

U  
MASS



**STRONG  
OPINIONS**

- > BACK  
TO WORK
- > TAKING ON  
THE TUNDRA



Photo: Lisa Beth Anderson

# CONTENTS

VOLUME **27** NO. **1** FALL **2022**

*The UMass men's hockey team has made it to the NCAA tournament each of the last three years and won the Frozen Four in 2021. Over the team's history, an impressive 20 players have gone on to play in the NHL. While their collective talents cannot be denied, there is a lesser-known group helping them reach this level of success—the equipment team. Led by Director of Equipment Operations Josh Penn, this team of two to three students is in charge of ordering and maintaining uniforms and equipment, ensuring that each player's skates and hockey stick hold their custom profile. They also make sure the skates' blades (seen here in their case) are always ready—sharpening them before each game.*

— Alexis Ali

## LONG READS >

8

### DEAF WITH A CAPITAL D

A closer look at Deaf culture through courses, colleagues, and alumni

16

### BACK TO WORK

Do we want to return to 'normal'?

26

### THE ANATOMY OF A GIVING HEART

Elaine N. Marieb '69PhD, '85MS shaped the world of nursing in life and beyond

34

### STRONG OPINIONS

UMass Poll tracks how we've changed our minds

## SHORT READS >

12

### WHERE TRUE COLORS SHINE

A first-of-its-kind community celebrates 30 years

22

### AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE OF DESIGN

Inclusivity in learning, clothing, and more

40

### A DECADE OF DREAMING

Living in legal limbo

## IN BRIEF >

6

### WHY IN THE WORLD

30

### SPORTS TALK

14

### AROUND THE POND

32

### STATE OF THE ARTS

24

### INQUIRING MINDS

## BITS >

### On the cover:

Tatishe Nteta, provost professor of political science and director of the UMass Poll, wrestles with a huge arrow—an imagined incarnation of the public opinion data that the poll tracks and analyzes. Story on page 34.

Photo: Lisa Beth Anderson

2

Seen

4

In Other Words

43

Accomplished

44

Connections

46

Class Notes

48

In Memoriam

52

Teachable Moment

### ONLINE



Alumna Terri Cappucci '00, '03MFA finds treasure in glass negatives from the 1800s—and more stories on Extra Credit: [umass.edu/magazine/extra](https://umass.edu/magazine/extra)

# WED 10:43AM> W. E. B. DU BOIS LIBRARY LOBBY

Twice a semester, a group of caring canines (and their humans) come to campus as part of the Paws Program—a mental-health-focused event for students.

Bright Spot Therapy Dogs, a popular local organization that has served the Pioneer Valley since 2004, teamed up with the UMass Peer Health Education program in 2014 to see if bringing trained therapy dogs to campus would help students cope with the stress of studying for midterms and finals. The answer was a resounding yes.

Last April, over 900 students stopped by the Campus Center or the W. E. B. Du Bois Library to get in a quick pet session before braving the rest of their hectic schedules. Gabby Esposito '25PhD says, "Seeing those sweet pups made all of my anxieties disappear for a short moment." The third-year doctoral candidate adds, "It was a fabulous way to start my day!"

Pictured here is Raven Jang '23, an exchange student from Ewha Womans University in Seoul, South Korea, petting therapy pup Sophie.

— Alexis Ali

Photo: Daniel Fillettaz-Domingues



## BECOMING WHO WE ARE

**Each fall**, a new crop of students eagerly leaps forward on the path to self-discovery. Many of us credit our college years with being a hugely important part in the process of becoming who we are. Not just because we’re learning so much academically and rubbing shoulders with new and exciting people and ideas, but also because we’re learning to value our identities, shaping our futures, finding our communities, and, ultimately, our purpose.

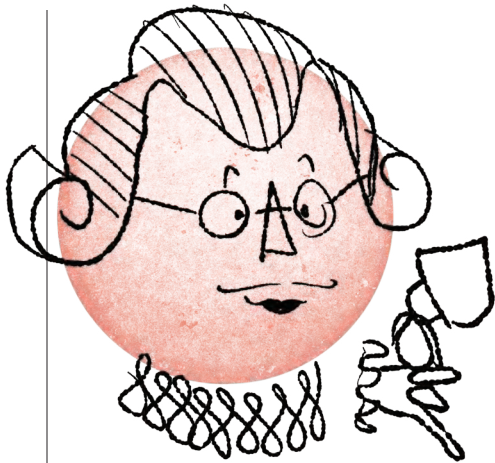
In this issue, we explore how our concepts of identity can shape our world. A researcher originally from Afghanistan pushes back against harmful stereotypes (p. 24), Deaf culture asserts its presence afresh (p. 8), LGBTQ+ students find community in a residence hall (p. 12), and a recent alumna shares how

her immigration status has shaped her opportunities (p. 40).

Of course, growth doesn’t stop when we leave campus. We’re inspired to see how alumni adapt to changes at work (p. 16), improve our daily lives with design innovations (p. 22), and track the restless evolution of public opinion over time, looking for clues about who we might become—in Massachusetts and as a nation (p. 34).

The work of becoming ourselves and enabling a better world continues, with UMass community members reminding us that learning is a lifelong project.

Happy reading,  
Candice Pinault Novak, Editor  
Lori Shine ’04MFA,  
Managing Editor



### JUST A TASTE

Nearly 1,500 readers have taken the UMass food personality quiz featured on the back cover of the spring 2022 issue. The University Club and the Blue Wall are the most popular so far—but the quiz is still open for you to join in and tally your taste!

[umass.edu/magazine/quiz](https://umass.edu/magazine/quiz)

**Mindy Domb**  
**@mindyforma** Thank you @massgrown and the state apiary in Amherst for inviting me to today’s festivities! I even got to see some bees emerge and taste the most delicious MA honey!



**Mina Carlily Stern-Wenk and Miguel Cruz ’24, Making Joy**  
**@mina.carlily.sternwenk** Finishing out this year strong with multiple pieces of work which I choreographed and directed totally wrapped up! Thank you so much to @miguel.j.cruz and the entire junior choreographers class at UMass for support and encouragement throughout this semester! ❤️

**Talen Carvalho ’97**  
**@talenc** Spring break 2022! Still friends after all these years. Credit Justin for the photo.  
#boston #springbreak #friendship #umassalumni



**Samantha Gentle ’22**  
**@samantha.gentle.art** It’s done!! I finished the mural yesterday evening. [...] All in all I spent about 23 hours painting this mural. At 9.5ft x 11.5ft it’s officially the largest piece I’ve completed and my shoulder can bear witness. 🙌 Thank you to @umass and @goodboyoncampus

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# TAKING ON THE TUNDRA

Mistakes were made — and that’s great!

> ALEXIS ALI

“I think that the most valuable learning moments came when things did not go to plan.”



**In the summer of 2021**, six civil and environmental engineering undergrads left the comforts of campus and set off for the Alaskan wilderness. Their task: to study beaded streams, a natural phenomenon unique to the Arctic tundra. The expedition is part of the Integrating Geosciences and Engineering in the Arctic (IGEA) program run by Professor Colin Gleason, who designed the one-year course specifically to challenge students by exposing them to the rigors of real-world field research.

From the first day of class in the spring 2021 semester, students were completely responsible for their research and trip planning, including booking flights, planning itineraries, and taking courses on wilderness safety. To take on these significant challenges, the group formed smaller focused teams. The medical team, for example, was responsible for medical treatment and illness and injury prevention. The team leads had to take an intensive wilderness course and become certified

Wilderness First Responders. The gear team had to collect, organize, and monitor all the equipment that students decided they would need for the expedition. And the data team managed the collection and digitization of all the measurements taken in the field.

Taking on these targeted roles allowed students to focus on manageable tasks and see how their work impacted the whole group, the research itself, and the future of this kind of study. “While we advanced our scientific skills by working in the field, we also had the luxury of admiring the nature that we were trying to preserve through understanding more about it,” explains Brady Bell ’23, a member of both the safety and data teams, and a camp manager in the field. “I learned the most from the land, the only sound being the river we were surveying, with nothing around us for miles but moss barren, aside from a herd of caribou or musk ox on the horizon. Nature’s beauty reminds us of why we do what we do.”

Gleason was there to offer his students advice and direction when they were stuck, but otherwise, these undergrads were completely responsible for the expedition. “I was willing to let them make mistakes,” Gleason explains, “to allow them to get to the field and then suddenly realize, either in the field or the following semester when they are analyzing data, the mistake they made all the way back at the beginning of the year in preparing.”

Liam Amery ’22 says, “I think that the most valuable learning moments came when things did not go to plan.” For example, “our original field measurement plan took much longer than we had anticipated, so we had to adapt on the fly.” Amery adds, “We also had to spend some time in the fall fixing some of the ways that we collected our data. While at times it was frustrating that not everything we did went exactly as we planned it, it was very valuable in teaching us how to change plans based on our priorities, and how

to better plan for future field work and data collection.”

Inspired by the first time he went into the field, Gleason designed the program as a way to give his students opportunities most researchers don’t have until graduate school. By designing their own research plan and experiments, organizing the materials they need to bring, and prioritizing their goals, students in this program learn critical research skills years before their peers. “Seeing them connect their preparation to their postmortem has been a really good learning experience for them,” Gleason says, “and it is only possible if we allow them to get it wrong.”



See the students in action near Toolik Field Station: [umass.edu/magazine/arctic](https://umass.edu/magazine/arctic)

Photos courtesy of Liam Amery '22

1. Liam Amery '22, Brady Bell '23, Noah Green '23  
2. Alanna Joachim '22  
3. Alanna Joachim '22 and Merritt Harlan '23 PhD  
4. Entering the research station

# Deaf with

# a capital



BY ANNIKA S. HIPPLE

Thanks to mainstream successes of stories like *CODA*, best picture winner at the 2021 Academy Awards, many people in the hearing world are getting a more robust introduction to the Deaf community. And thanks to the first undergraduate Deaf studies course at UMass, the university community is taking a closer look at the vibrancy of Deaf culture. Taught online through the University Without Walls (UWW) program, the course provides insight into the richness of Deaf culture and history, the challenges the Deaf community has faced, and the many contributions it has made to society.

## 'A THRIVING COMMUNITY'

Course instructor Myles Sanders, also a UWW academic advisor, grew up with a deaf sister, is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), and holds a degree in Deaf studies. “I’m not deaf myself; I am teaching a Deaf studies course so that people are more comfortable and aware of how to interact with and understand the Deaf culture and community,” he explains.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders estimates that two to three of every 1,000 children in the United States are born with hearing loss, and about 15% of adults over the age of 18 have some degree of difficulty in hearing. At UMass, there are currently around 50 deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as well as a number of faculty and staff.

Sanders’s course begins with commonly held misconceptions about the Deaf community, then

dives into Deaf history, from segregation and oppression to the rise of formal deaf education, the many contributions of deaf people to society, and the gradual change in perception from viewing deafness as an impairment to recognizing Deaf culture as a thriving community with its own language, identity, and societal norms.

Sanders addresses different ways of communicating within the Deaf community, including signed English (signing each word of a spoken sentence), finger spelling (forming individual letter shapes to spell out words), ASL, and dialects such as Black American Sign Language, which developed separately during segregation. A person using ASL may also have a distinct regional accent or style that is reflected in various ways, from signing speed to the specific expressions and gestures used.

Another unique feature of Deaf culture is name signs, which are used to identify individuals and also signify their membership in the Deaf community. A person does not choose his or her own name sign; it is bestowed by others based on the individual’s personal traits or interests.

There are also many deaf people who do not sign, so one thing Sanders emphasizes to his students is the need to get to know people as individuals rather than assuming everyone operates in the same way. The course also addresses assistive devices, from hearing aids and cochlear implants to devices that flash lights to indicate a doorbell or ringing telephone, and why some people might choose to use them while others might not.

Overall, Sanders’s aim is for students to become more confident in interacting with the Deaf community. “Deaf people can do everything you can except hear,” he says. “For the student, I want them to just be more aware. A lot of us naturally have our own implicit biases, so [one goal is] just being more cognizant that how you’re operating may not work for someone else that you interact with.”

The inaugural Deaf studies class of nine students included people working in a variety of fields with different population



groups, as well as a blind student and another student who is losing her hearing and wanted to learn more about the Deaf community that she will eventually join. Diannette Marrero '23, who studies multicultural applied psychology and works for the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, says Sanders's course has inspired her to begin learning ASL in order to better assist deaf clients. "This course has helped me be more aware of what it means to be someone who is deaf," she explains. "I also learned about bilingualism within the Deaf community and the difficulties children face in classrooms, which impact how [they] interact with others and their mental health."

Sanders hopes that the new course will create more interest in and awareness of the Deaf community at UMass and beyond, and in turn lead to more diversity and inclusion, with courses designed in a way that will help deaf students thrive.

## 'MAKING MAGIC HAPPEN'

Stephen Weiner '91 knows firsthand how challenging it can be for deaf students in a hearing setting. Born deaf, he attended mainstream public schools, only

obtaining access to interpreters in high school. At UMass he had little contact with other deaf students and limited knowledge of available communication tools. He enjoyed being a member of the varsity rowing team, but found social interactions with his teammates challenging. "It was isolating not being able to communicate effectively," he says.

Weiner is now in his 24th year of teaching at the Horace Mann School, the country's oldest public day school for the deaf and hard of hearing. After teaching middle school math for 15 years, he transitioned to teaching high school history, a subject he loves, particularly for the way it sparks engaging discussions with his students.

Although Weiner knew some English-based sign language growing up, he did not become fluent in ASL until he became a teacher and more involved in the Deaf community. He currently also teaches ASL on a part-time basis at Framingham State University, where he was gratified to receive a student evaluation calling him "a born teacher."

"I'm proud to become the kind of teacher that I never had growing up," he says. "I use my frustrating experience growing up in a public school mainstream setting to know what deaf students need, because I've been in their shoes before."

Outside the classroom, Weiner has performed regularly as a magician at special events since junior high. "Growing up where no

## "No matter how much you yell, I will still be deaf."

one in my family signed, I sought communication in another way, and that was through performing simple magic tricks at family gatherings," he says. "I immensely enjoy making magic happen in the eyes of the viewers. Magic is a visual art, and while my acts are intriguing to both the hearing and Deaf world, it's not common for Deaf spectators to see magic shows in ASL directly from the magician." For many, that in itself is a kind of magic.

## 'A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE'

Being deaf academics, Michele Cooke in geosciences and Ana Caicedo in biology know something about experiencing the world a bit differently. Together, they publish the blog *The Mind Hears*, in which deaf and hard-of-hearing people in academia share

their experiences and the techniques they rely on to succeed in a hearing world. While being deaf in mainstream academia involves many challenges, it also provides a distinctive outlook and skill set that contribute to their success as scientists and teachers.

Hard of hearing since adolescence, Caicedo relies on hearing aids, speech reading, and assistive listening devices. Because she often catches only part of a presentation or discussion, she is accustomed to having to find alternative ways to inform herself. "This requires persistence, observation, flexibility, and self-reliance. I like to think those skills also helped me settle in a foreign country," says Caicedo, who is originally from Colombia. "They also come into play every time I am frustrated about research that is not progressing as I wish, but that I will keep at until it yields results." The same abilities also help her "gauge the temperature" of her students and colleagues in various settings—another instance of what her colleague Cooke has referred to as "deaf gain."

"I think that being hard of hearing has made me empathetic to different ways of learning, helping me, in turn, design better teaching materials," Caicedo reflects. She will often autocaption lectures or provide slides and recordings in order to make her classes more accessible to students with diverse backgrounds and learning styles.

## 'AN ONGOING PROCESS'

For his part, Sanders wants his students to come away from his Deaf studies course with an understanding that the hearing population needs to meet the Deaf community on its own terms. Weiner has seen this shift beginning to happen, albeit gradually. "There's more awareness that American Sign Language is a language with its own rules, grammar, syntax, separate from American standard English, and more and more universities are accepting ASL as meeting foreign language requirements," he says.

Compared to a few decades ago, the general public has become more willing to make an effort to facilitate communication by writing things down. The prevalence of text messaging is one example. "Before, they would just yell," Weiner recalls. "No matter how much you yell, I will still be deaf."

Sanders expects interest in Deaf studies to grow, and hopes to eventually split the course into two parts in order to be able to delve deeper into the richness of Deaf culture and history. It's all part of an ongoing process of helping society move toward greater deaf accessibility and a better understanding of the Deaf community and its vibrant, unique culture.

## Deaf or deaf?

While anyone who is unable to hear is deaf, not all deaf people are Deaf.

When capitalized, the word Deaf refers to a specific group of people who share a distinct culture with its own set of beliefs and practices, as well as its own language, American Sign Language (ASL).

There are many reasons why a person who is deaf may not identify as Deaf. For example, not everyone who is deaf learns or communicates primarily through ASL, and people who lose their hearing as a result of age or illness may lack a cultural connection to the Deaf community.



> Read more about Sanders's path to creating the Deaf Studies course: [umass.edu/magazine/deafstudies](https://umass.edu/magazine/deafstudies)



▲ Spectrum residents in the Baker Hall lobby

# WHERE TRUE COLORS SHINE

First-in-the-country LGBTQ+ college housing community celebrates 30 years

> LORI SHINE '04MFA

**When Andrew Curran '22** was choosing housing at UMass Amherst, one factor ranked highly: “I wanted the queer community. There’s not a large community of gay people where I’m from and it’s always been sort of a lonesome experience.” When he came to live at Spectrum, the UMass defined residential

community (DRC) for LGBTQ+ students, he found what he was looking for—as have hundreds of students in the 30 years since UMass created the first collegiate LGBTQ+ housing community in the country, each pursuing the freedom to live authentically, together.

## FIRST ON THE SCENE

Indeed, when Spectrum began in 1992 (then called the Two in 20 floor), the picture was very different for LGBTQ+ students. Genny Beemyn, director of the Stonewall Center at UMass, says, “Back in the day when it was first created, it was designed to be a safe space, and the location was not publicized.” Tucked away on the fourth floor of Mary Lyon Hall, students could come and go from the building without being outed.

“Of course,” says Beemyn, “there are still occasions where people do horrible things, but it’s not the same situation that it was 30 years ago. People now live in Spectrum mostly because

Photos: Sage Orville Photography

“Without judgment, people can really blossom.”

they want to meet other LGBTQ+ students, but there’s still a sense of safety, a sense of comfort.”

Wendy Darling '97 moved onto “the queer floor” in 1994. “I became the LGBT issues editor for the [*Massachusetts Daily Collegian*], so actually one of the things I was able to do by living on the floor was have a ready network of sources!” she recalls.

During her years at UMass, Darling says, “We were hearing all the time about safety.” LGBTQ+ students were still frequent targets of physical violence and hate speech. Still, she learned, “If given the opportunity, without barriers, and without judgment, people can really blossom. I don’t know what I would have been like if I didn’t live there.”

## ‘WHAT A TIME TO WALK INTO THAT FLOOR’

In 2008, legal same-sex marriage was far from a settled issue. As a young person who suspected he might be gay, Brandon Meyers '12 wasn’t sure he was ready to come out. But he knew he wanted to go to college in “a place where I felt like I could become my true authentic self.”

Meyers took the leap of applying to live on the Spectrum floor, but reached out to Eboni Rafus-Brenning '08MFA, '11MA, the residence director at the time, to confess his jitters. “She said to me, ‘You’re going to be entering into a community that’s really going to care for you and value you. It’s been around for years and

it’s going to *continue* to be here.’ And I just felt immediate comfort in that knowledge. Especially as somebody who was still kind of figuring out who they were, in this kind of weird historical era before LGBTQ+ marriage was allowed—what a time to walk into that floor and into that community.”

A few years later, in California, Tev Sugarman '17 was doing his own research. By this time, Spectrum had been around for more than 20 years, and the Stonewall Center was also providing events, advocacy, programming, and support for the entire campus. It all seemed a sharp contrast with his previous experience at college. “Where I was coming from had pretty minimal resources for LGBT students,” he says, “and I was already out as queer, but I had just come out to my family as also trans.” Sugarman swapped coasts, schools, and majors, landing at UMass and almost immediately meeting his future spouse, as well as receiving assistance from the Stonewall Center to change his name and gender marker on identity documents, a hugely important step for him.

## ON THE RISE

The Spectrum DRC remains very popular, often receiving twice as many applicants as there are spaces available. Tyler Bradley, the current residence director, points out that “Gen Z has an even higher

rate of identifying with LGBTQ+ communities.”

Thanks to many years of intentional, thoughtful support, the university maintains its reputation as one of the most supportive communities for LGBTQ+ students, garnering consistently high scores from advocate ranking organizations like Campus Pride. As Sugarman says, “The Stonewall Center paired with Spectrum was hands down the most effective LGBTQ+ support system in academia that I’ve ever seen. It’s the perfect combination, like chocolate and peanut butter.”

▼ Spectrum resident Cait Foster '22



> Spectrum alumni share memories and photos: [umass.edu/magazine/spectrum](https://umass.edu/magazine/spectrum)



Original faculty members of the Department of Afro-American Studies in 1970

Photo: Ed Cohen

## MAPPING BLACK PRESENCE

UMass Amherst launched the Black Presence Initiative in 2021 to document and honor the contributions of Black alumni, students, faculty, and staff—and to bring the past into the present. Through oral history interviews and research on historical figures, the project strives to capture an authentic and in-depth understanding of their lived experiences.

The initiative is a cross-campus collaboration led by Professor John H. Bracey, Jr. of the W. E. B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies. The oral histories currently on the site were primarily recorded by

Bracey and graduate student Erika Slocumb '13, '16MS, '24PhD, as well as students in the Black Presence at UMass course.

Slocumb views the initiative as a way to connect the past, present, and future at UMass. “In my time at UMass, I really didn’t understand what community looked like for Black folks historically,” Slocumb says. “Each new cohort of Black students has to find each other and build that sense of community.”

The initiative is meant to be a living resource, with new interviews, profiles, and news added on an ongoing basis. Students, staff, faculty, and

alumni are all encouraged to submit items of interest.

“The importance of this project is really to create a sense of hope and belonging for Black folks,” Slocumb adds. “We don’t have to recreate it because there is already a road map for us.”

— Steve Neumann



Submit your own story about Black life at UMass: [umass.edu/magazine/blackpresence](https://umass.edu/magazine/blackpresence)

## ENGINEERING A BETTER WORLD

The College of Engineering celebrates 75th anniversary

The world has changed a lot over the last 75 years, and the College of Engineering has been there through it all. Established in 1947, the college has become one of the most revolutionary and transformative engineering programs in the world.

Many engineering alumni have gone on to make important contributions to the field—and the world. Two of those alumni were recently recognized with UMass Alumni Honors awards for their accomplishments. Lifetime Achievement Award winner Deepak Chopra '73 earned his master of science in semiconductor electronics at UMass Amherst and went on to create and lead OSI Systems Inc. in 1987. Designing and manufacturing

Photo: John Solem



specialized electronic systems for homeland security, health care, defense, and aerospace, OSI is a leader in the electronics industry.

During her time at UMass Amherst, Outstanding Young Alumni Award winner Sade Luwoye '15 majored in electrical engineering and minored in mathematics, and was president of the student chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers for the 2014–15

academic year. She is now a senior specialist systems engineer at L3Harris Technologies, a defense contractor and information technology services provider. Luwoye also hosts the *Win in STEM* podcast, which highlights and advises people of color in STEM and has listeners in more than 30 countries.

— Heather Kamins

## RUNNING ON RENEWABLES

In December 2021, a brand-new electric Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) bus, operated by UMass Transit, hit the roads of the UMass Amherst campus and the surrounding communities. One of four buses brought in to replace the oldest in the fleet, it can drive up to 230 miles between charges. As of this writing, it has carried more than



22,000 passengers over 8,200 miles—translating to 1,600 gallons of diesel fuel saved.

By 2023, the PVTA plans to replace at least two more old, diesel-dependent buses with

electric ones in an effort to move toward increased sustainability, improved local air quality, and a reduced carbon footprint.

— Alexis Ali

# Back to Work

Story by  
Naomi Shulman

Photographs by  
Lisa Beth Anderson

## When life got weird, work got even weirder. Do we *want* to return to ‘normal’?

### How’s work been for you these past couple of years?

Many of us found ourselves showing up to work in our makeshift home offices in our pajamas, while others who were reporting to work in person were suddenly considered “essential,” or even being applauded (literally!) as heroes. Some of us yearned for our old work lives, along with the rest of pre-pandemic normalcy. But as time wore on, a new realiza-

tion dawned: While the pandemic was a catastrophe, leaving our old work lives behind ... wasn’t.

More than two and a half years later, we’re not yet back to what we once called normal, but we’re inching closer to whatever is taking its place. We spoke to four intrepid UMass alumni to get their takes on how our work lives have really changed—and how some of those changes may also be opportunities.

KAMAAL JARRETT '06  
at work in CommonWealth  
Kitchen in Dorchester, Mass.



## Umm, what just happened?

ONLINE COMMERCE  
TOOK OFF.

### Andy Hunter '94 felt the economic impact of the pandemic early.

In the entire month of February 2020, Bookshop.org had sold \$50,000 worth of books. But on a single day in mid-March, the site sold \$60,000—and then the next day, it sold \$150,000. At the high point in June 2020, it sold \$900,000 in a single day. “It was really a kind of white-knuckle experience, and there was very little sleep involved. The tough part is that all of this was happening while my kids were doing remote learning and we were in a 450-square-foot apartment in Brooklyn,” says Hunter. “But it felt great to be able to do something positive in a time of so much suffering and so much concern for the future.” The positive? Well, for one thing, Hunter’s business was helping people get their books during a time when there was not much to do but read. But the mission of Bookshop.org, which had only launched earlier that year, was always to support local bookstores, and it was doing just that. “I am a writer and a reader, and in the past I’ve been a publisher. I believe that having a healthy ecosystem around books, reading, and writers is extremely important for creativity and human development, and I was worried about what would happen if one very profit-driven

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

company controlled the entire book market,” Hunter says.

But online commerce doesn’t translate across all fields. Steve Scully ’11PhD says, “For some research applications or clinically based positions, you have to be in a physical workplace—in the field or the lab. I don’t think that will change soon.” His product is designed to correct issues with how samples and clinical specimens are stored and transported, and that’s not something that lends itself to virtual testing. The system allows users to remotely track temperature zones, barometric pressure, humidity, and light, among other variables, keeping products safe and ready to use—providing obvious benefits during a worldwide pandemic. That said, for startups like his—which is essentially a health care tech crossover—the shift to online work is a boon. “In some places, like Rochester, Minnesota, it can be hard to find the right people. Working remotely expands opportunities to find the right people and the right fit.”

Of course, at least one industry remained brick-and-mortar throughout: grocery stores. And that created opportunities for Kamaal Jarrett ’06. “Because there was a run on grocery stores,

there were more openings for local small businesses to fill the gaps,” he says. “Suddenly buyers in larger organizations like Whole Foods and Stop & Shop gave us the time of day—they tasted our product and liked it, and knew we were in a position to get things moving. We were tremendously lucky we were small enough to limit our exposure to stay flexible.”

REMOTE WORK RULED—  
FOR BETTER  
OR FOR WORSE.

“My own office has gone hybrid,” Natascha F. Saunders ’01 says, “but we’re not a virtual institution. We primarily do on-campus education. So we’ve had lots of conversations around work-life balance.” What works? “For me, technology is what I want to carry forward. I want to keep Microsoft Teams and Zoom!” she laughs. “Maybe the technology bugs you, but the accessibility is what makes it work, and it benefits my ability to serve students wherever they are.”

But Jarrett is less pleased with the switch. “We need a hiatus from Zoom,” he insists. “It’s so weird—we’ve had great contracts in the past year or two, but they’ve

all been done via video conference. I haven’t been to any headquarters! This is the first season where trade shows are returning and we’re getting back to face-to-face interactions, and I’m really looking forward to it.”

“There’s a certain energy that comes with being in person,” agrees Hunter. But he doesn’t think in-person office work will ever come back in quite the same way. “I had plenty of office jobs in my life, and was once very skeptical of the idea that we could go fully remote and everyone would be productive. But when we were forced into that, it turned out fine. I think that genie’s out of the bottle. People will try to put it back in—the commercial real estate market is going to do everything they can to get companies to require employees to come back to



the office. But I don’t think that will happen because productivity and profits have not declined in these last two years.”

WHO HAS THE LEVERAGE  
NOW, THE WORKER  
OR THE BOSS?

Jarrett thinks it’s the worker.

“I am looking to hire, and it’s become more competitive, even at the internship level,” he says. “We’re not able to necessarily provide huge salaries or benefits, so I have to think about how to provide a package that entices someone to join us long term. People have options, which is great.”

Saunders agrees—but only to a point. “People want their work to be meaningful, and also want to balance it with family. I think that’s a direct result of the trauma of the pandemic—people are thinking about what really matters,” she says. “So many people will say the person who is looking for work has the negotiation power, and I wouldn’t necessarily disagree. But they’ll still only make the offer to one person, and there may be 25, 50, 100 people going for that same job.”

“No one really knows what the future of work will be,” Hunter points out. “But employees have a lot more freedom now and are more aware of their value and their ability to shop around, so companies are going to have to step up to retain their employees. Ultimately, that has to be a good thing for anyone more on the side of people than corporations.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

“I think that genie’s out of the bottle.”

The entrepreneurs

SPECIAL SECTION

STEVE SCULLY  
’11PHD  
Founder,  
Thaddeus Medical  
Systems

THADDEUS MEDICAL SYSTEMS IS THE CREATOR OF THE IQ-LER: an innovative cold-chain system that allows people to easily and safely transport, store, and dispense temperature-sensitive pharmaceuticals—including vaccines—using a portable, battery-powered freezer. Prior to founding Thaddeus Medical Systems, Scully was an NIH fellow at the Mayo Clinic.

KAMAAL  
JARRETT ’06  
Founder,  
Hillside Harvest

HILLSIDE HARVEST IS A CARIBBEAN AMERICAN SAUCE AND CONDIMENT COMPANY BASED IN BOSTON. Since its launch in January 2019, Hillside Harvest has been sold in more than 200 retail locations throughout New England.

NATASCHA F. SAUNDERS ’01  
Associate Director, Office of Career  
Advancement at Harvard Kennedy  
School of Government

SAUNDERS IS A CERTIFIED CAREER COACH, consultant, speaker, faculty member, and entrepreneur. As a dual-career and first-generation professional, she is currently the associate director and career coach at Harvard Kennedy School and CEO of The Youth Career Coach, Inc.

ANDY HUNTER ’94  
Founder and CEO,  
Bookshop.org

BOOKSHOP.ORG enables local independent bookstores to compete with the online juggernaut of Amazon. All purchases on Bookshop.org support the local bookstore of your choosing.



## What's next?

**IN SOME WAYS, THERE'S NO GOING BACK. AND MAYBE THAT'S OKAY.**

**Few people miss their long commutes to work.** But the shift in where and how we work, learn, and connect over the last few years has shone a new light on different ways of being in the world. "I have a diagnosed learning disability," says Saunders, "and I have not always been comfortable in certain spaces." Working from home, just like schooling from home, allows certain types of people to bloom. "This has opened up the dialogue around diversity. People need to think about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and now we're rolling these conversations into everybody's job descriptions. Whether they want to or not, everyone's talking about it."

Another societal shift has been a refocus on local commerce—during the height of the pandemic, many consumers went out of their way to support neighborhood shops. Hunter says, "From a very self-interested perspective, I hope that kind of conscious consumption does not go away—that people still understand the value of investing in their communities, even if we go back to 'normal.'" He adds, "I hope all the conscious consumption and socially conscious consumer activism that got a boost in the pandemic continues and builds and gets stronger from here."



**SILVER LININGS ABOUND.**

**The start of the pandemic was eerie timing for Scully,** who launched a business focusing on vaccine transportation in early 2020. That may sound ideal, but it actually wasn't, since his product hadn't had a chance to prove itself. "We were hoping to ride the wave, if you will, for all the vaccines that got deployed and distributed," he says, "but our device is expensive, and Styrofoam and ice are super cheap. There are still a lot of areas where it will be useful, and we're still pursuing that." The pandemic isn't going away, and neither will Scully's technology. "More attention being brought to the delivery of medicines is a good thing," he says, "not just for our company, but in general."

Jarrett sees the bigger picture. After all, the pandemic didn't just hit us in the workplace. It hit all of us at home, too. "I feel like we've learned to appreciate our family members, our friends, our local community, in such a more authentic and meaningful way," he

says. "We were forced to do an inventory of our lives and loved ones, and a lot of us realized we weren't spending enough time with those people." (And if that time involves backyard barbecues, well, Jarrett recommends his Jamaican Jerk marinades and sauces. "My favorite is the Original Hot Pepper.")

That renewed appreciation can extend to our coworkers. Saunders points out that the adversity of the pandemic brought her team closer together in different ways. "We were close as a department, but now we're even closer as individuals," Saunders says. "People have made accommodations for one another. There's been a lot of sharing—not just of work, but of what's going on in our lives." Those conversations include a lot of questions that many of us didn't think to ask a couple of years ago. "For example, *Am I happy with the work I'm doing? Do I enjoy the people I'm working with?*" Saunders says. "What am I learning? How am I growing? All of these questions are coming up."

The answers today may not look the same a few more years down

the line. "I know a little about pivoting," Saunders says. "I took a windy road at UMass—I couldn't pick a major." Saunders took advantage of the the BDIC program then (Bachelor's Degree with Individual Concentration), combining three areas she loved into one major. Today, as founder and CEO of The Youth Career Coach Inc., she is focused on workforce development, offering workshops, programming, seminars, and lessons that help students create their own paths. The post-pandemic world may offer new opportunities along with the challenges, if folks are willing to shift gears.

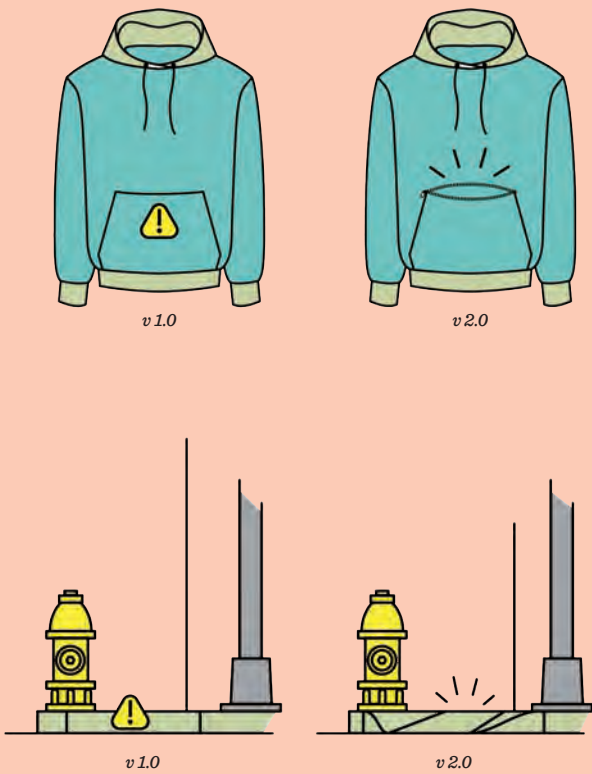
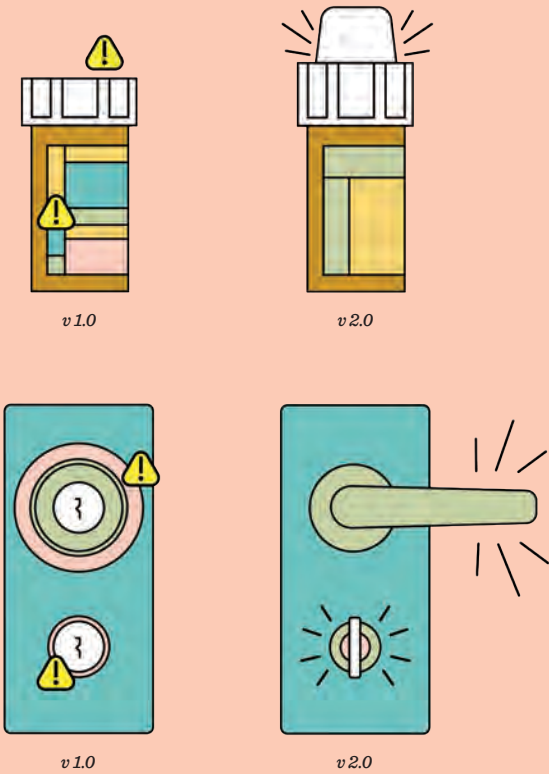
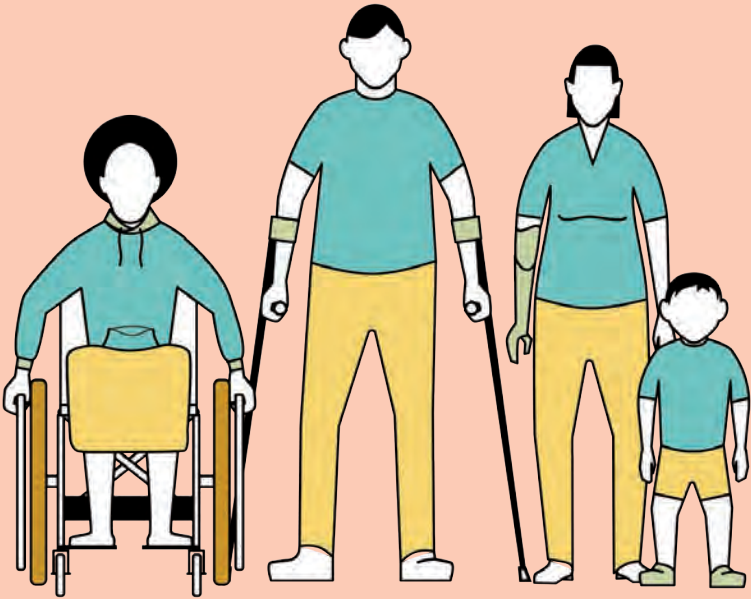
"I'd like to follow up this conversation in about five years," Saunders says. "There's an emotional component to these questions. A couple of years in, I can imagine someone saying, *Whoa, I need to pivot again.* And that's okay! People change." Times do, too.

**>** UMass Center for Employment  
Equity shares tools for managers  
and business owners:  
[umass.edu/magazine/work](http://umass.edu/magazine/work)

# AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE OF DESIGN

> HEATHER KAMINS

While the impetus for design modifications might come from the needs of a certain community, universal design creates objects, environments, and even teaching techniques that wind up helping everyone.



Picture this: You slip your phone into the side pocket of the hooded sweatshirt you’re wearing ... only to have it slide out as soon as you sit down. It’s a common problem wheelchair users experience when transferring in or out of their chairs, but it can happen to anyone. One solution: vertical pockets that keep items in place for everyone—an example of a concept called universal design.

Universal design is the idea that spaces, products, and services should be designed for everyone, regardless of ability or disability, and that designing to accommodate one group helps others as well. It’s often most visible in physical spaces—for example, ramps that accommodate wheelchairs also support people using strollers or hand trucks. But universal design goes much further. Take the hoodie example: It isn’t just theoretical; it’s one of the elements incorporated by Social Surge, a universally designed clothing line co-founded by Meredith Aleigha Wells ’17.

## Ready to wear

Wells—an actor, singer, dancer, and writer—and their co-founders started Social Surge while the theater industry was shut down due to COVID-19 restrictions. “We all had similar thoughts and feelings toward the fashion industry and what it was lacking, and what we could create.”

A musical theater major at UMass with a work-study job in the costume shop, Wells was often tasked with making clothing easy for performers to change into and out of. “I would have to quick-rig

things all the time and put snaps instead of buckles on shoes, or put Velcro underneath a line of buttons so you could rip it open for a quick change,” they say. “From that moment, I always thought it was silly that we didn’t make all clothing accessible.”

Wells, a wheelchair user, points to the importance of taking feedback directly from disabled customers to ensure good design. “With Social Surge it’s a human-centered approach,” says Wells. “We’re taking in what our consumers’ needs are and designing pieces of clothing around those needs.

“I like to think of the way that Social Surge operates as very similar to the way that 20 years ago there was the big push for plus-size clothing, but now you don’t really see that labeling as much anymore,” says Wells. “You’re starting to see a shift and all clothing lines having a more inclusive size range.”

## ‘A strengths-based approach’

A different type of universal design is being implemented right here on campus. Kirsten Helmer, senior lecturer and director of programming for diversity, inclusion, and equity at the Center for Teaching and Learning, places her focus on universal design for learning (UDL), training instructors across the university how to make their teaching more accessible to all.

“UDL is an evidence-based framework that’s grounded in lots of research,” says Helmer. “It comes from the premise that all students can be successful in their learning when a course and the lessons are designed in ways that

make them accessible and provide multiple pathways to achieve the intended learning outcome.”

Helmer presents workshops for UMass instructors and grad students on incorporating the principles of UDL, and offers consultations to campus departments, schools, and colleges. She also developed and leads the Teaching for Inclusiveness, Diversity, and Equity (TIDE) Ambassadors Fellowship, which allows faculty to take a deeper dive into UDL, among other topics, and bring those concepts back to their own departments.

One of those TIDE ambassadors is Tammy Rahhal, associate chair of teaching and chief undergraduate advisor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences and winner of the prestigious Manning Prize for Excellence in Teaching in 2020. As the instructor of a 470-person introductory psychology course, incorporating more flexibility into her teaching may have seemed like a tall order. But, says Rahhal, “One thing I learned as a TIDE scholar is if you can make an accommodation for the entire class that benefits the student who actually needs the accommodation, it actually helps everybody in the class.”

For example, a student who had difficulty hearing asked Rahhal if the videos shown in class could be captioned. “I showed the first of these videos in class that semester, and I realized that I and every single student in the class was reading the captions as we watched the video. So this was something done to help one student and it ended up benefiting 470 students, and I’ve benefited myself.”

Illustration: Thom Dudley

# THE DECON-STRUCTIV-IST

Working to rectify stereotypes of Afghan and American identity in a post-9/11 world

> WES DESHANO

By the time Nangyalai Attal '23 PhD graduated from high school in Wardak province, Afghanistan, he had walked nearly 20,000 miles between his childhood home and school. His pursuit of knowledge propelled him back and forth six days every week—for 12 years.

“My elementary school teacher would tell me, ‘I will make you wings and then you can fly to school,’” says Attal, a doctoral candidate in the College of Education’s international education program.

Even though a magical pair of wings never materialized, Attal continued to make his daily treks. His parents, who had no formal schooling themselves, reinforced the importance of education, and Attal and his siblings gained a deep-seated appreciation for critical thinking and debate.

In 1980s Afghanistan, however, education at home and education in the classroom could be diametrically opposed. At home, Attal experienced nonviolent religious edification. At school, he encountered “jihad literacy”—one that framed Islamic subjectivity and national identity in terms of violent opposition to the Soviet Union. As a young boy, Attal would complete mathematics exercises that asked students to quantify bullets and guns. Images of the “sacrificial warrior” pervaded school materials. The tension between these two learning modes became a touchstone for Attal’s future as an activist scholar.

“I have seen both the wild wild west and the wild wild east,” says Attal. “The media and popular culture, even some academics, are trying to portray ‘the other’ in perpetual enmity. But in fact, given that I lived in both (Afghanistan and the United States), there is a great deal to capture and celebrate.”

Attal’s research focuses on the intersection of ideology, nationalism, and education. Stereotypes of American exceptionalism and Afghan extremism have been perpetuated for so long, he says, that collective understanding between the two nations too often gives way to violence. Attal seeks to rectify this tension through educational activism.

It wasn’t until he began his graduate work at UMass Amherst that Attal discovered that some of the textbooks he grew up with were funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The echo of Cold War politics in his lessons was no accident, he realized—American authors were lacing teaching materials with strong ideological terms.

With Bjorn Nordtveit, associate professor of international education, Attal is digging deeper into the emotional fallout experienced by Afghan children who grew up with these textbooks.

“Our identity bears the imprint of that curricula,” Attal says. “That conflict becomes part of you. There are even thoughts *I’m* still trying to deconstruct. Because of this, some of the

“THAT  
CONFLICT  
BECOMES  
PART  
OF YOU.”

people who are raised like that, they did not survive.”

Since 2013, Attal has lived and studied in the United States and Afghanistan. His experiences in both nations have resulted in a double consciousness of sorts, a frame of mind that enables him to validate the strengths of each nation’s educational system while interrogating their shortcomings. He explains feeling “a great responsibility to represent the identity of great Muslim scholars and offer a sense of mutual understanding grounded in scholarship.”

Despite the enormous challenge, Attal remains determined to tap into the spaces where he can expand possibilities through education in Afghanistan. “We have to stay engaged,” he says, adding, “I believe that a determined struggle always has a chance of victory. We must not turn back on the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Afghan people to live in peace and dignity.”

The social justice underpinnings of his work at UMass give him cause to remain optimistic about the future. “I came to realize that while our cognitive abilities as children are susceptible to violent distortion and negative influence by powerful institutions and ideological groups,” Attal says, “our human capacity to persistently fight these wrong ideas is powerful.”



# the anatomy giving heart

ELAINE NICPON MARIEB '69PHD, '85MS SHAPED THE WORLD OF NURSING IN LIFE AND BEYOND

By Scott Whitney | Photos by Jon Crispin

Kathryn Pacheco '22, Joshua Zelikman '23, Robert Tacescu '22 and Gina Georgadarellis '24PhD working together on a project for the new Elaine Marieb Center for Nursing and Engineering Innovation

**Dr. Elaine N. Marieb** may be the most influential author you've never heard of—but you'll be glad your doctor has. Best known as the author of *Human Anatomy & Physiology*, Marieb's textbooks are taught in more than 2,400 classrooms around the world. *Time* magazine recently ranked the UMass alum the seventh most-read female writer in the college classroom, behind such literary luminaries as Mary Shelley and Virginia Woolf. And though the world lost this titan in 2018, her legacy, impact, and influence continue to grow, thanks to her generous philanthropy.

In September 2021, the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Charitable Foundation announced a gift to UMass Amherst of \$21.5 million, the largest cash gift in the university's 159-year history. One year later, UMass officially renamed its nursing school the Elaine Marieb College of Nursing in honor of the late educator and author. But this change goes deeper than a name—it marks a fundamental shift in medical innovation, putting nurses at the forefront of research and product development.

## From Bedside to Benefactor

Marieb often referred to herself as an “accidental author,” and little in her humble background suggested she would go on to become one of the premier human anatomists of her time. Raised on her family's farm in Northampton, Massachusetts, Marieb's academic ambitions were repeatedly derailed by lack of funds. But her tenacity in pursuing a college education led to degrees from Westfield State University and Mount Holyoke College, before finishing her doctoral work at UMass in 1969. She then went on to become a professor, teaching human anatomy at several Massachusetts colleges and universities.

Marieb established a reputation as a disciplined and intuitive classroom teacher, particularly dedicated to students interested in nursing. “I knew I was sitting at the feet of someone special,” recalls Lynn Wiedenroth, a nursing student of Marieb's in 1975. After receiving a D on an exam, the first in her academic career, Wiedenroth approached her professor for advice. “She showed me that good studying wasn't about memorizing all the components of muscle tissue; it was about really understanding what makes a muscle flex. The concept was the important thing,” she recalls. “With all of the knowledge she had, she respected anyone who was trying to learn—nurses, in particular.”



In addition to her classroom work, Marieb served as a chapter reviewer for a Massachusetts textbook publisher. It was there that she discovered her calling as an author. Following one review session, she handed the publisher a manuscript she had written for her courses, asking if it might be published. That led to her first work, a laboratory manual that remains a bestseller 40 years later.

Emboldened by the success of her lab manual, Marieb believed she could create a more effective textbook than those she was asked to review. She went on to write what would become her seminal work, *Human Anatomy & Physiology*. In so doing, Marieb pioneered a new approach to textbook writing that included analogies, illustrated tables, and other graphic teaching aids. “Over a million practitioners out there, including nurses, have learned from Elaine,” says Serina Beauparlant, Marieb’s editor and publisher since 2002. “She led the shift from a textbook as a container of information to a book intended to hold a student’s hand.”

As an editor at Pearson Education, Beauparlant recalls a passionate educator with a guarded personality. “Elaine was a classic New Englander. I felt very close to her, but it took a while,” she says. But when it came to Marieb’s craft, her passion and commitment to future nurses shone. “She never took a sabbatical to write,” says Beauparlant. “She taught as she wrote. And the empathy that she felt toward her students really came through in the writing.”

First published in 1989, *Human Anatomy & Physiology* is now in its 11th edition, has sold more than two million copies to date, and shows no signs of fading. However, Marieb’s influence on future nurses and physicians didn’t stop with the publication of a renowned textbook. As a result of her writing success, the “accidental author” found a new vehicle for making change: philanthropy. During her lifetime, she made significant donations to schools in Florida and Massachusetts, and following her death in 2018, her estate made a posthumous gift to UMass Amherst of \$1 million. This donation allowed the university to provide grants for nursing students and develop a state-of-the-art cytology research lab. Marieb’s impact on the UMass nursing program expanded further with a recent gift of \$21.5 million from her posthumous philanthropic organization, the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Charitable Foundation.

### Doing (way) better than ‘good enough’

A portion of the transformational gift will support the Elaine Marieb Center for Nursing and Engineering Innovation, a program focused on cutting-edge research and nurse-centered solutions. First established through seed funding from Michael Hluchyj ’76 and Theresa Hluchyj ’77 and sustained through the permanent funding provided by the Marieb estate, the center invites graduate students and other early career researchers, like Postdoctoral Research Fellow Jeannine Blake ’22 PhD, to solve industry problems through an engineering lens.

Like Marieb, Blake cannot simply accept “good enough.” During her time as a critical care nurse in a Rhode Island hospital, Blake felt she couldn’t have the impact she wanted as a bedside nurse. “I was frustrated with aspects of my job that never worked well and realized that those things were contributing [negatively] to patient outcomes.” Her path to research brought her to the UMass nursing program, where she met Karen Giuliano, co-director for the center. Under Giuliano’s mentorship, Blake began to understand the fundamental disconnect she experienced as a practicing nurse. “Nursing is a product-heavy practice,” she explains. “But nurses typically aren’t the ones designing those products—engineers are.”

Giuliano echoes Blake’s experience, advocating for an intense collaboration between nurses and engineers in the early stages of research and product development. “Nurses have the best perspective on what works and what doesn’t, and they need to be



On September 12, 2022, the Elaine Marieb College of Nursing came together to celebrate its renaming with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony. In addition to having the new name of the college on the exterior of the building, Marieb was honored with a mural featuring her portrait in the entranceway. The celebration included speakers, a tour of the building, and a performance by the UMass jazz band to honor Marieb’s love of jazz music both as a listener and a singer.

included in the research cycle,” she explains. “That’s where we come in.” Since 2019, the center has brought the disciplines of nursing and engineering together in research and development, allowing nurses’ practical experience to be heard from the outset.

Expanding upon Giuliano’s previous work, Blake has built her own program of research, focusing on the flow-rate accuracy of intravenous smart pumps. These widely used devices are designed to deliver carefully dosed medication to patients; however, as Giuliano and Blake soon discovered, the pumps were often highly inaccurate in practice, putting patients at risk. “These are devices I used every day as a nurse,” says Blake. “But once I started digging in, I learned about critical issues with the technology that researchers were aware of, but not clinicians. What I learned in research often explained the very problems I had observed at bedside.” She explains that though technologies like smart pumps may work well in an engineering lab, they often don’t translate to the realities of a clinical environment.

Blake hopes her research will spur updated testing standards for smart pumps, leading to better patient outcomes. Ultimately, she and Giuliano believe that the center’s work will lead to the improvement of many such devices in the future. “When nurses and engineers work together, it leads to safer products for patients and more relevance in a clinical environment,” says Blake.

For Giuliano, it is only appropriate that Marieb’s gift supports research like Blake’s. “Elaine was a trailblazer, plain and simple,” says Giuliano. “And the

research that Jeannine is doing has the same look and feel as Elaine’s work, just with a different application.”

In addition to offering pilot grants for innovative work like Blake’s, UMass is using the foundation’s gift to provide scholarships to students who, like Marieb, have had their academic careers interrupted due to limited finances or other challenges. UMass history major Laura Haskell ’23 is one such student. In the 2021–2022 academic year, Haskell became one of the first two recipients of the Elaine Marieb Phoenix Fund, following an eight-year break in her education. “I’m paying for school myself, and having to balance school with work and bills is very difficult,” she says. “This scholarship lifted the financial burden and made me feel that I really can do this.”

According to Martin Wasmer, chair of the Elaine Nicpon Marieb Charitable Foundation, the work that the estate’s gift will support is in the spirit of the icon he knew. “Elaine’s progression from educator to author was driven by the belief that the materials she was utilizing could always be better. She was an innovator from day one [...] and the work of the Center for Nursing and Engineering is in alignment with who she was as an educator,” says Wasmer.

Beauparlant also sees a direct line from the powerful educator she knew to the impact of Marieb’s philanthropy today. “If someone was motivated and worked hard, she would always extend an open hand. And she was always looking for institutions who would be good partners in making a difference,” says Beauparlant. “I have no doubt she’s looking down at the work being done in her name and is very happy.”





## OUT OF HIS COMFORT ZONE

> HEATHER KAMINS

**Y**osuke Hanya '21 is no stranger to blazing trails. He came to UMass from Tokyo in 2018 speaking very little English, but went on to become a star midfielder for the men's soccer team—and win a special place in his teammates' hearts. And in early 2022, he signed with the Colorado Rapids 2, part of the brand-new MLS NEXT Pro league created by Major League Soccer to offer new opportunities for rising stars in the sport.

Driven by the desire to improve and push himself, Hanya says, "The reason why I came to the United States was not only to play soccer in the NCAA but also to learn a new language and culture as well as to grow up as a person by getting out of my comfort zone."

Hanya quickly made a name for himself on the team. "He garnered attention with his ability," says Coach Fran O'Leary, "but more importantly, he won over the team. He was humble, hard-working, unselfish, and the guys took to him. It's a lot easier to settle in if you've got the ability to make friends easily and quickly, and he definitely did that."

Hanya was named to the Atlantic 10 (A-10) All-Rookie team in 2018 following his first

season in Amherst. Despite a season-ending injury in 2019, Hanya bounced back stronger than ever. And in his final season in spring 2021, Hanya was an A-10 All-Conference Second-Team selection and earned first-team All-A-10 honors after leading the conference in assists. Ranking ninth nationally in assists and 16th in assists per game, he helped the team earn an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament.

It's obvious from the way Hanya's coach and teammates speak about him that they hold great fondness for him—and the feeling is mutual. When he first arrived at UMass, he says, "I was really having a hard time expressing myself to my teammates. But my teammates kept talking to me and treating me as a part of this team. That helped me open my heart and be myself."

And, he adds, "After I finished my last season at UMass, I was thinking about hanging up the boots and going back to Japan to find a job. However, my teammates, coaches, and family all kept supporting me and believing in me. And, most importantly, I didn't give up my dream of becoming a soccer player."

"While not physically big," says O'Leary, "he's a very brave player,

both mentally and physically courageous." That courage is apparent both on and off the field, and at both the collegiate and the professional levels.

O'Leary sees parallels between Hanya's arrival at UMass and the start of his professional career. "Everyone would be out of their comfort zone traveling so far to a new environment," says O'Leary. Now, as Hanya acclimates to a professional level of play, O'Leary says, "I think the confidence he gained from the initial transition from Japan to UMass will have served him well in his latest transition."

So far, Hanya is adjusting successfully to his new career, having scored the first goal in the reserve team's history. "As this team has a different soccer style than UMass, I also have a different role," he says. "However, what I learned from college soccer still exists in my heart and helps me be myself, be confident on the pitch."

What's next for this driven and dynamic trailblazer? "My goal as a player is to sign with the first team and play in the MLS," says Hanya. And if history is any indication, there's a good chance he'll do just that.

# BRUTALLY BEAUTIFUL

An architectural vision of the past—and future

> MICHAEL C. CAROLAN '09MFA

You see them in the backgrounds of sci-fi movies from *A Clockwork Orange* to *Blade Runner 2049*—enormous concrete structures representing repressive dystopian governments. But these buildings aren't simply set dressings in movies. They're examples of the mid-century architectural movement known as brutalism, and they're found all over UMass, from the Lincoln Campus Center and W. E. B. Du Bois Library to the Randolph W. Bromery Center for the Arts, from Herter to Whitmore to Tobin.

For years considered imposing, dated, and even ugly, these structures are being reconsidered as usable, intimate, and yes, even beautiful works of art by UMass students, scholars, and planners alike. Take the rectilinear Campus Center, its sculptural

forms, interplays of light and shadow and staircase that spill into a vast green field. It's one of the campus's best-known examples of brutalism and was designed by one of the world's most popular architects of the 20th century, Marcel Breuer.

The 27 brutalist buildings at UMass Amherst, built between 1965 and 1975, make up about a quarter of the campus in total square footage. And over the last several years, both UMass Amherst and UMass Dartmouth have increasingly embraced their status as two of the most architecturally significant brutalist campuses in the United States.

Words used to describe these buildings today include *hip*, *aesthetically cool*, and *avant-garde*. Brutalism, says UMass Campus Planning graduate researcher Lincoln Nemetz-Carlson '23, “expresses progressive ideals that corporate architecture of our day does not.”

In 2021, the two-day symposium Brutalism + the Public University: Past, Present and Future featured a hundred speakers between UMass Amherst and UMass Dartmouth (whose entire campus was designed by brutalist architect Paul Rudolph). UMass Amherst offered the UMassBRUT walking tour and campus guide, the Brutalism in Color exhibit, talks with the Amherst Historical Society and Museum, the Jones Library, and the UMass Public History program. Even more programming and resources are in the works.

Timothy M. Rohan, associate professor of art history

and architecture, points to the UMassBRUT exhibit at the Commonwealth Honors College Greenbaum Gallery, *Standing in Silhouette: The Southwest Dormitories at UMass*, as recognizing the focus of much of campus life since the mid-1960s. “Southwest is monumental, but it also has intimate spaces and great architectural complexity that you won't find in other places on campus,” says Rohan.

Kelley Almada '21 lived there in spring 2020. “I loved the windows that let in so much light,” she says. “It felt like I had a penthouse view from the seventh floor.” She enjoyed people-watching, parties, cultural events, and a location central to her classes and the dining commons.

Ludmilla Pavlova-Gillham, architect, senior campus planner, and adjunct professor in building construction technology, came to Amherst from communist Bulgaria at age 14. The W. E. B. Du Bois Library became “a symbol of democracy” where Pavlova-Gillham found banned speeches made by the Bulgarian president. She attended prom in the rooftop lounge of the Campus Center. “My biography is tied into the brutalism on campus,” says Pavlova-Gillham.

She helped UMass host a national conference of university planners and taught a course on the topic. Today she ensures

sustainable building and infrastructure updates and plans future UMassBRUT campaigns. “We want to be a UMass systemwide resource for campuses across the state,” she says.

One important reason to take a fresh look at these buildings has to do with climate change. Concrete has historically been one of the most carbon-intensive materials. Using more carbon to tear buildings down and construct replacements makes little sense. “Building reuse *is* climate action,” she notes. With that in mind, brutalist architecture may indeed be a vision of the future—but unlike in the movies, a vision of optimism and hope.

ONLINE



More appreciations of campus brutalism: [umass.edu/magazine/brutalism](https://umass.edu/magazine/brutalism)

Photos: Lisa Beth Anderson

# TRADITIONAL

UMASS POLL TRACKS HOW WE'VE CHANGED OUR MINDS

BY SCOTT WHITNEY

PHOTOS BY LISA BETH ANDERSON

**AN** American statesman once opined, “[I]n this country, public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed.” That statesman was Abraham Lincoln—and his words ring truer today than when he spoke them 168 years ago. However, the science of determining public opinion is no small task, and the UMass Amherst Poll endeavors to do just that. For the past twelve years, a small group of scholars and students have taken the collective temperature of the commonwealth and the nation at large, reporting back our likes and dislikes, our shared values and polarizing beliefs.

In the world of polling, the UMass Poll is a relative newcomer, first established by UMass political science professor Brian Schaffner in 2010. Eight years after its inception, Schaffner handed the reins to provost political science professor Tatishe Nteta (Nah-teh-tah), who now serves as the poll’s director. Under Nteta’s leadership, the poll has differentiated itself from its peers by uncovering the hard-won “whys” of public opinion. From our feelings on the economy to progress in racial equity, the UMass Poll follows a lofty north star—reporting on the health of democracy itself.

Over the years, the poll has evolved to get at respondents’ true take on issues—and has tracked some surprising reversals on the most controversial of topics.

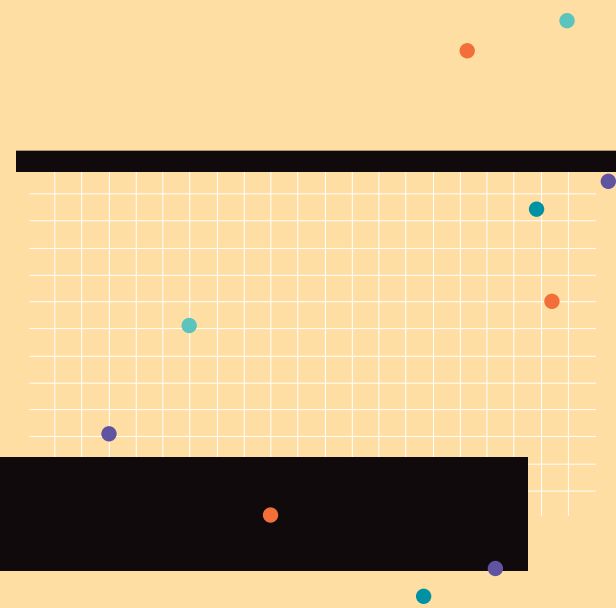
MELINDA TARSI '18MA,  
'14PHD IN HER OFFICE  
AT BRIDGEWATER  
STATE UNIVERSITY



## INFREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When Nteta first joined UMass Poll, running a public-opinion survey wasn’t foremost among his professional goals. “Absolutely not,” he recalls. “But it became clear to me that to fully explore the issues I was interested in—race, immigration, the changing demographic in our country—I needed quantitative methods in my tool kit.” In fact, many of Nteta’s colleagues view their polling work as in service to their academic research, rather than the focus of it. That alone has become a differentiator. “We’re professors first and pollsters second,” says Nteta. “We take the issues we research as faculty, discuss with our students and each other, and use those conversations to craft timely questions. But it’s all with the goal of understanding the civic health of the state and the country.”

Jesse Rhodes, one of UMass Poll’s three associate directors, agrees that the poll is an extension of his academic inquiry. As a political historian, Rhodes uses the poll to get at the underpinnings of contemporary public opinion and place them within a historical context. “For example, if the poll finds a correlation between people’s acceptance of violence [at the U.S. Capitol] on January 6 and their negative attitudes toward people of color, we need to place that in a long tradition of whites trying to maintain prerogatives through hostility toward people of color,” he explains. “Context is critical, and because all of us working on the poll have different backgrounds and research interests, it makes the poll work well.” ➤



Rhodes is joined by associate directors Ray La Raja and Alexander Theodoridis, both from the university's political science department.

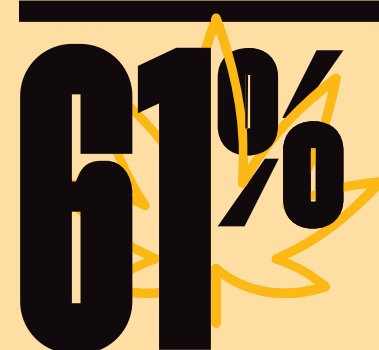
Compared to polling organizations like Marist and Quinnipiac, the UMass Poll is comfortable being the turtle to their hare. Nteta and his team craft five to six polls a year, considerably less than the near weekly polls conducted by their peers. However, this suits the UMass team just fine. Though they include “horse-race” questions in every survey, gauging potential voters’ stance on upcoming elections, the team puts a premium on uncovering the social pressures and trends that underlie these results. Getting to that level of inquiry, however, requires thoughtful—and often experimental—methodology.

In recent years, the polling team has seen a tendency among respondents to answer questions in a way that supports their political identity, rather than reveal how they personally feel about the issue at hand. “We call this ‘expressive responding,’” explains Rhodes. “It’s a way for people to assert their identities—but we’re looking to get at their genuine beliefs.” To counteract this tendency, the pollsters often provide respondents with a list of belief statements and ask them, not which ones they agree with, but how many. “In that circumstance, we’ve minimized the incentive to engage in expressive responding,” explains Rhodes. “When you flat out ask people certain questions, you can run into methodological problems. Innovative and experimental questioning helps us get at how people feel in a more rigorous way.”

Another method the UMass Poll employs is free association, asking respondents to describe a politician or political issue. “Rather than just ask, ‘Do you approve or disapprove of [Massachusetts Governor] Charlie Baker?’ we’ll ask, ‘What one

word describes Charlie Baker?’” Nteta explains. The polling team then illustrates these responses in a word cloud, with the size of each word corresponding to their frequency in poll results. (During the pandemic, “competent” and “moderate” were leading adjectives used to describe the governor.) Nteta argues that by combining qualitative and quantitative methods, a more complete picture of public opinion emerges. “The overarching story we heard about Charlie Baker is that he’s a throwback to a New England Republican—socially liberal and fiscally conservative. He’s someone who voters feel really understands the state,” says Nteta. “We’re not just interested in whether Charlie Baker is up or down, but why. These methods help us get there.”

To get beyond respondents’ potential biases, Nteta and his team must first root out their own, ensuring that their questions don’t lead the respondent or betray an underlying agenda. Melinda Tarsi ’10MA, ’14PhD recalls a stringent vetting process when she worked on the poll as a doctoral student.



SUGGESTED THAT MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION HAD BEEN POSITIVE FOR THE STATE



NTETA AND RHODES PUT THE DATA TOGETHER

**In recent years, the UMass Poll has taken residents’ temperature on the hot-button questions of legalized marijuana and gambling. The story the survey has told says much about how public opinion can be bolstered—or lost.**

**In the case of marijuana legalization, residents’ support has only grown over time. Prior to the legalization of medical marijuana use in 2013, 68% of those polled voiced support.**

**Four years later, 53% of respondents agreed that recreational marijuana should also be made legal for adults, a measure that the state legislature passed in 2016. In a November 2021 survey, 61% suggested that legalization had been positive for the state, with just 13% believing the impact to be negative. “Implementation has not been controversial,” acknowledged Nteta. “Many communities around the state**

**are seeing positive financial benefits with few negative consequences—and that’s showing up in our data,” he says. The story of legalized gambling in Massachusetts offers a very different case study. Several years after the legalization of casinos in 2011, 41% of survey respondents felt the legislation should be reversed, with 48% believing gambling should remain legal.**



YEARS AFTER CASINOS WERE LEGALIZED, 41% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THE DECISION SHOULD BE REVERSED

She tells of long sessions parsing questions, debating with her colleagues how certain wording might show the writer’s personal preference or lead a respondent to a particular answer. “I learned to take into consideration the psychological aspects of taking a survey,” she says. “Even the ordering of questions can prime a respondent to think in a certain way.”

While many polls are designed to attract media attention, the objective of the UMass Poll is more aspirational. “If I have a normative commitment, it’s to democracy,” says Nteta. “There are fundamental questions facing our society that we need to debate: climate change, identity politics, and who we are as a nation. The UMass Poll is attempting to provide answers.”

The poll, administered digitally with the help of YouGov, a data-analytics firm, aims to report on the health of democracy in Massachusetts and the country at large. The story it has told in recent years is that of a nation struggling to reconcile its shared identity—and a commonwealth that might just hold the answers. ➤



## THE STATE OF THE UNION

In October 2011, the UMass Amherst poll reported that 32% of respondents felt the country was headed in the right direction. In the same period, 43% of respondents felt the same about Massachusetts. Nine years later, nearly the same percentage of respondents felt positively about the national direction, but 7% more (50%) described the direction of the commonwealth as favorable. “This is a state that hasn’t embraced the polarized politics of the rest of the nation. In fact, recognizing the importance of various political viewpoints is important here,” said Nteta. “The story of Massachusetts has historically been about hope, and over the last two decades, the state has become one of the country’s beacons in that regard.”

Perhaps on no issue has the poll shown more divided public sentiment than that of race. In January 2022, the UMass Poll reported that, although three out of four Americans are in favor of teaching children about racial inequality, just over half believe that white Americans enjoy certain advantages because of their skin color. Forty-two percent of respondents went so far as to say that racism is either



JUST OVER HALF BELIEVE  
THAT WHITE AMERICANS ENJOY  
CERTAIN ADVANTAGES BECAUSE  
OF THEIR SKIN COLOR

“probably” or “definitely” not systemic in America.

However, in examining the numbers through a holistic lens, Rhodes finds reason for optimism. “When it comes to the high-profile cultural issues, there’s a lot more common ground than political elites demonstrate,” he says. “Most Americans support teaching the history of slavery; they don’t support the termination of abortion rights; they’re not opposed to participation of transgender people in sports. There’s a lot more room for compromise among the public than there is among elites.”

Nteta also sees reason for hope in the data and historical context. “The nation has faced these challenges before, and I’m hopeful that we begin to recognize our shared threats and demand more from leadership,” he says. On this point, Nteta believes that the work he and his colleagues are doing will help others chart the way forward. “I see our poll as helping to improve civic debate, so that when people are making decisions, whether they’re private citizens or elected officials, they have access to good information,” he says.

Rhodes shares his colleague’s view that collecting reliable data on public sentiment is a critical component of a healthy democracy. However, he also emphasizes that this occasionally means reporting unpopular results. “We absolutely have a responsibility to report in an unbiased way, but that also means not pulling punches,” he says. “To censor your findings is itself a form of bias.” To that end, both Nteta and Rhodes underscore the need for unimpeachable polling methodol-

ogies, strong data, and a willingness to speak truth to power. As a torch bearer for that message, the UMass Poll has already succeeded with the next generation of political scientists.

Following her time at UMass, Tarsi went on to serve in several municipal positions in Massachusetts, where she found her experience working on the UMass Poll to be critical in building consensus. “Because of what I learned, I can provide decision makers with the data they need to make informed decisions for their town,” she says. “And I’m able to say, ‘Here are the survey results, and here’s how I did it. I’m passing this data to your citizens and appointed officials so you can make the best decisions possible.’ I love being able to provide that.”

## PREPPING THE POLLSTERS

Beyond its status as an esteemed survey with national recognition, the UMass Poll also serves as a training ground for UMass students looking for real-world experience with quantitative data—as well as how to present results to the public. During his sophomore year, Anthony Rentsch ’18 got his feet wet proof-reading survey questions and double-checking poll results, until then-director Brian Schaffner asked him to cowrite a blog post on early voting results in advance of the 2016 election. The blog post, entitled “Early Voting Predicts Who Wins,” was soon picked up by *The Washington Post*, giving Rentsch an early career win. “Especially as an undergraduate, having the opportunity to have my name in the *Post* was incredibly cool,” recalls Rentsch. “I left that one on my resume for a long time.”

Tarsi also points to her time with the poll as a definitive professional experience. As a political science professor at Bridgewater State University, she shares what she’s learned with the next generation of pollsters, pundits, and politicians. “I loved the war-room mentality we had at the UMass Poll, pitching survey questions to each other, reworking them until they were just right,” she recalls. “That’s something I carry forward with my students now.”

Nteta and his team are keenly aware of the benefit in involving graduate and undergraduate students alike. He argues that the more diverse eyes he can put on both survey questions and results, the greater integ-

rity the poll will have. Of course, the benefits run both ways. “We don’t just want to bring students in to talk about poll results, but hopefully to get publications out of their work here,” he says. “We recently wrote an article on [Washington,] D.C. statehood in which one of our graduate students played a key role in working on the data analysis and writing the paper. If we can get this thing published, that goes right on his CV for the job market.” Nteta and his team are also at work developing courses and learning opportunities that allow more undergraduate students to be hands-on with poll data.

Increasingly, the UMass Poll has shown up in media outlets across the state and country, with results cited by MSNBC, CNN, *The Boston Globe*, and even in a tweet from former President Donald Trump. For Nteta and the UMass polling team, notoriety brings increased responsibility—and they take their charge seriously. “As a poll, we can’t create the change, but we can damn well inform the conversations that are happening around the dinner table, on Beacon Hill, or in the Supreme Court,” says Nteta. “It’s our job to inform the public of what they currently think or believe, so people don’t feel alone in their support or opposition to an issue. That’s what this poll is all about.”



See the latest opinions tracked:  
[umass.edu/magazine/poll](https://umass.edu/magazine/poll)

“IF I HAVE A NORMATIVE COMMITMENT,  
IT’S TO DEMOCRACY”

# A DECADE OF DREAMING

> ALEXIS ALI

## The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

(DACA) program provides temporary legal protection to children who immigrated to the United States without papers. Many are accompanied by their relocating families, too young to understand or even remember the journey or the home countries they left behind. Established in 2012, the DACA program has protected 1.8 million people from deportation, allowing them to work and live in the United States legally—giving them access to a driver’s license, social security number, and work permit. However, the track to even that temporary administrative relief has become increasingly difficult to navigate in recent years. Ten years into the program, only a small fraction of those eligible are enrolled.

To better understand the life of a DACA recipient, we sat down with Luana Rodrigues Dos Santos ’22, a recent UMass grad who immigrated here from Brazil with her family at age four.

## LEGAL LIMBO

The Student Legal Services Office (SLSO) offers free services from licensed attorneys. However, since DACA recipients aren’t identified in the database, students must self-identify to receive help—a proposition that is understandably met with trepidation. DACA students are not considered domestic students because they have no legal status in the United States. But they are also not international students, since they have no visa. Fortunately, because the SLSO is an actual law office, attorney-client privilege pertains—a distinction that few universities offer.

DACA recipients are not eligible for any federal financial aid. Recognizing this, UMass Amherst established the Angel Fund in 2017 to assist individuals adversely affected by federal immigration policy. The fund has disbursed nearly \$10,000 so far.

## How would your life be different if DACA didn’t exist?

I definitely wouldn’t have been able to attend a four-year university. Even with DACA, when I was applying to colleges, there were a lot of misunderstandings, and I was told by some that they wouldn’t accept me because they only accept permanent residents or citizens. I would have had even more closed doors.

## What’s changed since you first enrolled?

The whole process has changed dramatically. When DACA started, I had to renew it every two years and it’s expensive, trying to find \$1,000 out of nowhere. In 2020, Trump instituted a policy so that you had

“A lot of people do not understand immigration. It’s a very broken system, especially now.

to renew it every year. And on top of that, if you didn’t renew in time, you couldn’t even reapply. They weren’t accepting new applications. So, if I didn’t renew in time, I would not have been able to stay in the United States.

## How did you manage to renew?

I wasn’t able to attend classes a lot because I was working to come up with the money to renew my DACA status ... I emailed my physics professor to say I was sorry for my attendance and my grades dropping. I told him my situation, and he ended up setting up an online fundraiser for me. Within two days, I had what I needed. I was just super grateful for it—and the kindness of his heart.

## What do you want people to know?

The biggest question I get is, “Well, why don’t you just get a green card?” A lot of people do not understand immigration. It’s a very broken system, especially now. There is no pathway to a green card or citizenship from DACA. The only way I can get it is if a new law opens up or I get married to somebody who is already a citizen.

**Luana Rodrigues Dos Santos ’22** graduated in the spring and plans to become a neurologist or neurosurgeon. Though there was talk of establishing a new pathway to citizenship for DACA beneficiaries in the 2020 presidential campaigns, no new policies have been announced as of this writing.



Illustration: Thom Dudley



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## ACCOMPLISHED >

### LIVING THE BRAND

When you walk into a clothing store, do you notice how the sales associates are dressed? Their hairstyle? Skin color? Body type? While you might not think those things matter, many store chains have established unwritten specifications for whom they want working in their stores—and representing their brand.

In their book, *Walking Mannequins: How Race and Gender Inequalities Shape Retail Clothing Work*, UMass Provost Professor Joya Misra and Kyla Walters '14MA, '19PhD explore how racism, classism, and gender

bias impact retail employee demographics. Throughout many studies on the subject, they've found these biases influence every element of retail jobs—from a worker's experience with customers, managers, and the personal aesthetics and beauty requirements they endure while on the job. All while wearing the clothing they are trying to sell (another job requirement). The studies most notably detail how

white-associated beauty standards are perpetuated through dress codes and hiring practices.

"We wrote the book for our students working retail jobs," explains Misra. "We admire our students so much, working so hard, trying to make a difference, even when they face low pay, variable and unpredictable schedules, and poor working conditions. Our goal is for the book to make things better for young workers."

— Alexis Ali



**MORE UMASS GEAR THAN ANY OTHER STORE!**



### POTENTIAL ENERGY

During his childhood in rural Uganda, Aggrey Muhebwa '24PhD had access to electricity for only a few hours each week. That gave him firsthand insight into the impact that a stable, renewable energy source could have on remote communities. Today, Muhebwa is a graduate research assistant in the lab of Assistant Professor Jay Taneja, whose work explores using machine learning to measure and manage infrastructure systems—such as energy, transportation, water, and sanitation—in industrialized and developing regions.

"Affordable energy underpins any economic development," says Muhebwa. "To lift people out of

poverty, there is a need to have affordable and reliable energy sources." But cost isn't the only consideration. According to the World Bank, climate change is likely to disproportionately affect poorer communities, and has the potential to push more than 100 million people into extreme poverty. "We have to go beyond affordability and make sure that is it clean and sustainable," Muhebwa says.

Muhebwa is the first UMass Amherst student to receive a prestigious international scholarship from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, given in support of his work. He emphasizes that measuring the effects of climate change in the developing world benefits people everywhere. For example, he says, "This

scholarship has allowed me to tap into a network of like-minded individuals with shared goals and interests in utilizing big data and artificial intelligence to further understand the cascading impacts of climate change on water resources."

— Heather Kamins



# THE WILDS OF IMAGINATION

To write a book, says **Robin McLean '11MFA**, first, get rid of the beeping sounds and flashing lights of modernity. Next, watch the Milky Way galaxy spin across the big dark sky, where there's no light pollution. Then, get to work. At Ike's Canyon Ranch, the writer's retreat McLean recently co-founded in Nevada, you can do just that. McLean would know—this is where she penned her most recent books.

Named a best book of fiction by *The Guardian*, McLean's novel *Pity the Beast* (2021) upends the classic Western with a female protagonist, animals whose thoughts we can hear, and a landscape that's a main character. Her most recent short story collection, *Get 'em Young, Treat 'em Tough, Tell 'em Nothing*, was released in October. To get to Ike's Canyon Ranch, a former stagecoach stop, you must leave the pavement of the

Loneliest Road in America—a 400-mile empty stretch of U.S. Route 50—and cross another 50 miles of gravel that often washes away. Once there, you might hear the footfalls of Penny the donkey, a whinny from one of the wild horses that drinks from the nearby stream, or the rattle of the wind through the tack shed windows. Beyond that, all you'll hear are the sounds of your own imagination.

— Michael C. Carolan '09MFA

Photo: Robin McLean



◀ Nora Gallo '20 testifies at the Connecticut State House in support of reforms.

## HONORING EVERY VOICE

**Nora Gallo '20**, a survivor of campus sexual violence, began her activism against sexual violence and trauma in 2018 by volunteering at the UMass It's On Us chapter. Today, Gallo is co-director of the activist group Every Voice

Coalition (EVC) and is well known within the Massachusetts legislature—and beyond—for speaking to her experience and the importance of survivor-centered reforms in public policy. So far, she has helped pass new campus sexual violence legislation in five states, providing increased access to resources for survivors and increased safety measures on college campuses. Last spring, Gallo and her team at EVC received the 2022 Ronald Wilson Reagan Public Policy Award from the Department of

Justice. This award honors those whose leadership, vision, and innovation have led to significant changes in public policy and practice that benefit crime victims. Gallo says the high-level spotlight on the group's work to end the "epidemic of campus sexual violence" is an important recognition of "the outstanding and much-needed leadership of hundreds of survivor and student leaders across the country who are advocating for their rights." — Alexis Ali

## NOT HOLDING BACK

**Terrell Hill '18PhD** (right) is the founder and president of Black Leaders and Administrators Consortium Inc. (BLAC), a nonprofit that fosters the professional development of Black leaders through training, mentoring, and networking. When Hill struggled to find a position as a school superintendent, he was motivated to investigate hiring barriers in the industry more broadly. Through his doctoral work, he discovered that Black administrators often face barriers stemming from limited educational opportunities or relationships with decision makers as their white colleagues. His recommendation: a professional affinity group to assist future leaders in their professional growth and career progression.





PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

**Will Carswell ’00**, owner of Zen Art & Design in South Deerfield, MA, has turned his love of jigsaw puzzles into a unique business. The company offers artisanal wooden puzzles with designs that are dry mounted on eco-friendly natural birch slabs. Digitally created and laser cut, the puzzles often include uniquely shaped pieces, such as a starfish piece in a beach-themed puzzle.



SO PROUD

When **Deanna Kenyon ’19** first transferred to UMass as a sophomore, she was grappling with her identity as a cis-bisexual woman, trying to find her place socially and in a male-dominated field. The UMass Integrated Concentration in Science (iCons) program gave her the confidence she needed to excel at UMass and beyond. With her degree in environmental science, she now leads critical research on renewable energy technologies for Johnson Matthey (JM) in London, and co-chairs her company’s global PRIDE committee.

CLASS NOTES

**1970s**  
**Florentinus Gregorius Winarno ’71PhD** and his grandson **Amadeus Driando Ahnan-Winarno ’20PhD**, both accomplished food scientists, spoke at TEDxJakartaStudio events held in Indonesia. Winarno’s interview “Geographical Indication: Biodiversity and Indigenous Wisdom” covered Indonesia’s food resources in Bahasa, Indonesia. Ahnan-Winarno delivered a presentation titled “Tempe[h], Indonesia’s Greatest Best Kept Secret” on the potential of tempeh as a traditional food technology for producing nutritious, sustainable, and affordable meat alternatives.

**Deborah Hopkinson ’73** is an award-winning children’s author of more than 60 books, including *My Little Golden Book About Betty White* and several historical fiction and nonfiction picture books set in New England. Her latest picture book, *Only One*, came out in April.

**Eliane Sciammas Markoff ’75** and her husband, Gary, started Wellesley-based nonprofit gallery Art in Giving to raise money for childhood cancer research after their nine-year-old daughter, Rachel Molly, died of a brain tumor in 1992. Over the past three decades, the organization has raised more than \$2 million for basic childhood cancer research through the sale of fine art. To date, funding has gone to top researchers nationwide, including the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital,

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Johns Hopkins University, and Stanford University School of Medicine.

**James M. Odató ’77** is the author of *This Brain Had a Mouth: Lucy Gwin and the Voice of Disability Nation*, published by the University of Massachusetts Press. In this biography, Odató provides an intimate portrait of Gwin, an author, advocacy journalist, disability rights activist, feminist, and founder of *Mouth* magazine—a radical disability rights publication known for its acerbic, sometimes funny, and often moving coverage of people from throughout the disability community.

**Kevin O’Hara ’77** is the author of *Ins and Outs of a Locked Ward: My 30 Years as a Psychiatric Nurse*. Having written three other books, this is O’Hara’s first memoir, which focuses on nursing at Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, MA. O’Hara is a Vietnam veteran, a past Norman Rockwell model, and the 2012 recipient of a John F. Kennedy National Award, which is presented annually to an American of Irish descent who has distinguished themselves in their chosen profession.

**1980s**  
**Susan Rich ’83** recently published her fifth poetry collection, *Gallery of Postcards and Maps: New and Selected Poems* (Salmon Poetry, 2022). Rich has spent time living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, West Africa, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, and has done human rights work with Amnesty International in addition to her work as a poet.

**Susan L. Stearns ’86** has been named executive director of NAMI New Hampshire. Stearns has been serving as deputy director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) New Hampshire, and she has worked in the nonprofit sector in New Hampshire for over 30 years, advocating for families, children, and individuals with disabilities.

**Marissa Delinks ’88**, a partner at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, was selected by *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* as one of their 2021 Top Women of Law. She was also named one of *American Lawyer* magazine’s 2022 Northeast Trailblazers. Each year, *American Lawyer* recognizes attorneys who have “moved the needle” and are “agents of change” in their respective fields.

**Dr. Lauren Turner ’89** has been named the senior vice president for talent and inclusion at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Most recently, she served as the senior associate vice chancellor of human resources and organizational strategy and effectiveness at UMass Lowell.

**1990s**  
**Kimberly J. O’Shields ’90** is president and CEO of Continuum Solutions LLC (CSL), a woman- and Black-owned business that focuses on using technology to automate well-being services in educational and corporate settings. CSL strives to provide continuity of well-being services during distance learning or working remotely.

**Eric Feinstein ’91**, founder of Remember Sambor Genealogy, was

recently featured in the Orthodox Jewish magazine *Mishpacha*. He cites his UMass education as something that prepared him for his career as a genealogist. Feinstein specializes in European archival research and is fluent in Russian, French, and German, and has a working reading proficiency in Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and other Slavic languages, which “gives him firsthand access to the most obscure pieces of information.”

**Daniel Leonard ’92, ’00MA** and **Lorena Hernández Leonard ’02** produced the animated short film *Demi’s Panic*, which was an official selection at film festivals around the world, won several awards, and was long-listed for the 94th Academy Awards. Inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic, the film tells the story of a young Latina living in New York City when an unprecedented storm changes her city and her life.

**Trisha Blanchet ’93** (as T.M. Blanchet) is the author of *Herrick’s End*. Her debut novel is the story of a shy Boston kid who finds himself sucked into a dangerous, magical world below the city when he goes in search of a missing friend. Blanchet pulls from her time working at a domestic violence center and explores themes of abuse, justice, and revenge.

**Ousmane Power-Greene ’99, ’06MA, ’07PhD**, associate professor of history at Clark University, has had an “unusual last three years during the pandemic,” from teaching in Wuhan, China, in the summer of 2019 before the pandemic hit to the fall 2022 publication of his debut novel, *The Confessions of Matthew Strong*.

According to the publisher, the book is “a wildly original, incendiary story about race, redemption, the dangerous imbalances that continue to destabilize society, and speaking out for what’s right.”

**Marc Williams ’99MS**, a sports marketing pioneer and pop culture expert, was named one of the 100 Most Influential Blacks Today by *CORE Magazine*. Williams has worked for three of the largest sports brands in the world—Champs Sports, Footaction, and Reebok—and is widely regarded as one of the nation’s foremost experts on branding, sports marketing, consumer behavior, and hip-hop culture.

**2000s**  
**Cassie Sanchez ’08MEd, ’20PhD** recently joined the national nonprofit Warrior-Scholar Project as director of education. Sanchez was formerly an assistant editor and research assistant with UMass Amherst and brings decades of experience to her new role.

Brothers **Khalil Abdullah ’09** and **Ahmed Abdullah ’10** are included in a list of 10 Black Innovators who Changed the Gaming Industry. Their company, Decoy Games, created the award-winning game *Swimsanity!* and strives to be a symbol of inclusion, diversity, and inspiration in the gaming industry.

**Jose Cotto ’09** was named to the 2022 Nonprofit 40 Under 40 list by *City & State New York*. Cotto is a licensed clinical social worker who serves as senior vice president for residential treatment at the Institute for Community Living, a human services organization

that provides mental health care, housing, and social support services.

**2010s**  
**Tara DeZao ’12MBA** was featured in *Adweek*’s 2021 Pride Stars. DeZao is currently a director of product marketing for MarTech and Adtech at Pegasystems and was previously at Oracle’s in-house agency. Throughout her career, she has worked to prioritize support of LGBTQ+ communities both inside and outside the company. She is also active within the UMass alumni community, helping graduates prepare for corporate life with a focus on gender equity.

**Laura Butler Kisty ’14** won the Stevan Porter Emerging Hospitality Leader of the Year Award at the 2022 American Hotel & Lodging Association’s Night of a Thousand Stars Gala in Los Angeles. Each year, this event celebrates the industry’s top property-level talent. Seven awards were given this year to celebrate the diversity and inclusion of the hospitality sector.

**2020s**  
**Gabrielle Taylor ’20** and current student Masha Leyfer ’23 are two of the creators of the game *Vertl*, a Yiddish version of the popular word game *Wordle*, hosted by the Jewish news outlet *The Forward*. They met at UMass, where Leyfer, a linguistics and sustainable community development major, received help with her computer science homework from Taylor, who is now a software developer.

> Submit your note at: [umassalumni.com/classnotes](https://umassalumni.com/classnotes)



Photo: Associated Press

## SPOTLIGHTING THE TRUTH

**Phil Saviano '75** worked in health care, owned a successful concert promotion business, and imported and sold international folk art, but he was best known for being an instrumental whistleblower—exposing the clergy's sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Saviano died peacefully in November 2021.

Years after being abused as a child by a priest in his parish, Saviano learned that his abuser had been moved around but continued to victimize children. He felt an obligation to stop the abuse and hold the Church responsible. To that end, he established the first New England chapter of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) in 1997. Saviano spoke publicly and acted as a consultant around the world, advising others on how to address this issue.

After years of research and documentation, Saviano took his work to *The Boston Globe* Spotlight Team. That presentation, and subsequent discussions with the *Globe* reporters, led to the Spotlight Team's momentous investigation and 2002 reporting of the widespread abuse within the Church. The investigation and Saviano's role in it were later portrayed in the 2015 Academy Award-winning film *Spotlight*.

Saviano's bravery and compassion were a comfort to people around the world as he inspired them to understand their experiences, move beyond guilt, and live happier lives.



Photo: courtesy Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts

## WEAVING HER MAGIC

**Fiber artist Jacalyn "Jackie" Abrams '70, MEd**, died November 6, 2021, at age 72. Born in New York, she built a career and raised her two daughters in Vermont.

In 1975, Abrams was working as a schoolteacher when she wandered into a basket shop, inhaled the fragrance of pounded ash wood, and talked her way into an apprenticeship. After 13 years of making functional baskets, she began creating expressive vessels from materials such as paper, textiles, wire, and plastic bags. Her pieces have been included in the Smithsonian American Art Museum and other museum collections. A champion of lifelong learning, she taught crafting techniques to women in Africa and Central America and founded North Country Studio Workshops, a nonprofit that provides advanced training to New England artists.

Her work was often a commentary on social issues and the complex lives of women. One long-term project, *Women Forms*, reflected the ways that, as she put it, "our stories poke us out and cave us in." Her final series, *Precarious Shelters*, aimed to raise awareness and funds to address global housing insecurity.

Petria Mitchell and Jim Giddings of Vermont's Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts remember Abrams as "an eager collaborator with uncommon talent," observing, "Her deep respect for other cultures and her passion for the arts are woven into her remarkable creations."



Photo: Deklamond67/Stock

## MAN OF STEEL

**Robert Brack '60**, a longtime champion for UMass Amherst and the College of Engineering, died in September 2021.

After graduating with a BS in civil engineering, Brack joined the family business, Barker Steel, and became CEO in 1976. Under Brack's leadership, the company grew to 17 locations in 11 states with nearly 700 employees. He sold the business to Nucor Steel in 2007 and retired in 2012.

Brack also served as a treasurer, an executive board member, and as president of the Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute (CRSI) Education and Research Foundation. In 2013, Brack was the first recipient of the newly established CRSI Distinguished Service Award and was inducted into the CRSI Hall of Fame.

As an active alumnus of the Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) Department, Brack was the major donor behind the establishment of CEE's Robert B. Brack Structural Testing Facility. He also established an undergraduate scholarship endowment and graduate student fellowships, donated materials for experimental research in the CEE department, and funded a postdoctoral fellowship in the Structural Engineering and Mechanics Program.

CEE Department Head John Tobiason says, "The impact that Bob's volunteerism and philanthropy had, and continues to have, on the department can't be overstated."



Photo: Arthur Krigsmann

## A MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHER

**Professor Emerita Beth Sulzer-Azaroff**, a pioneering researcher of behavioral psychology, died February 26, 2022, at the age of 92.

Sulzer-Azaroff was raised in and around New York City, and began her professional career as a schoolteacher in Harlem. Curiosity about how to be a more effective teacher led her to take classes in psychology, and she eventually earned a doctorate in school psychology from the University of Minnesota.

She dedicated much of her career to supporting children with autism, and was one of the founders of the field of applied behavior analysis. To this day, her approach is still the primary treatment for children with learning and social disorders. She authored or co-authored several books, including textbooks that continue to impact the education of autistic children.

Sulzer-Azaroff joined the UMass faculty in 1973. Her daughter, Dr. Lenore Azaroff, says that before UMass, "She was refused openly for jobs because she was a woman." Her position at UMass enabled Sulzer-Azaroff to further her long and impactful career, and allowed decades of students to benefit from her wisdom and guidance, with several going on to become national leaders in behavioral psychology themselves.

Please submit nominations for remembrances to: [updates@umass.edu](mailto:updates@umass.edu)  
For a full list of alumni and faculty whose deaths were reported to the UMass Amherst Alumni Association between February 1, 2022 and August 31, 2022, please visit: [umass.edu/magazine/f22memoriam](http://umass.edu/magazine/f22memoriam)

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Age	Rate	Age	Rate
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70	5.3%	85	8.1%
75	6.0%	90+	9.1%

Two Lives			
Ages	Rate	Ages	Rate
65/65	4.3%	80/80	5.9%
65/70	4.5%	80/85	6.3%
70/70	4.8%	85/85	6.9%
70/75	4.9%	85/90	7.5%
75/75	5.2%	90/90	8.6%
75/80	5.5%	90/95+	8.8%

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# 2022 UMASS ALUMNI HONORS

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENTS



Revolutionary Spirit Award  
Esther Cuesta Santana  
'02, '09MA, '15PhD



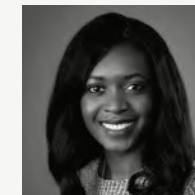
Excellence in Service Award  
Dr. John A. and Mrs. Elizabeth S. Armstrong  
2003 Distinguished Honorary Alumni



Lifetime Achievement Award  
Deepak Chopra '73MS



Distinguished Leader Award  
Thomas F. Burke, MD '84



Outstanding Young Alumni Award  
Sade Adeola Luwoye '15



Randolph W. "Bill" Bromery  
Legacy Award  
Earl W. Stafford '76

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MEMORY'S MATERIAL

> WENDY XU '14MFA

Wendy Xu '14MFA writes about identity, memory, and intimacy in three poetry collections, most recently *The Past*, from which this passage is excerpted. Her previous book, *Phrasis*, was named one of the 10 best poetry books of 2017 by *The New York Times Book Review*. She is assistant professor of writing at The New School.

Xu writes, “‘Notes for an Opening’ is a poem that uses autobiographical material but pushes against narrative neatness. Instead, there is room for all kinds of discoveries, new to both myself and reader, room for details to float more loosely on the page and exhibit a magnetization to other details that they perhaps didn’t have contact with ‘in real life.’ This also makes it a performance of the fragmented experience of remembering.”

from Notes for an Opening

On June 1st 1989 I was a baby carried on an airplane away from Shandong, China, the place of my birth and it was later related to me that during the flight I exhibited supernatural calm, a sense of devotion (submission) to the isolation I would later experience

I have mythologized it to the point of memory

Golf masters do this alongside prisoners of war: intense visualization over time seems to the body as good as lived experience

The imagination is, or is not, an abstraction

Three days later protestors are massacred in Tiananmen Square and the irony of the name of the place seems too cheeky, too perfect to talk about

“The Gate of Heavenly Peace”

My father participated quite fully in “brain drain”

In my adult life I throw up on public transportation

I write “false correlation,” on the board and slash it red

Adults at the time say there was something in the air and mean it as fully abstract though it is fully literal

What was in the air?

Illustration: Alex Rupp



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## SWAMY ON THE SOCIALS

The “selfie with Swamy” was just one of the many memorable traditions that the 30th Chancellor of UMass Amherst, Kumble R. Subbaswamy, heralded during his decade of leadership, which ends in July 2023.

Share your Swamy selfie, favorite memory, and hopes for how his legacy will continue by tagging **#SwamySelfies** on any social media platform or emailing us at [magazine@umass.edu](mailto:magazine@umass.edu). We may feature your memories and thoughts in the next issue!

And test your Swamy savvy: Check out our online trivia challenge to see how much you know about Chancellor Subbaswamy’s UMass legacy.

[umass.edu/magazine/swamysavvy](https://umass.edu/magazine/swamysavvy)