide*
Professor Yana K. Reshetnyak, Professor Oleg A. Andreev, Assistant Professor Research Anna Moshnikova
Department of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island;
Donald M. Engelman, Yale University

*pHLIP®-Mediated Intracellular Delivery of Immuno-Stimulatory Compounds*
Professor Yana K. Reshetnyak, Professor Oleg A. Andreev, Assistant Professor Research Anna Moshnikova
Department of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island;
Donald M. Engelman, John C. Deacon, Yale University

*pH-Triggered Membrane Peptide-Mediated Epitope Tethering at Cell Surfaces*
Professor Yana K. Reshetnyak, Professor Oleg A. Andreev, Assistant Professor Research Anna Moshnikova
Department of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island;
Donald M. Engelman, Yale University

*Radiolabeled Ligands for Targeted PET/SPECT Imaging and Methods of Their Use*
Professor Yana K. Reshetnyak, Professor Oleg A. Andreev, Assistant Professor Research Anna Moshnikova
Department of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Rhode Island;
Jason S. Lewis, Dustin Wayne Demoin, Nerissa Viola-Villegas, Sloan-Kettering

# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
# UNITED STATES ISSUED PATENTS

SUMANTA DAS

*Polymeric Compositions and Corrosion Resistant Systems*
Associate Professor Sumanta Das, Sumeru Nayak
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Rhode Island

---

DANIEL ROXBURY

*Wearable Optical Microfibrous Material with Encapsulated Nanosensors for Wireless Monitoring of Chemical Analytes*
Associate Professor Daniel E. Roxbury, Mohammad Moein Safaee, Mitchell Gravely
Department of Chemical, Biomolecular, and Materials Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Rhode Island

---

QING YANG

*BUS Authentication and Anti-Probing Architecture*
Professor Qing Q. Yang, Professor Tao Wei, Zhenyu Xu
Department of Electrical, Computer and Biomedical Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Rhode Island

*Method and Apparatus for Runtime Detection of BUS Probing/Tampering in Computer Systems*
Professor Qing Q. Yang, Professor Tao Wei, Zhenyu Xu
Department of Electrical, Computer and Biomedical Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Rhode Island

# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
# UNITED STATES ISSUED PATENTS

OTTO GREGORY

*Glass-Ceramic Thermal Paint System and Method Using Uv:vis Spectroscopy*
Professor Otto J. Gregory, Noah Alexander Burke, Panagiotis Panoutsopoulos, Zachary Ahlquist
Department of Chemical, Biomolecular, and Materials Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Rhode Island

*High Temperature Heat Flux Sensors*
Professor Otto J. Gregory, Noah Alexander Burke, Panagiotis Panoutsopoulos, Zachary Ahlquist
Department of Chemical, Biomolecular, and Materials Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Rhode Island

# URI RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP PHOTO CONTEST

## 1ST PLACE: BUILT-IN NECK PILLOW

**Emily Sperou**
*Postdoctoral Fellow*
*Department of Natural Resources Science, College of the Environment and Life Sciences*

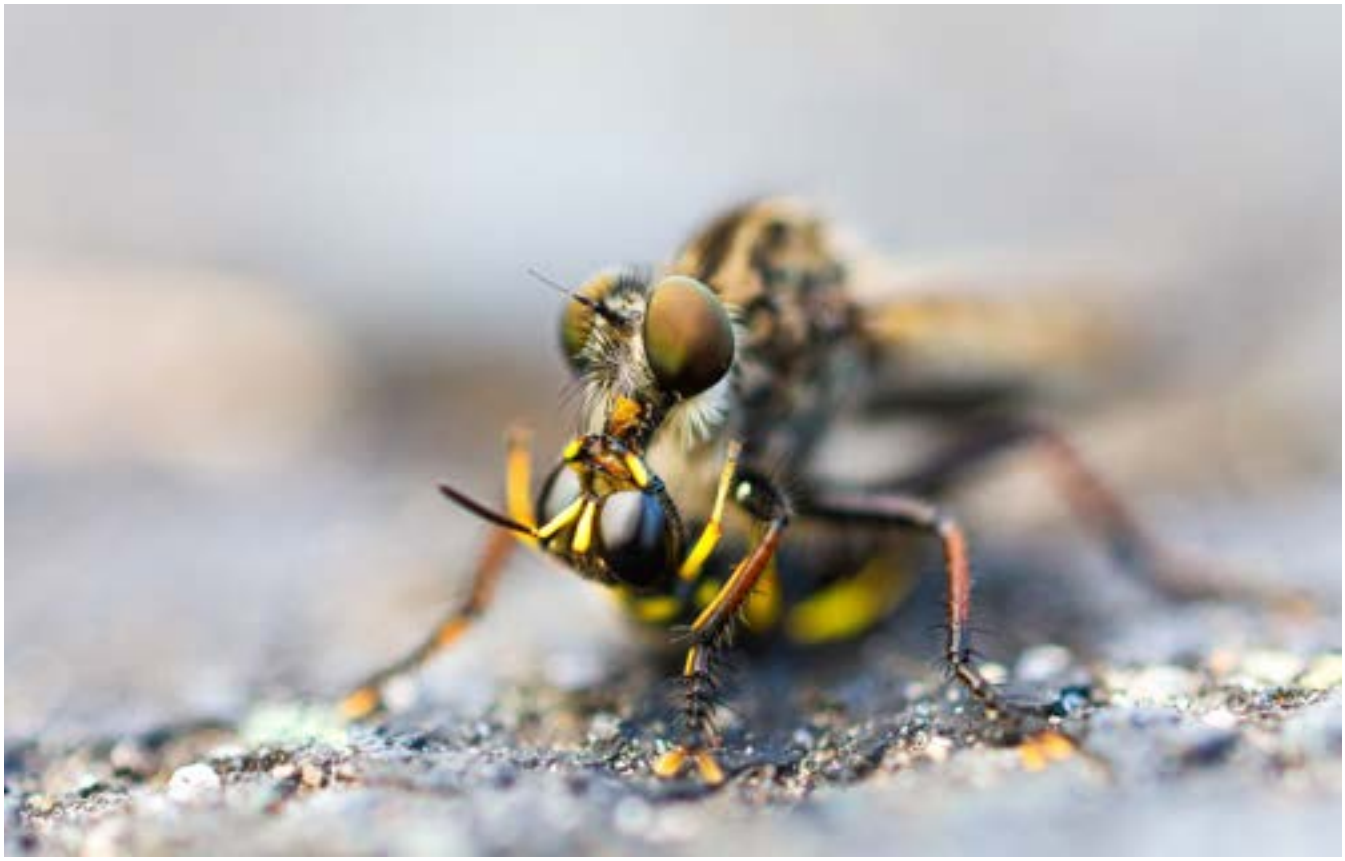
A southern elephant seal pup rests on a rocky beach in South Bay, Antarctica. The recently weaned pup will remain on land, living off stored energy reserves, until it is ready to enter the ocean and begin hunting on its own. The image captures both the vulnerability and resilience of young marine mammals in a demanding and rapidly changing Antarctic environment.

“Although Antarctica feels remote,” says Sperou, “it plays a vital role in regulating Earth’s climate and supporting marine biodiversity worldwide. As climate change accelerates across the region, understanding how marine mammals adapt will be key to protecting these ecosystems and informing global conservation decisions.”

# URI RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP PHOTO CONTEST

## 2ND PLACE: PREDATOR AND POLLINATOR

**Alexia Lanagan '26**
*Undergraduate Student*
*Department of Film/Media Major, College of Arts and Sciences*



Robber flies are predatory insects known for speed and precision. They catch other insects in midair and inject enzymes that break down the insects' bodies so they can consume them. Bees are important pollinators and also part of the food chain. Robber flies are one of the many insects that prey on them.

This photo, taken in Cumberland, R.I., shows a robber fly feeding on a bee. Lanagan says that as a film media student, she has learned how to tell a story through a single frame. The photo, she says, "shows how I use framing, perspective, and attention to detail to turn a moment in nature into a meaningful story."

# URI RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP PHOTO CONTEST

## 3RD PLACE: EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL IN HAND

**Liam Corcoran '18, M.S. '25**
*Research Associate*
*Natural Resources Science, College of the Environment and Life Sciences*

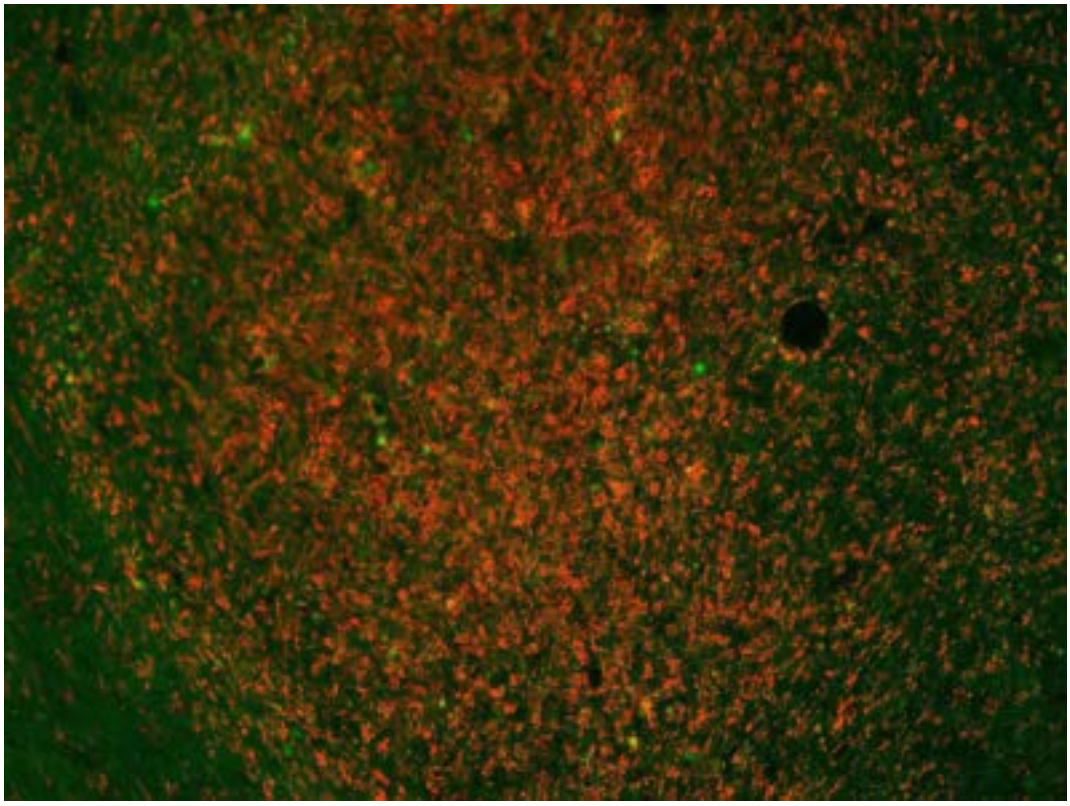
The Eastern whip-poor-will *(Antrostomus vociferus)* population has declined by approximately 70% since 1970 due to habitat loss and declines in insect prey. It is considered a species of greatest conservation need in almost every state within its range. Still, whip-poor-wills are understudied due to their cryptic plumage and nocturnal activity.

This in-the-hand portrait, says Corcoran, was taken at the Marion Eppley Wildlife Refuge in Exeter, R.I., during field work deploying radio transmitters to track the birds' migratory movements from their breeding grounds in R.I. to wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America.

# URI RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP PHOTO CONTEST

## COMMITTEE CHOICE, RESEARCH IMAGE: ACTIVATION OF MICROGLIA IN THE THALAMUS OF A PRECLINICAL MODEL OF CEREBRAL AMYLOID ANGIOPATHY

**Dakota Hunter '25**
*Graduate Student*
*Biopharmaceutical Sciences, College of Pharmacy*



As the population's average age increases, developing treatments for age-related disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease, is a research priority that requires understanding disease mechanisms. In URI's Schrader Lab, says Hunter, "we look at how cerebral amyloid angiopathy (CAA), a form of vascular dementia, and co-morbidity of Alzheimer's disease, progresses, potentially informing the development of therapies and drug interventions for these diseases."

This immunohistochemistry slide shows the activation of an immune response in the thalamus of a preclinical model for CAA at 20 times magnification. The red areas show an inflammatory response in the brain's immune cells, and the green areas show citrullinated histone H3, a protein often found inside cells, but released in a neutrophil extracellular trap, or NET.

**For more information:**

uri.edu/provost/initiatives/awards/academic-excellence-awards-winners

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND