WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

PLUS:
10 years of the Office of Undergraduate Research
Teaching London Calling
The nation’s first peace engineering student
Dear Friends of Pennoni Honors College,

This spring, we intended to move into Bentley Hall, our new Honors home. This was put on hold with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. Our building stands, complete but for some finishing touches and the arrival of furniture — but, like so much else, it is in limbo, awaiting the resumption of life.

Fortunately, we have been able to transfer all our courses and much of our programming online. We have been sending notices to all our constituencies about what is available and have tried to be receptive to the needs of our students, now scattered all over the country and the world. The transition has been difficult, but, with the help of Drexel IT and the exceptional talents of our staff, relatively smooth and efficient.

Still, there is no denying our disappointment. We miss our students’ physical presence, and we wish we could be finally sharing office space together in Bentley. We are also disappointed that we must delay the arrival of a gift that was planned for the walls of our new home: 16 paintings from the estate of the late Brooklyn artist Thor Rinden, bequeathed to the Pennoni Honors College. These works — large, abstract oils in the style of the Color Field Movement — are striking. They will make Bentley Hall a destination for artists and art enthusiasts.

This is a difficult time for all of us, but we remain a devoted community, engaging with each other as best we can. Please keep an eye out for announcements regarding our virtual programming, and try to join where you can.

Susan Baren-Pearson from Drexel’s Office of Institutional Advancement is happy to talk to anyone who wishes to help the College. Gifts and programming engagement are welcome as we weather this storm and look forward to embarking on the next stage in the life of Pennoni Honors College at Bentley Hall.

From the Dean

Alumni Spotlight

Ryan Monkman, BS civil engineering ’12, works as project manager for Hunter Roberts Construction Group, which recently completed the renovation to Calhoun Residence Hall – now Bentley Hall – and the upcoming opening of the Pennoni Honors College addition. Ryan will next be working on the construction of Princeton University’s 500,000-square-foot New Residential Colleges 7 & 8.
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You can make a difference! When you make a gift to the Pennoni Honors College, you support the tradition of an interdisciplinary education. Every gift counts. To learn more about how you can support the Honors College, contact:
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Comments? Contact us at pennoni@drexel.edu
Philadelphia is notorious as a city of firsts. This was the original capital of the United States and the signing place of the original Declaration of Independence. The grit, passion and pride that its citizens emanate are unparalleled. The history of some of these firsts are better known than others, and the history of Philly’s LGBT movement is one that is rarely covered with the depth that its significance would otherwise warrant.

One Drexel community-based learning class was hoping to change that. Professor Jennifer Ayres, a visiting fellow in the Pennoni Honors College, taught a class last winter named “Oral History and Memory.” She and her students visited the residents of the John C. Anderson Apartments in Center City and, through semi-structured interviews, parsed out a fascinating part of local history that explored a snapshot of a nationwide social movement.

In alignment with President Fry’s goal for Drexel to become the most civically engaged university in the country, community-based learning courses were established alongside other initiatives that sought to integrate students and faculty more deeply within West Philadelphia neighborhoods. The Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, Lindy Center for Civic Engagement and Kline School Legal Clinic are a few of the facilities and endeavors the university has taken but, in my opinion, none are quite as immersive for students as community-based learning wherein students and local residents participate in the learning process together. Through shared experiences, they come closer to breaking socially constructed barriers and forming a cohesive community.

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This course in particular split its time between the Dornsife Center and the John C. Anderson Apartments, paying special attention to the exploration of public memory of the HIV/AIDS crisis that devastated an already marginalized population throughout the country. With assignments such as blog posts, interviews with family members and poignant readings that emphasized the relevant themes of gentrification, social justice, activism and various forms of media involved with community-building, students synthesized interview questions asked when meeting with residents.

Students and residents were given a tour of the William Way LGBT Community Center and its archives, which are home to installations from local artists, publications from various zines and other shared underground circulars and photos and archival media that document the rich history of an often-overlooked demographic of Philadelphia’s population.

Surrounding the building are various murals whose origin stories were told in depth and provided the foundation for students to recognize how often in our everyday routines we encounter such rich histories that have literally encompassed entire lives and pass them by without much thought.

Through thoughtful reflection of the responses they are given, students took the narratives they were exposed to and used them to not only provide greater insight into how much progress has been made historically for the equal rights of LGBT citizens, but also chart their own course moving forward. The work encouraged students to prioritize diversity, inclusivity and activism as they continue their education and careers in a city with as unique an ecosystem as Philadelphia. You can follow the journey of this project at oralhistoryandmemory.drexel.com.

ILLUSTRATING INJUSTICES

“Thank you for allowing me to teach such neat students. I really enjoy seeing the world from their eyes and always learn something new,” says Cyndi Rickards, Associate Teaching Professor of Criminology & Justice Studies.
In Brief

2019-20 ASPIRE SCHOLARS
Introducing the Center for Scholar Development’s third cohort of Aspire Scholars

Fifteen Drexel sophomores from across the university have been selected by Pennoni’s Center for Scholar Development for the third cohort of Aspire Scholars based on their academic achievement, engagement and demonstrated potential for success at Drexel and beyond.

The year-long program allows sophomores to develop their goals and embark on funded personal and professional development experiences. Through small group meetings and individual advising, Scholars gain the tools and opportunities to clarify professional goals, engage more deeply on and off-campus and build stronger personal and professional relationships.

This year’s cohort, our most competitive yet, represents 12 different majors and consists of international students, first-generation college students, peer mentors, STAR Scholars and more.

“We are proud of what these students have already accomplished and look forward to continuing to support them as they expand their network and work to achieve their goals,” says Martha Meiers, program manager for the Center for Scholar Development.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Olivia Spratt, custom-designed major, sustainable food systems ’21, was selected as a winner at Drexel’s 13th Annual Student Conference on Global Challenges for her research presentation, “Defining Upcycled Food Products.” Olivia plans to use her monetary award to travel to and present at the Graduate Food Studies Association conference this fall. She is working with Drs. Jonathan Deutsch and Raj Bhat on her senior project, and is also working with Deutsch on a manuscript for publication.

PRACTICING CIVIL DISCOURSE
The Civil Discourse, a reimagined TV interview series from Pennoni Honors College, will begin appearing online and on PBS television affiliates across the country via the National Educational Telecommunications Association in fall 2020. Building on the legacy of more than 15 years of The Drexel Interview, this series will explore controversial topics and social justice themes in the spirit of civil discourse with high-profile and renowned guests.

Pennoni Honors College Dean and Host Paula Marantz Cohen will delve into a spectrum of opinions and experiences with upcoming guests including The New York Times’s Bari Weiss, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, and Project HOME’s housing champion Sister Mary Scullion.

Visit The Civil Discourse online at drexel.edu/the-civil-discourse for more information and updates. For inquiries and guest appearances, contact civildiscourse@drexel.edu.
Isabelle Betancourt, curatorial assistant of entomology at the Academy of Natural Sciences and a recent graduate of Drexel University’s Master of Science program in communication, has been offered both a Fulbright Study/Research grant to Indonesia and a Fulbright-National Geographic Storytelling Fellowship from the U.S. Department of State and the National Geographic Society.

Betancourt plans to work with the National University (UNAS) to assess insect biodiversity at the University’s orangutan research field site in Borneo. The research forest currently has water channels that unnaturally drain the peat swamp forest, leaving it vulnerable to degradation and fires, but UNAS plans to restore the forest’s natural hydrology by stopping the channels. Betancourt will work with UNAS to gather data on how the restoration affects the wildlife community by documenting insect biodiversity prior to and after the hydraulic restoration project. The data can inform future restoration initiatives and the project will found an UNAS entomological research collection.

This additional storytelling fellowship will allow her to undertake an in-depth examination of globally relevant issues. Utilizing a variety of storytelling tools — including, but not limited to text, photography, video, audio/podcasts, public speaking, maps, and graphic illustrations — she will have the opportunity to share stories from her experience, and the stories of those she meets, through National Geographic and social media platforms.

In Brief

**CONGRATS ARE IN ORDER**

Big fellowships news for two Pennoni Honors College students

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Betancourt is one of over 2,100 U.S. citizens who will be awarded grants to teach, study, conduct research and provide expertise abroad for the 2020-21 academic year through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. She was just one of five fellows chosen from a pool of over 230 applicants for this National Geographic opportunity.

**Kamyar Kamyar, economics ’20, Honors, was recently selected as a 2020 Portz Fellowship recipient by the National Collegiate Honors Council and the members of the Portz Interdisciplinary Fellowship Committee. The council said his project, “Do Employers Screen Applicants Based on Work History? A Text Analysis of Help-Wanted Ads” reflected a thoughtful and relevant purpose, clear research methods, and utilized an interdisciplinary approach. The committee noted they were impressed with his preparation, his deep engagement in honors and evident enthusiasm for his project. Kamyar will begin a PhD program at the Ohio State University in the fall for economics.**

**VIRTUAL REALITY**

How Pennoni Honors College transitioned to the online world during COVID-19

When Drexel sent out its messaging that because of COVID-19 all spring classes would move online, Pennoni Honors College responded. Not only did it scramble to make sure its 15 Honors Program classes would be up and running online, but Honors College staff worked swiftly to shift more than 40-plus co-curricular and extracurricular events to a virtual space. We also packaged some of our creative initiatives to share and engage with our various audiences.

Together, students, staff, faculty, and members of the community have come together for Shakespeare Read-Alouds, Wednesdays at the Kline discussions, virtual office hours, information sessions, Nerd Night talks and trivia.

While this pandemic has left no one unaffected, we do hope that our virtual calendar keeps you conversing and connected.
A LONG ROAD TO SELF-DISCOVERY

The Center for Scholar Development helped support the way to world travel

BY SHERIDAN CLEMENTS, ANTHROPOLOGY ’19

I'm from a tiny town in central Maine called Cambridge, where some of our neighbors are of the big brown moose variety. I've always been fascinated with travel, hoarding my grandmother's old National Geographic magazines, and getting excited when exchange students would give school presentations about their home countries. Over time, a number of family members and teachers fostered my interest in world cultures and travel, encouraging me to seek out new experiences.

In high school, I went abroad with the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange program for the first time and spent my junior year at a high school in southwestern Germany. Since then, I've returned to Germany several times for study and personal enrichment. While a Drexel University undergraduate, I traveled to Greece with the Vidalakis Cretan Scholars Program for co-op abroad. I worked at the Historical Museum of Crete and spent my free time exploring beaches and beautiful scenery. Following co-op, I also completed the last part of my undergraduate degree in Scotland, spending a semester at the University of Aberdeen. Pennoni’s Center for Scholar Development introduced me to this opportunity, helping me focus my interests and find programs I had never considered; the staff later encouraged me to apply for a Fulbright award. They gave amazing feedback and guidance, and I honestly don't think I would be where I am right now — perhaps literally and figuratively — if I hadn't met them.

Which is, in Wales, as a Fulbright scholar at Bangor University, pursuing a master's degree in Celtic archaeology. Wales is incredibly spirited and unique, as well as stunningly beautiful, and I often take trips to local archaeological sites. After graduation, I plan to get a job in the United Kingdom to establish myself more within the field of archaeology. Over the next decade, my goals include getting my PhD, traveling to parts of the world I've never visited, like Nepal, and inspiring more students to experience life outside their comfort zone.

My travels have been a long road of personal self-discovery. I've been able to experience so much more than would have been possible at home — in Maine or the United States — and I'm more open-minded about differences among people. I was able to come out to my family and friends, and now I'm able to live freely as myself because I realize that difference is an inherent part of the human experience.

World travel has made me aware of how many false assumptions we have about people and culture, making it easier to think more critically about my field. I've even gained a greater appreciation for my hometown while away, discovering things that I never knew I would miss. 

BY SHERIDAN CLEMENTS, ANTHROPOLOGY ’19

Advice from a Fulbright Recipient and World Traveler

Believe in yourself. Make the effort to get the experiences you want in life.

Never be afraid to ask for help. If I hadn't asked the Center for Scholar Development for help, I never would have found such amazing opportunities.

Keep going. Even if rejected at first, keep applying for fellowships you want.

It’s all about perspective. While you may not like everything about a new place, that doesn’t mean it’s bad. It just may be unfamiliar (and you may even come to like those differences).

Take your time. Don’t just focus on seeing things, like the way people funnel straight to the showstopper in a museum. Learn about a place and its people, lose your tunnel vision and see so much more. This approach can also lead you to hidden treasures, like a gorgeous waterfall or a tasty new treat.

Don’t buy things, buy experiences. Traveling so much has wreaked havoc on my luggage space, and each purchase I make now has much more meaning. Just think: you could buy that souvenir T-shirt or you could take a bus to tour a castle.
Seeing Both Sides

One Honors student’s assessment of her community-based course

By Abigail Gard, Civil Engineering ’21, Honors

When course registration rolls around, I pour over the honors courses, looking for something engaging to take alongside my engineering classes.

Throughout the years, I’ve taken courses such as “Media, Law, Society, and Ethics”, “Defining America” and “Great Works: Lucia Di Lammermoor.” This past fall, I registered for my first side-by-side course, a collaboration between the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement and the Pennoni Honors College. Side-by-side courses contain Drexel students and community members, who are invited to take these courses for free with no previous educational requirement. The goal of the course, according to the Lindy Center website, is “to create a mutually respectful learning environment where everyone can ... benefit from the experiences and perspectives of their classmates ... so we may work together to co-create solutions to social problems.” The course I registered for was “Places of Justice” and was taught by Cyndi Rickards, an associate teaching professor of criminology and justice studies.

This dialogue-based course was a refreshing change of pace from my typical engineering courses comprised of lecture, homework and exams on seemingly endless repeat. Cyndi tactfully facilitated discussions and planned engaging activities that led to rich and insightful dialogue for the 15 Drexel students and 12 community members. The safe, trusting environment we created allowed us to tackle challenging topics such as systemic racism, gun violence, housing discrimination, as well as environmental and educational justice. We became comfortable sharing our experiences, challenging each other’s biases, and educating one another to help bridge generational, racial, religious and socio-economic gaps. In 10 short weeks, we became a team, committed to exploring these issues as deeply as possible. Each week, I left feeling grateful for the time we got to spend together and the little community we were building.

Sadly, our team suffered the loss of one of our community students, Shirley Dixon, during Week 9. We were devastated. I still think about Shirley — her calm and collected nature, her dedication to education, and her bright eyeshadow. She was a true example of someone dedicated to their community and to building places of justice in any capacity that she could. The impact that Shirley had on our lives in nine weeks is a testament to the power of bringing together students and community members in side-by-side courses.

Not only did this course meet The Lindy Center’s goals, but it produced thoughts, feelings, and conversations that I am still digesting two months after the end of the course. Additionally, it left me eager to apply the knowledge I gleaned in the classroom to my educational, professional, and personal life, which should be an outcome of any class at Drexel. Thank you to Cyndi Rickards, my Drexel peers, and my community student classmates for making this one of the most impactful courses of my college career.
Lessons from London Calling’s 40th anniversary from the students of Fall 2019 Honors 480

BY DR. KEVIN EGAN, DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, DREXEL UNIVERSITY

CLASH IS IN SESSION

Lessons from London Calling’s 40th anniversary from the students of Fall 2019 Honors 480

Forty years ago, The Clash released their third studio album, London Calling. A masterpiece in experimentation, London Calling is one of the most ambitious, musically sprawling albums of all time.

The album comprises 19 tracks, featuring punk, garage rock, rockabilly, reggae, ska, R&B and even jazz. Upon its release, it exploded the conventions of punk, defied categorization and deftly blended musical genres along with politics and irreverence.

In the Rolling Stone review of London Calling, the album is referred to as “so rich and far-reaching that it leaves you not just exhilarated but exalted and triumphantly alive.” I can say, without exaggeration, that these were exactly the feelings elicited when I first discovered The Clash in high school. I had survived my early teenage years, and I was working the Seattle-fueled angst out of my system, moving my musical preferences a bit further down the coastline to explore Bay area punk. I was hooked and as 2019 unfolded, I wanted to find a way to commemorate it and think about its relevance to a more contemporary audience.

Fortunately, I found a way to do this through the Pennoni Honors College by teaching a Great Works course. The purpose of such a course is to celebrate, explore, contextualize and gain a deeper understanding of a singular work that is considered to be of unique significance in its genre — for me, this was London Calling.

Throughout the term, we explored the historical context — in terms of music, politics, and society — in which the Clash formed and created London Calling. We learned about its origin story, and compared it to other punk staples of the time. We dissected the album track by track. We discussed the aesthetics of its famous cover art. And, we considered how the album was received at the time of its release, as well as how it has aged over the course of 40 years.

When it came to thinking about how the album has aged, and how we assess it as a great work, the students in the class were tasked with writing a 40th anniversary review of London Calling. This was certainly no small task given the amount of praise that has been heaped upon the album over those 40 years. Saying something new or having a fresh take might have proven difficult, but in some ways these students had the advantage of bringing a distinctive perspective precisely because this was a fairly unknown album to them (although many did note that they took the class because their parents are big fans of The Clash). My hope was that the album would spark the same exhilaration that I felt; that it would leave them feeling “triumphantly alive.” But, what they wrote for their final papers demonstrates some of the unique insights they developed along the way. It is clear to me that London Calling still resonates today with a new audience, and I think its ability to endure over time, often in unpredictable ways, is what makes it great. I think that my Oldsmobile tape deck would agree.

by the frenetic energy of bands like Rancid, Green Day and Operation Ivy, but it wasn’t until I saw the John Cusack movie Grosse Pointe Blank that I encountered The Clash. I saw that movie four or maybe five times in the theater, and each time I was completely transfixed by the soundtrack, and particularly the song “Rudie Can’t Fail.” There was something about the boisterousness — and maybe even a little bit of dangerousness — of the song that was infectious, and it was the gateway to the exhilaration I would come to feel for the entire album.

London Calling became the soundtrack to my commute in high school, a mainstay in my college-years musical rotation and the inspiration for me to study political theory in grad school. Given the sonic breadth of the album, it has always found a way to reflect my mood: for righteous political indignation, switch on “Clampdown,” “Spanish Bombs” and “Death or Glory;” for the gloom of suburban alienation, take comfort in “Lost in the Supermarket” or “The Card Cheat;” for when I am just feeling amped, crank up the title track, “The Guns of Brixton,” and “Wrong ’em Boyo;” for when I just got dumped, turn on “Train in Vain” (on repeat); and, of course, “Rudie Can’t Fail” unfailingly pulls me out of whatever bad mood I might be in. The album has been an anchor for me, and as 2019 unfolded, I wanted to find a way to commemorate it and think about its relevance to a more contemporary audience.

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This story originally published on thesmartset.com, featured three student reviews from the course. Above are illustrations of Olivia Eife’s (BS environmental engineering ’22) breakdown of London Calling’s tracks used on The Smart Set’s Instagram stories @thesmartsetmag. Illustrations by Barbara Chernyakova.
The son of a National Geographic wildlife photographer, Ian Nichols spent his early years traveling to places where few people go: Nepal, Uganda, Gabon, Rwanda. The University of Virginia graduate followed in his father’s footsteps after college, photographing chimpanzees and lowland gorillas in the Republic of Congo and orangutans at the International Orangutan Center at the Indianapolis Zoo. For seven years he made a career of it, but, in that time, he watched the magazine industry falter. And capturing a National Geographic-level wildlife story on camera takes time – time the magazine world no longer offered.

In the long hours behind the lens, the patient and hardworking photographer came to realize he wanted to delve deeper than lighting, aperture and shutter speed. He’d come to understand his subjects and respect their environments. He began a master’s program in biology at a field site of the University of Virginia, and while working on Equatorial Guinea’s Bioko Island for Drexel’s Gonder Lab, the 39-year-old from Crozet, Virginia decided to pursue a PhD degree in biology at Drexel.

His primary research focuses on human development that can also support wildlife such as agroforestry, but also includes his life-long passion for great apes and their unique cultures tied to their habitats. But his data points
Kingo, a silverback gorilla in the Republic of Congo. Kingo was part of a gorilla group or harem studied over a 15-year period, giving us a rare glimpse into the lives of the elusive and reclusive great ape. The gorillas’ frequent visits to a nearby swamp for nutrient-rich herbs, allowed Ian to obtain unique photos. It also allowed him to obtain unique parasites like hookworm and schistosomiasis and on another Congo assignment, he contracted malaria five times.

Always looking for opportunities to stay in Africa doing fieldwork, Ian applied and received a 2018-19 Fulbright with help from Pennoni’s Center for Scholar Development. The “photographer scientist,” as Ian calls himself, says both fields are rooted in thoughtful observation. See for yourself.

A portrait of Azy, an adult male orangutan, Pongo pygmaeus, who grew up in captivity and now lives at the International Orangutan Center in Indianapolis. “I have never met a zoo animal like Azy,” Ian says. “He is studying and watching the humans around him all day long. It took him three days until he accepted me and allowed me to take his photograph.”

Azy is part of several cognitive studies that Dr. Robert Shumaker—who also worked with Azy at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C.—and now others conduct to prove how truly intelligent these great apes are. “I was amazed when I began to see how Azy manipulates the zoo keepers by playing games and lying to get what he wants. Rocky, another orangutan, would craft tools out of cardboard to escape or reach items he shouldn’t have access to. Orangutans are notorious escape artists in zoos.

The Indianapolis center has both captive apes, but also orangutans that were in the entertainment industry; the differences are striking. The entertainment apes grew up as humans in a sense, and they act that way. Rocky and Katy both loved an audience and attention and at times seemed more connected to humans vs. their fellow orangutans.

Mycombe rests with son Ekendy, with the silverback Kingo nearby for protection. During the hottest part of the day, gorillas take a nap in a shady area. High-quality camera traps and trail cameras make research easier — before that, Ian says, those intimate moments took months of patience and hard work to get. While on his Fulbright, Ian captured videos of 35-plus species. Including mantuwanis that are incredibly beautiful, but also rare. “The human observer/photographer changes the scene,” he admits, “whenever I’d push the gorillas for a shot, by getting closer or watching too long, I’d lose the shot. Camera traps do away with that issue and it’s amazing to see how wisely, expansively chimpanzees navigate their environment.”

come in the form of photography and video, which he translates into scientific findings to better understand the lives and behaviors of species that avoid humans or are active at night.
Muddy mudskipper in mangroves, family Oxudercinae, Gabon, Africa. A favorite photo of Ian’s, mudskippers are an unassuming fish that walk on land. “When you watch them in their world, you see how aggressive males are – it’s all about defending your territory.” The brown drab fish flares up a brightly colored fin to display to females and other males. “We can all make a great photo because luck is part of capturing moments, but the scientific side means you know what your subject will do, how to capture it, and how that fits into the narrative, and how we relate to that and what we can learn from that,” he says. Ian was not the kid born with a camera in his hand. He hated taking photos because he connected the instrument to his father being away for long periods of time; He also recalls being “tortured” by his father, when Ian was made to model for some Patagonia photo shoots as a young child. His interest in photography didn’t start until he went to Africa with his family in 2003 and helped document his travels by taking photos of the beach, the trash and the punk rock shirt. “Then for the rest of college,” Ian says, “I always had a camera with me.”

If you meet a forest elephant in the field, either it runs, those around you run, or the elephant knows poachers and he or she chases you around or up a tree until it moves on.

A camera trap of a forest elephant with tusks. A male elephant shakes a vine in response to hearing the clicking of a camera trap taking photos. “Forest elephants are a good example of the power of camera traps,” Ian says. “If you meet a forest elephant in the field, either it runs, those around you run, or the elephant knows poachers and he or she chases you around or up a tree until it moves on.” Camera traps are a unique teaching tool, Ian acknowledges, because without a human observing nearby we cannot see such behavior. “With advances in technology I’ve moved from photos to videos at Ganga Research Station in Cameroon.”

Ian is now working with fellow Cornell Lab graduate student Tyler Andres-Bray, to assist him with a study on tool use for termites and ants in a transition habitat – or ecotone – between forest and savannah.
The last decade of Pennoni’s Office of Undergraduate Research has seen unprecedented growth in fostering student engagement, increasing experiential learning opportunities and enriching the Drexel experience for hundreds of students.

BY THE OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH STAFF

Celebrating 10 years of the Office of Undergraduate Research

This spring, the Office of Undergraduate Research celebrates 10 years of engaging and supporting Drexel undergraduates in knowledge creation in their fields.

As we reflect on the past decade of growth, it becomes clear that the evolution of our office has matched, stride for stride, the insight our students attain — and what they aim to do as undergraduate researchers. The STAR Scholars Program, established nearly a decade prior to the founding of the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), was created to allow first-year students the chance to participate in faculty-mentored research, scholarship or creative work. But with a term of full-time research under their belt and a boost to their self-confidence, students were left wondering what came next. Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Suzanne Rocheleau and the support of the Pennoni Honors College and the University, the Office of Undergraduate Research was created to answer this very question.

From the beginning of the STAR Scholars Program, our students have exceeded expectations for what first-year students are capable of and for what undergraduate students can achieve in research (read more from former STAR scholar Kara Spiller on page 26). In response, we started sending students to undergraduate research conferences and supporting students’ presentations at discipline-specific conferences through travel grants (read more about OUR travel grants on page 23) to ensure they were building communication and presentation skills while taking advantage of opportunities to network with other undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty in and beyond their fields.

In 2011, the Office established the Outstanding Mentor of the Year award (read more about the Outstanding Mentor of the Year on page 26) to engage students in thinking about the contributions their mentors make to their STAR summers; the award also acknowledges faculty, in a small way, for the time and effort they put into guiding these students through what is often a transformative experience. STAR Scholars started nominating their graduate student mentors for the award with such frequency that our office worked with Drexel’s Graduate College to create the Outstanding Mentorship Award as part of the slate of Graduate Student Awards, hoping also to make the work graduate students do in mentoring STAR students visible and identifying it as valuable.

Students also expressed interest in doing research internationally; in 2012, the Office established relationships with a few international institutions and created the iSTAR Scholars Program to enable students to engage in research in international and other domestic, external settings. iSTAR also helped integrate undergraduate students into faculty collaborations domestically and abroad. Over seven years, we’ve sent 69 students to 14 locations. In 2016, we established an Undergraduate Research Leaders initiative because we wanted to corral students’ enthusiasm for research and direct it outwards; those students took the organization leaps beyond what we anticipated by establishing an executive board, bylaws and a regular meeting schedule. They even organically attended Drexel admissions events, serving as student representatives of our office, chatting with prospective students and parents, and showcasing the impact research can have on their college careers.

Next came the SuperNova Undergraduate Research Fellows program. In 2013, we wanted to recognize students who were accomplishing amazing things as undergraduate researchers beyond their freshman year, so we designed a program around real students whose achievements were out of this world. In the six years since SuperNova’s inception, 34 students have achieved the rank of either Research Fellow or SuperNova, meaning they have participated in part-time or full-time research experiences; presented their research on campus, at undergraduate research conferences, or discipline-specific and professional meetings; published their work, applied for and won fellowships and other merit-based awards; and even applied for patents! In 2015, at the suggestion of a student who knew there was an audience among undergraduate researchers, we founded Nerd Night @ Drexel U to host informal conversations about topics the students themselves found engaging (read more about Nerd Night on page 27.) Now with programs and initiatives that track and commemorate the accomplishments that students achieve during their undergraduate careers, we began organizing the Week of Undergraduate Excellence in 2017 to give students a forum on campus to share these achievements — in research, in the classroom, in co-curriculars and co-op — with the University community. Over the past four years, we have hosted more than 125 events as part of the Week of Undergraduate Excellence and engaged more than 500 students in collaboration with colleges and departments across the university.

For the past 10 years, OUR has grown — in staff capacity, in programmatic offerings, and in response to what our students have suggested or requested or needed. For the next decade, we hope to anticipate those needs — or, at the very least, to keep pace with Drexel’s amazing students.

— JAYA MOHAN, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH
Amelia Hoover-Green, an associate professor in Drexel’s Department of Politics, teaches courses in comparative politics and research methods. In 2003, she was awarded funding for a research co-op and sought help from Pennoni’s Office of Undergraduate Research to find research assistants. She mentored five STAR Scholar students: Asiya Chiteh, global studies ’22; Kiona Dhimna, political science ’21; Uma Mutaal, political science ’23; Kejri Shahaj, communication ’22; and Medina Talebi, political science ’22.

We caught up with Amelia to ask about her social science research and mentorship of STAR Scholars. This is what she had to say.

**Often research connotes beakers and test tubes. Tell us about your social science research?**

My research focuses mostly on the causes of violence against civilians in armed conflicts. There is emerging evidence that internal armed group institutions (for example, practices of recruitment, retention, military training, ideological indoctrination and discipline) can strongly affect how and whether armed groups are able to control violence against civilians. My book, *The Commander’s Dilemma*, looks closely at institutions and patterns of violence across several armed groups that fought civil wars in El Salvador, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

**How did you get involved in working with the Office of Undergraduate Research?**

I’m always looking for research assistants (RAs), so the STAR Scholars Program has been an enormous boon for me. As external sources of social science funding get sparser and more competitive, this internal competition allows me both to identify some of our best students in the social sciences and to fund my own research (since I couldn’t otherwise pay RAs.* )

**Why is research important for social science undergraduates?**

The Department of Politics teaches a three-course required research methods sequence. In addition to substantive information about politics, we want students — most of whom aren’t going to become political scientists themselves! — to develop a toolkit for asking and answering hard, contentious questions.

**I often hear from alumni who credit a research methods course with improving their working life — whether in social work, law, local government, political consulting or corporate communications.**

How have you incorporated undergrads into your research? My research assistants on my ongoing research project about armed group institutions got assigned one armed conflict at a time and are responsible for doing an exhaustive search of news and scholarly research on the recruitment, retention, training and disciplinary systems for these groups. It’s really tough intellectual work. In addition to gathering information, students are researching names of potential experts for follow-up interviews, reading between the lines for evidence that these institutions existed (or not) and ultimately deciding when they’ve exhausted the available information.

I think one of the most important things STAR students do is leave me behind and work on their own research. Uma and Medina, for example, each quickly decided to work on their own independent projects — Medina on an emerging social movement around Shia genealogies and Uma on a project exploring the power of non-state religious elites in strong, ostensibly secular states. They returned in January from an undergraduate research conference at Harvard and are both preparing manuscripts for publication now.

**What sorts of skills, interests and work ethic do you look for in a social science undergrad seeking research?**

For data work, I need students who are dogged self-starters, but also creative thinkers. Foreign language skills can be especially helpful, since much of the local knowledge about armed groups is not in English-language media. Above all, though, I look for students who are genuinely passionate about a question or project that falls in or near one of my intellectual interests, who show that they can envision what an extended research project would look like.

**How has working with undergraduates improved your research?**

I never could have made the progress I’ve made in the last few years without my RAs. Also, student researchers have been first readers of much of my academic writing over the last several years. Sometimes it takes a non-expert, or a person whose expertise is new, on a person whose expertise is slightly different than yours, to identify an implicit assumption or a missing piece of an argument.

**Has doing social science research with undergraduates changed anything about your classroom teaching?**

Mentoring undergraduate researchers keeps me attuned to what I need to teach. It’s been 15 years since I entered graduate school, and in that amount of time it’s easy to forget that it’s not obvious how academic research is done, on a practical level. Particularly in my research methods courses, my undergraduate research assistants have been really influential as I consider yearly course revisions.

*STAR Scholars earn a $3,500 stipend.*
Written in the STARs
BY ERICA LEVI ZELINGER

In her freshman year at Drexel, now-associate professor of biomedical engineering, Dr. Kara Spiller, was accepted into a new summer program where she had a chance to participate in faculty-mentored research. Just 18-years-old at the time, Spiller, a biomedical engineering major, was enthralled by the idea of working in a biomedical research lab, being in charge of a whole project and designing her own experiments. As one of 30 students admitted to the first class of the STAR Scholars Program, Spiller spent eight hours a day in the summer of 2003 working in Drexel’s Wheatley Research Lab on a drug delivery project. Seventeen years later, Spiller admits she pulled one all-nighter at the end of the program to get done what she promised to finish.

“STAR students learn how to operate independently and manage their own time,” Spiller says. “Working in the lab taught me how to manage my time effectively. I used that skill going forward for my classes, and clubs and other research. I carried it forward into my career.”

After receiving her BS/MS and doing her doctoral research at Drexel, Spiller received the award for Most Outstanding Doctoral Graduate: Most Promise to Enhance Drexel’s reputation. She went on to get her own research lab, where she now is passionate about hiring STAR students.

“STAR students are highly motivated, enthusiastic members of my lab and the time. It permeated my entire undergraduate education.”

In 2014, she brought on one STAR student. She took on three in summer 2016 and two more last summer. After a few years working with undergraduates, Spiller has developed a training program, because, as she says half-jokingly, “we need to make sure they don’t burn the lab down.”

Her first lab rule is to teach students how to receive packages to make sure they’re opened immediately and properly stored. Then, she gives them low-risk, but high-reward projects, training them in the skills they need before setting them off to collect data. Many of Spiller’s STAR Scholars have gone on for their PhDs, using their time in lab as a springboard to gain necessary experience and the understanding of what it means to do research.

“I love working with STARs,” Spiller says. “They are all highly motivated, enthusiastic members of my lab and bring a lot to the lab’s morale. They are just so excited all the time.”

I look forward to Nerd Night @ Drexel U hosted by Drexel’s Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) each term — it is one of my favorite events. Pizza, trivia, prizes and laughs are perhaps the most enticing incentives for any college student. What’s more, it’s the welcoming environment that is jointly curated by both the OUR staff and the audience of students. I have presented at two Nerd Night events, once in 2017 and once in 2018, and am planning on presenting once more to cap off my senior year. Though I have presented research at other academic functions, the informality of Nerd Night, combined with its comfortable and encouraging environment, have fostered my development and confidence as a public speaker.

This unique platform has allowed me to explore and share on topics that I am passionate about but often don’t have the opportunity to engage with my community about. Why is it important to study and conserve amphibians? How do we address mass extinction? What impact can climate change have on one’s health? As an undergraduate, the opportunity to genuinely examine these loaded questions with my peers is rarely afforded, but Nerd Night @ Drexel U does just that.

—JAKUB ZEGAR, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, ’20

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Among the benefits of early undergraduate research experience is more time to explore potential career paths and preparation for graduate study. Students who respond in biomedical engineering and participated in the STAR Scholars Program are prime examples of this, as 18 percent of the 136 students pursued a master’s degree (with thesis option) either here at Drexel or elsewhere, and 24 percent of biomedical engineering STAR Scholars went on to pursue a terminal degree, whether that meant a PhD, MD, or even JD.

Biomed Breakdown

Alumni Spotlights

CLAUDIA GUTIERREZ
BS/MMS, biomedical engineering ‘15
STAR Scholar, Summer 2013

• Pursued research and fellowships throughout under-graduate career, including the Whitaker which allowed her to do research abroad as an undergraduate
• Attended medical school at The Mayo Clinic Alx School of Medicine
• Has maintained strong connections to Drexel and worked with the Center for Scholar Development to apply for Fulbright while in med school; took a year off to then return to the lab in Switzerland where she did her Whitaker and continued doing research

CARLI MARISCO (NEÉ MOOREHEAD)
BS biomedical engineering/MMS materials science & engineering ’17
STAR Scholar (Summer 2013), Undergraduate Research Leader, SuperNova

• Helped Institute Nerd Night @ Drexel U for undergraduate students
• Earned Fulbright to Italy
• Pursuing PhD in materials science & engineering at University of Washington, Seattle
• Has returned as an alumnae to help review applications for STAR Scholars

JOHN QUINLAN
BS/MMS biomedical engineering ’19
STAR Scholar Summer 2014, Undergraduate Research Leader, SuperNova

• Completed his master’s thesis research in the same lab in which he worked for the STAR Scholars Program (with Dr. Alessandro Fatatis, DUCOM)
• Participated in undergraduate research conferences, including INCUR and CUR Posters on the Hill
• Presented work on campus via Week of Undergraduate Excellence and Nerd Night @ Drexel U
• Engaged in research experiences in academia (here at Drexel, in industry (at Janssen Pharm), and at a non-profit (Marshall Sciences Foundation)
• Pursuing a dual MD/PhD at University of Maryland

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18% MASTER'S DEGREE

136
BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING
STAR SCHOLARS
24% TERMINAL DEGREE

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24% TERMINAL DEGREE

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Excellence and Nerd Night @ Drexel U
Fallen Angel Rises

en Han “Hunter” Wu, game design and production, ’20, recently signed a deal with a publisher to take his game Fallen Angel to the next level. A 2019-20 Office of Undergraduate Research travel grant supported his travel to four game design conferences across the country where he promoted Fallen Angel and developed contacts that led to his deal with Vizromatic Publishing. Fallen Angel is a pixel art action game in which the player takes the role of Lucifer and returns to Heaven in a quest to regain paradise. The game’s narrative is inspired by John Milton’s Paradise Lost, and features an alternate interpretation of Satan’s story. A $12,000 office of undergraduate research travel grant supported his travel to four game development conferences in the United States, and he was also awarded $12,000 from the OUR Student Travel Grant Program.

Outstanding Mentor of the Year

Established in 2011, OUR has now given this award to 12 faculty over eight years, for a total of $12,000 awarded to faculty to support their work with undergraduate students.

2011
DR. SRIRAM BALASUBRAMANIAN
(BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING)

2012
DR. JEAN-CLAUDE BRADLEY
(Chemistry)

2013
DR. GLEN MUSCHIO
(SOCIAL MEDIA)

2014
DR. MURUGAN ANANDARAJAN (MANAGEMENT)

2017
DR. KAPIL DANDEKAR
(ELECTRICAL & COMPUTER ENGINEERING)

2018
PROFESSOR HANDE BENSON
(Decision Science)

2019
DR. DAVID BECHER (FINANCE)

Travel Grants

The Office of Undergraduate Research has provided students with more than $135,000 in grants and travel funding since its inception in 2010. OUR provided grants to 423 students... who traveled to 32 states and Washington, D.C. ...and 15 countries, including Ireland, Germany and Japan.

SuperNovas’ Achievements

CONTINUING RESEARCH
35 students have had at least one full-time research experience outside of the STAR Scholars Program
30 students have had at least one part-time research experience
25 students have taken at least one research methods or research-related course
PRESENTATIONS
13 students have participated in at least one on-campus presentation of their work, including Week of Undergraduate Excellence
17 students have presented at one or more undergraduate research conferences
19 students have presented at one or more professional or discipline-specific conference

Attending the National Collegiate Conference Research Boston opened my eyes to the incredible research occurring at universities all across the globe. I found myself undeniably inspired by the talented, intelligent and driven individuals that I had the opportunity to meet, speak to and hear from. This conference was such a great way to not only present the work that I am doing to a broader audience but also to learn and grow as a person, student, and researcher.

EMILY JOHNS, CHEMISTRY, ’23
HARVARD NATIONAL COLLEGIATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE
(CAMBRIDGE, MAI, JANUARY 2020)

—  ROXANNE LOVELL, PROGRAM MANAGER, OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH
MAKING PEACE

How one custom-designed major graduate became the nation's first peace engineering master's student

BY DR. MELINDA LEWIS

In 2010, Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake. 220,000 were estimated dead. 1.5 million others were displaced. The island’s infrastructure was largely destroyed. By the time Savanna Michener, custom-designed major, sustainable development '19, arrived in Haiti six years later for an alternative spring break trip, the damage was still visible. Meeting people working in the area, Michener who was already interested in the relationship between engineering and the environment, found others who were just as passionate about respecting the planet and improving people’s lived experience through engineering. This trip inspired Savanna to strike out in an area where she could combine her love of built and natural environments, sustainability, and people. Eventually she carved out her own sustainable academic path via the custom-designed major before becoming the nation’s first peace engineering master’s student.

“Growing up on a farm taught me a lot about being outdoors, working with animals, and understanding human-environment interaction. But none of that ever felt like a passion, it was a part of my everyday life,” Savanna says. Despite her childhood spent with chickens, cows and sheep, her career plan upon entering college was to better the human condition, which for her meant the body directly. Savanna’s interest in helping people combined with her high school science courses, led her to choosing a biomedical engineering major at Drexel. Her courses allowed Savanna to focus on subjects that meant a lot to her like the human body, problem solving, and math. The major seemed like a natural fit.

As she continued her coursework, however, she began to look at the larger picture. The body in context. Savanna began noticing that there were overlapping fields that delve into environmental and political issues: “We all live, work, and relax in different environments, and it’s almost always a combination of natural and built ... I started to realize what a profound impact engineering projects have on shaping these environments.” The connections were further forged during her iSTAR experience through Pennoni’s Office of Undergraduate Research, when she traveled to Costa Rica the summer after her freshman year to work as a research assistant. It was out of her comfort zone, but the experience helped her further reflect on the significant relationship between humans, infrastructure, and environment.

While recognizing the overlap happening in her classes, Savanna sought the opportunity to bring these concepts closer together by building her own sustainable development studies via the custom-designed major.

“I knew I wanted to help improve lives, while simultaneously gaining this deep passion and respect for the natural environment and the plane that allows us to live,” Savanna says. “Being able to explore the connection between these interests was the key to me making the transition ... the custom-designed major gave me the freedom, backed by academic rigor, to explore this unique, but so critical intersection.”

The process of forming her major was challenging, but the ownership over its construction empowered Savanna.

Savanna would never describe herself as an outdoorsy kid. But being raised in Massachusetts, the natural environment was just home. “Growing up on a farm taught me a lot about being outdoors, working with animals, and understanding human-environment interaction. But none of that ever felt like a passion, it was a part of my everyday life,” Savanna says. Despite her childhood spent with chickens, cows and sheep, her career plan upon entering college was to better the human condition, which for her meant the body directly. Savanna’s interest in helping people combined with her high school science courses, led her to choosing a biomedical engineering major at Drexel. Her courses allowed Savanna to focus on subjects that meant a lot to her like the human body, problem solving, and math. The major seemed like a natural fit.

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While recognizing the overlap happening in her classes, Savanna sought the opportunity to bring these concepts closer together by building her own sustainable development studies via the custom-designed major. “I knew I wanted to help improve lives, while simultaneously gaining this deep passion and respect for the natural environment and the plane that allows us to live,” Savanna says. “Being able to explore the connection between these interests was the key to me making the transition … the custom-designed major gave me the freedom, backed by academic rigor, to explore this unique, but so critical intersection.”

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experiences. This summer, Savanna had hoped to travel to Morocco as part of a Critical Language Fellowship she received to study Arabic and build strong relationships with those in the community. Sadly, the fellowship was canceled by the State Department due to COVID-19.

Dr. Kevin Egan, director of Pennoni’s Academic Programs and formerly the director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry, remembers Savanna as highly motivated and ambitious, a person who frequently found adventurous opportunities to pursue and hustled to make them happen. “She had a core vision of the problem space she wanted to go into and an understanding of how to make systems more sustainable, to design those systems to be more ecologically friendly, and that became the node.”

Savanna’s master’s program allows her to continue to hone her ideas, and coupled with her work in the classroom and work in the field, she has not only grounded her scholarship in the real world but also continues to self-reflect and consider how to make the world a better place. This quality, of seeing problems and moving forward to address and solve, is one that Kevin believes Savanna embodies and is emblematic of many of his custom-designed major students. “Here is somebody who found her vision, found her voice, found what she wanted to do and has taken that outside in the world and is helping people,” Kevin says. “That’s a success to me, the program, and it’s rad.”

“I’ve always been a pretty independent person,” she says, “[so] having to follow a sometimes seemingly arbitrary curriculum [made me feel] like I was being tunneled down a trajectory I wasn’t sure I wanted…”. Being able to take control encouraged Savanna to reconsider how the pieces of her major worked together to form the bigger picture and “explain exactly why I was doing it and the importance.”

At the same time she was engineering her own degree, a peace engineering graduate program emerged at Drexel, the nation’s first. Savanna had taken some courses in this area as an undergraduate and met with the faculty who were helping to develop Drexel’s new area of study. And so, Savanna became the program’s first student. “I had never considered getting my master’s right away or in conjunction with my undergrad degree … but then there was a program that was a perfect fit for me and my unique interests that met my high standards.”

Part of her master’s included working in a refugee camp in Greece, where Savanna says, she learned more about the complications and priorities of applying ideas and changes to built and natural environments. She gained perspective beyond what was written in books and lectured about within courses. Savanna was able to gain real-world experience negotiating the complications when it comes to making decisions regarding spaces, people within those spaces, and the consequences of those decisions. As she approaches her expected graduation date in December, Savanna continues to put together the pieces, coupling the theoretical concepts learned in courses with her lived experiences. This summer, Savanna had hoped to travel to Morocco as part of a Critical Language Fellowship she received to study Arabic and build strong relationships with those in the community. Sadly, the fellowship was canceled by the State Department due to COVID-19.

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How one custom-designed major graduate thinks reframing our perceptions of time can change the user experience

**BY BRIAN KANTOREK**

A year ago, Alyssa Klein was a senior capstone project student who presented research about the Power of Time Perception in UX Design. Using her CSDN experience, Alyssa addressed how good design ultimately saves time. The then-user experience designer for HomeAdvisor, a service specializing in digital mobile apps that match service professionals with homeowners, presented research about the way humans record reality. Turns out, this has a lot to do with the emotions we are experiencing at the time. It also highlights the cultural status quo: Faster equals better.

Alyssa says, UX design, she admits, has incorporated this idea of instant gratification into how it serves people in today’s cultural climate. “Ironically, there is a significant amount of waiting we have all been forced to endure during these strange times,” Alyssa says. “Waiting to travel, to see family and friends, waiting to move, even waiting to get into the grocery store. With all this extra time we have (that would normally be spent socializing, drinking, etc.), the days might seem like they are crawling by at a snail’s pace. There are certainly ways to make the time feel like it is going by faster or slower, but it depends on the context of your situation.”

“Maybe you are an essential worker putting in overtime, and April and May have just flown by for you. The concept of a weekend has evaporated, and you can’t believe how well you’ve endured the lockdown. You’re busy and overstretched, and there aren’t enough hours in the day for you to pause and take a breath. Everyone else around you is rearranging their furniture and becoming avid marathon runners. How can you slow down during this stressful time? You need to shake up your routine. Take a different route to work. Put down your phone, and pay attention to the world around you. Drink a cup of coffee. Whip out DuoLingo on your bus ride and learn something new.”

“An opposite example as well: you were laid off (like so many others) when everything shut down. You have no idea when you’ll be able to work again, or how you’ll pay rent. Is today Wednesday or Saturday? You have no idea. You sleep until noon and binge-watch West World all night. April and May have lasted literally forever and you don’t know how much more you can bear. To help speed up this dull time, throw yourself into passion projects, discover new music, and cook yourself food. In the absence of structure, develop routines or rituals, like waking up to watch the sunrise, or exercising regularly. With all this time, maybe now is the best time to take those coding classes you’ve been putting off. Whether you want time to go by fast or slow, you are in charge of your own experience.”

As a rising professional in the field, Alyssa finds solace and sense in the power of taking her time to achieve results. “We aren’t comfortable just sitting, doing nothing anymore,” she notes. There was a time when waiting was built into everything we did as a society, but much of that has changed in a fast-paced, technology-driven culture of recent decades. Alyssa points to tried-and-true adages like “a watched pot never boils” or “time flies when you’re having fun.” To get beyond these clichés, this designer has spent the last few years searching for an answer to that lingering existential question: How do we truly embrace the wait? Alyssa recently started a new job as a product designer at Livongo Health, a whole person platform that empowers people with chronic conditions.

“It’s the catch-22 of my job: encouraging people to spend more time on screens … but maybe we shouldn’t.”

In high school, Alyssa took intensive art classes but always maintained an interest in science. In fact, she originally intended to double major in art and science fields to create virtual or augmented reality programs for medical students. However, that would have required a biomedical aspect to complement art design, and “that was a lot of my conflict with finding universities that would let me pursue both in tandem.”

Then Alyssa stumbled on CSDN as an incoming Drexel student in Fall 2013, when the major was still in its infancy. The self-described “huge nerd” came in with enough AP credits from her art-specialized high school in Southern Florida, so she dove right into CSDN. It happened completely by accident … but now I’m doing exactly what I love to do. I ended up building my own UX design approach for individuals. As a rising professional in the field, Alyssa finds solace and sense in the power of taking her time to achieve results. “We aren’t comfortable just sitting, doing nothing anymore,” she notes. There was a time when waiting was built into everything we did as a society, but much of that has changed in a fast-paced, technology-driven culture of recent decades. Alyssa points to tried-and-true adages like “a watched pot never boils” or “time flies when you’re having fun.” To get beyond these clichés, this designer has spent the last few years searching for an answer to that lingering existential question: How do we truly embrace the wait? Alyssa recently started a new job as a product designer at Livongo Health, a whole person platform that empowers people with chronic conditions.

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In high school, Alyssa took intensive art classes but always maintained an interest in science. In fact, she originally intended to double major in art and science fields to create virtual or augmented reality programs for medical students. However, that would have required a biomedical aspect to complement art design, and “that was a lot of my conflict with finding universities that would let me pursue both in tandem.”
called on examples from mundane grocery store check-out lines to computer loading indicators (particularly those oft infuriating spinners, also known as “wheels of death”).

Following her graduation from the CSDN program and Drexel University, Alyssa packed her bags for Denver, where she soon found herself immersed in the scenic, metropolitan landscape and post-undergraduate employment. Not only did her CSDN coursework clearly prepare Alyssa to take on her first job at HomeAdvisor and now at Livongo, but it also enabled her to think about the intersecting worlds of art and science and how these fields relate to UX.

As a creative outlet in her limited free time — but not all that disparate from her Startup Week presentation or CSDN capstone project — Alyssa patiently turns to light painting photography to make sense of an ever-changing world around her. Using a combination of a slow-cooked lens shutter technique to gradually paint an image with streaks of light, Alyssa finds beauty in the wait.

“That’s my passion,” says the UX professional. “It’s basically like altering time perception within an image.”

Her work both as a UX designer and as a light painting photographer continues to evolve. Just as light painting requires long exposure, realizing her professional goals is much more bearable and comfortable these days.
 Alumni News

Rick Antines, BS, architectural engineering '98 & Erica Antines (née Leeds), BS civil engineering '98, celebrate the birth of their son, Aaron Richard Antines, born on January 27. Aaron joins older sister Elena. Congratulations!

Jonathan Deutsch, hospitality management '96, received the 2010 Syracuse University Educator of the Year award from the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Education. The James Beard Foundation Impact Fellows has authored or edited eight books and currently teaches classes across a wide range of programs including culinary arts, food science, hospitality management and nutrition. He also maintains an active research program and is the Drexel Food Lab Director, a good food product development and culinary innovation lab.

Bryan Fuskowski, sport management '14, was promoted to associate director of athletic communications at Western Kentucky University. In 2013, he received the best season reception for his "Quicksand Threat" article from the College Sports Information Directors of America's (CoSIDA) Final Four. Still busy, Still writing. He also received a 2019 CoSIDA Regional Award for the best athlete profile for his "You Go Proud of You Buddy, I Love You" piece.

Damie Juat, biological sciences '17, graduated with a master’s in biotechnological and translational science in May. Damie won third place and a $500 scholarship in the University of California, Irvine Davis Dean Competition. Glad Slam is a systems-level competition that showcases and awards the best three-minute research presentations by graduate students. This competition not only highlights the excellence, importance and relevance of UCI graduate scholars and their research, but it also designed to increase graduate students’ communication skills and their capacity to effectively present their work with pride and confidence. It is an opportunity to share accomplishments with the campus, friends of UCI, the local community, and the broader public.

Chris Rathausnky, accounting '07, obtained his CPA while working with his co-owner at-frame employee, POC. After leaving POC, he started working on the series during the past eight years to Senior Director of Strategy, Analytics & Metrics within PRO Unlimited, a contingent labor management consultancy and software firm. PRO Unlimited manages the temp-workforce for well-known companies including Nike, Facebook, Novartis, McKinsey & Co. and Goldman Sachs. He also teaches annually at Drexel in Dana D’Angelo’s and Jodi Catlin’s BUSN 101 students on the 2008 subprime mortgage credit crisis. He met his wife Kate Radvansky (née Brennan), finance '07, freshman year in that very same class and they were married in April 2012. The couple now has two daughters, ages 2 and 5. Kate, an honors student, segued her finance degree into a medical license and serves as an attending physician within the Jefferson Health System. The Radvanskys currently live in Bucks County outside of Newtown.

Megan Powerloefen (née Correll), global journalism '94, has a book coming out in October with Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Megan will celebrate the publishing of Enterprising: A Laboratory’s Investigation into the Science and History of Bodies Bound in Human Skin with a book launch party at Philadelphia's Merlet Museum, which houses the largest confirmed collection of human skin books in the world. For more details, go to meganpowerloefen.com.

Dane Schroeder, BSMS, civil engineering '17, is an associate engineer for Pennoni Associates in Philadelphia. Dane works in the transportation division and specializes in bridge design, construction and rehabilitation.

Kelly Trussell, PhD physical therapy '17, and Andrew F. Feldman, BS/MS civil engineering '16, were married in September 2019 in Newport, Rhode Island. Drexel friends traveled from 15 states to enjoy the celebration. The couple met in Spring 2011 at the conclusion of high school and both lived in Millburn. Fall their freshman year. Today, the couple lives in Cambridge, Mass., where Kelly is a physical therapist at Total Rehab & Fitness, an outpatient multiple sclerosis care facility. Andrew is a fourth-year PhD student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in civil and environmental engineering.

The Drexel InterView is Pennoni Honors College’s longstanding television series, featuring interesting people engaged in civil discourse with host Paula Marantz Cohen. Building on the legacy of this show, the series will be rebranded this fall as The Civil Discourse and explore controversial topics and social justice themes. For full episodes, visit The Drexel InterView YouTube channel or check your local PBS affiliate television listings.
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