

# NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## YOU BELONG:

Helping Students Feel Welcomed,  
Supported, and Connected



PLUS

Tackling Cancer's  
Thorniest Questions  
—  
Vancouver's Big Move



Dear Friends,

As we just completed our 62nd annual commencement to celebrate the Class of 2023, New York Tech and its mission are as resilient as ever. We remain committed to providing career-oriented professional education, giving all qualified students access to opportunity, and supporting research and scholarship that benefit the larger world. While technology and other advances continue to evolve and impact our operations—the way we teach students, support faculty and staff, drive enrollments, advertise our degree programs, and connect with alumni mentors, to name a few—our focus has always remained fixed on ensuring all of these elements converge to provide the best possible student experiences.

Take this issue of *New York Institute of Technology Magazine*, which highlights how our university is working toward advancing our mission and delivering on our promise. Our Center for Cancer Research follows in the footsteps of our other health initiatives, such as the Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome/Hypermobility Treatment Center and Center for Sports Medicine (among others), in fostering vital research that impacts millions. Moreover, this center will provide undergraduate-, graduate-, and doctorate-level opportunities for students to pursue more cancer-related research in a way that harnesses a diverse range of academic disciplines into this endeavor, combining our Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Engineering and Computing Sciences, and Arts and Sciences.

Speaking of diversity, another story focuses on how our Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) is making great strides. New York Tech is ranked one of the most diverse colleges in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*. In today's learning environments, DEIB is essential for understanding the backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs of those around us, providing benefits across every industry—from science to medicine to business to computer programming and more—to produce the best, most impactful outcomes. This feature also highlights a new DEIB alumni board that will coordinate its efforts with New York Tech staff to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have access to opportunity.

In addition, our Vancouver campus is one of our best success stories as it relates to how we are fulfilling our mission of providing career-oriented professional education. The number of enrolled students at this location is up more than 600 percent since 2016 and is made up of individuals entirely from outside Canada. This remarkable growth has necessitated a move into a 40,000-square-foot campus that spans three connected buildings. In addition, many of our Vancouver graduates find jobs in Canada in some of the fastest-growing fields, including energy management and business analytics.

It is wonderful to see how our university's mission continues to ring true across campuses, cultures, and careers, all while providing the best experiences that support New York Tech students and our mission. Please enjoy this latest issue of *New York Institute of Technology Magazine*, and thank you for all that you do for our students.

Sincerely,

Hank Foley, Ph.D.  
President, New York Institute of Technology

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Esther Pagan (B.A. '94, M.P.S. '04)

**Specialist, Alumni Relations:**  
Kathryn Karwoski

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Update your contact information or mailing address: [alumni@nyit.edu](mailto:alumni@nyit.edu) or 516.686.7800.

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## LET'S BE FRIENDS

Like what you see? Share your updates and feedback at [nyit.edu/alumni\\_notes](https://nyit.edu/alumni_notes) and connect at @NYITalumni, [nyit.edu/linkedin](https://nyit.edu/linkedin), and [facebook.com/nyit.alumni](https://facebook.com/nyit.alumni).

ALEXANDER BERG

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As New York Tech-Vancouver continues to grow, the university's Canadian campus is making the move from two locations to one, creating a cohesive community within a new 40,000-square-foot multibuilding complex.

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## CAMPUS BUZZ

### NIH Awards Three New York Tech Faculty \$3.5 Million in Grants

Shenglong Zhang, Ph.D.; Jerry Zhao, Ph.D.; and Jole Fiorito, Ph.D., collectively received approximately \$3.5 million in National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants to further studies in Alzheimer's disease, RNA modifications, and brain disorder treatments.

### Center for Risk Management Continues to "Bloom"

An enhanced relationship with Bloomberg L.P. is paying dividends for the School of Management.

### Reaching for the Stars

Assistant Professor Andrew Hofstrand, Ph.D., received the Air Force Research Laboratory/Air Force Office of Scientific Research Young Investigator's Program Award to study the mathematics that describe the way lasers move inside specially designed materials.

REC PHILLY

### "Engineering" Solutions for Healthier Brains

Assistant Professor Maryam Ravan, Ph.D., proposes the use of cutting-edge algorithms and techniques that could provide noninvasive solutions for clinicians to treat neurological and psychiatric conditions more effectively.

### How to Help Address America's Youth Mental Health Crisis

In an op-ed in *Salon*, Assistant Professor of School Counseling Cameka Hazel, Ed.D., explains how an increase in K-12 school counselors could be one way to provide support to young students.

### Alumni Named to Board of Trustees

John R. Keville (B.S. '88), Thomas J. Van Laan (M.B.A. '84), and Debra A. Vogel (A.A.S. '85) have been elected to New York Tech's Board of Trustees.

### Architecture Alum Joins New York Tech

Donald Booth (B.S.A.T. '91) has joined his alma mater as vice president of capital planning and facilities.

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Sheena Howard

Cover illustration by Ryan Johnson

# CAMPUS BUZZ

Stay up to date on the latest New York Tech news. Check out our alumni and student profiles, research updates, campus happenings, and more. [👉](#)



Yingtao Zhao

Shenglong Zhang

Jole Fiorito

## NIH Awards Three New York Tech Faculty \$3.5 Million in Grants

Three New York Tech faculty have collectively received approximately \$3.5 million in National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants to further studies in Alzheimer’s disease, RNA modifications, and brain disorder treatments.

### Searching for the True Sequence of RNA

Imagine a world where eyeglasses only allow the perception of four colors, despite the existence of a rich and diverse color spectrum. That is the challenge faced by scientists when deciphering RNA sequences. Present-day tools can only identify four nucleotides within an RNA sequence, yet there are numerous other components that remain undetected and unaccounted for.

Shenglong Zhang, Ph.D., associate professor of biological and chemical sciences, received a \$676,946 NIH R01 grant, with total funding estimated at \$2,588,918 over the next four years, to develop a tool to uncover the true sequence of RNA.

RNA plays diverse roles, but its main function is to create proteins by carrying genetic information during cell replication. It is

also the primary genetic material for viruses. Modifications in an RNA’s nucleotides occur to perform these biological functions. Defects in RNA modifications account for more than 100 diseases, including breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. By studying these modifications and defects, scientists may be able to understand and find treatments for these diseases.

What makes RNA modification studies complicated is that while more than 170 modifications have been discovered, not all nucleotide modifications are modified to 100 percent at their RNA sites.

Working with co-investigator Associate Professor of Computer Science Wenjia Li, Ph.D., Zhang aims to develop a new tool to discover the true makeup of RNA. “Our tool aims to tackle a long-standing challenge of revealing ‘true’ RNA sequences, offering a transformative solution for studying RNA modifications,” says Zhang. “This advancement will foster a deeper understanding of functions of RNA modifications and their correlations to RNA-related diseases and pandemics.”

### Stopping the Progression of Alzheimer’s

Alzheimer’s disease has an increasing health and financial impact on society as there are no drug treatments that effectively counteract it. There are limited treatment options available to target mild to moderate Alzheimer’s symptoms, such as memory loss, but little is available to modify the disease’s progression.

With a three-year \$438,583 grant from the NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Assistant Professor of Biological and Chemical Sciences Jole Fiorito, Ph.D., who specializes in medicinal chemistry, will explore drug developments to treat the disease. The research team includes New York Tech faculty co-investigators Michael Hadjiargyrou, Ph.D., distinguished professor and chair of biological and chemical sciences; Raddy Ramos, Ph.D., associate professor of biomedical sciences; and five undergraduate students.

Fiorito’s early-stage work seeks to develop a compound that inhibits two specific enzymes, thus helping improve learning and memory processes. She aims to develop a single-drug treatment to stop the disease’s progression while reducing the side effects that taking multiple drugs can generate. “Results from this study will advance our knowledge on the synthetic feasibility and therapeutic potential of these small molecules and will open avenues of opportunity for the discovery of a novel therapeutic candidate,” says Fiorito.

### New Treatments for Neurological Conditions

Assistant Professor of Biomedical Sciences at the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) Yingtao “Jerry” Zhao, Ph.D., leads a research team that recently secured a three-year, \$428,400 grant from the NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. This grant will support research to study the sugar molecule heparan sulfate, which covers the surface of all cells in the human body and is believed to help regulate cell-to-cell interactions. While deficient heparan sulfate levels have been associated with autism spectrum disorder, overaccumulation has been linked to Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease. However, little is known about how, exactly, heparan sulfate helps to regulate brain function, and treatments are limited.

Zhao and his team will use a novel mouse model to study genetics, molecular biology, and other biomedical factors that could impact the role of heparan sulfate in the brains of adult mammals.

“Our research is significant because it will fundamentally advance understanding of the role that heparan sulfate plays in the brain’s signaling pathways. We aim to offer a strong scientific basis to develop new therapies for patients with neurological diseases caused by heparan sulfate irregularities,” says Zhao.

## Center for Risk Management Continues to “Bloom”

The Center for Risk Management is experiencing a renaissance thanks to the efforts of some faculty and students in the School of Management. An enhanced relationship with Bloomberg L.P., the financial, software, data, and media company headquartered in New York City, is paying dividends for School of Management students and offers potential benefits to all New York Tech students, faculty, and staff in the form of enhanced financial literacy.

While the School of Management has long offered students training and access to Bloomberg terminals (there is one terminal each on the Long Island and Vancouver campuses; there are 10 terminals in the Bloomberg lab on the New York City campus), the relationship with Bloomberg has blossomed under

the leadership of Professor Joshua Bienstock, J.D., LL.M., who is also program director of the Center for Risk Management.

Now, thanks to Bienstock, dozens of School of Management undergraduate and graduate students have toured the Bloomberg campus and participated in a workshop; another hundred or so have expressed interest in upcoming visits. He is also working to have Bloomberg executives speak to students on cutting-edge issues concerning risk management. But one of the greatest aspects of the Bloomberg relationship is its certification program, according to Bienstock. “It’s invaluable to everybody,” he says.

Bloomberg offers training and certification in two primary areas: Bloomberg Market Concepts, which offers a

library of e-learning courses, providing an introduction to the financial markets, and Environmental Social Governance (ESG), an interactive e-learning course that provides an introduction to ESG strategies and reporting. Both training programs are available at no cost to New York Tech students, faculty, and staff under the School of Management’s licensing agreement with Bloomberg. Otherwise, it would cost \$150 per person to access the training. [👉](#)



SHENGLONG ZHANG: ALEXANDER BERG; JOLE FIORITO: ANDRE KOPINSKI; JERRY ZHAO: STEVEN GAINES

## Reaching for the Stars

The work of Assistant Professor Andrew Hofstrand, Ph.D., might be grounded in complex and advanced scientific research, but it all began with a love of studying the stars. “My interest in mathematics grew out of my passion for astronomy in middle school,” he says. “I later majored both in astronomy and mathematics in college. Actually, some of my current research has connections to astronomy.”

Hofstrand recently received the Air Force Research Laboratory/Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFRL/AFOSR) Young Investigator’s Program (YIP) Award. “My research has a strong computational component, and some of the AFRL/AFOSR YIP funds [more than \$200,000 over three years] will be allotted to obtain hardware for running large-scale simulations.”

His research focuses on the mathematics that describe the way lasers move inside specially designed materials and how the light interacts with its surroundings. Such light-matter interactions can be highly complex, requiring sophisticated techniques in mathematical modeling. “There is currently a great deal

of interest among optical scientists and engineers in finding novel ways to control and manipulate light in the hopes of generating faster and more efficient technologies, particularly in computing,” he says.

Hofstrand’s application was one of 58 chosen from a pool of more than 175 proposals vying for the prestigious award; many of the awardees are from top research institutions in the country, which puts him—and New York Tech—in impressive company. The grant award is also significant in another way. “Most of the awardees are from engineering departments. I am honored to be among these recipients and to be chosen as an applied mathematician,” he says.

For the spring 2023 semester, Hofstrand brought his expertise to a new course of his own design called Computational Analysis, which aims to introduce students to important numerical algorithms used in analyzing data. “My goal for the course is to expose students to mathematical and computational fundamentals, which can grow into more advanced projects related to my ongoing research,” he says.



COURTESY OF ANDREW HOFSTRAND



◀ Dean Babak Beheshti (far left) with this year’s honorees. From left: David Schieren; Carmella Stephens, a patent attorney at Carter, DeLuca & Farrell, who accepted the award on the firm’s behalf; and Oliver Vasquez.

played an important role in supporting the college’s growth and transformation and has shown outstanding service to the college, its students, and its mission through financial support and technical collaborations that benefit students.

### THIS YEAR’S HONOREES ARE:

- Hall of Fame award: [David Schieren \(M.S. '06\)](#), chief executive officer at EmPower Solar
- Rising Star: [Oliver Vasquez \(B.S. '12\)](#), founder and chief executive officer of Vasquez Integrators
- Industry Partner of the Year: The law firm of Carter, DeLuca & Farrell, LLP

In addition to the three awards, a special award was presented to George Likourezos, a partner at Carter, DeLuca & Farrell, for his work on the Dean’s Executive Advisory Board and contributions to New York Tech’s annual Biotechnology Conference.

## Ingenium Awards Celebrate Alumni, Industry Partners

On April 26, at NYIT de Seversky Mansion on the Long Island campus, guests commemorated the accomplishments of alumni and industry partners at the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences’ second Ingenium Awards ceremony.

Awards were presented in three categories. The Hall of Fame award recognizes exemplary alumni who demonstrate extraor-

dinary achievements and accomplishments in their profession and demonstrate exceptional service and commitment to their field, the community, and the university; the Rising Star award recognizes alumni who demonstrate a commitment to the college by serving as a mentor and resource to current students as they chart and explore their career goals; and the Industry Partner of the Year, which recognizes a company that has

## What’s a College Degree Worth?

New York Tech has become the first university in the nation to provide a highly personalized and visual return on investment (ROI) calculator on its website. This tool, called Return on College, or ROC, is designed to help prospective and current students fully understand the financial costs and potential long-term payoff of various undergraduate degrees, complete with related career pathways. The university partnered with Vantage Point Consulting, which designed and developed ROC through a U.S. Department of Education Small Business Innovation Research grant. New York Tech volunteered to serve as a beta site in 2021 to provide input into the tool design before unveiling it in late 2022.



LORENZO BEVILACQUA

## Getting Kids to Talk About Depression

Recent College of Osteopathic Medicine-Arkansas graduate [Syed Hasnain \(D.O. '23\)](#) self-published a book titled *Let’s Talk About Feeling Sad*, a 22-page paperback designed for parents to read with their children and get them to talk about their feelings.

“Mental health is something that can be really difficult for kids to talk about,” Hasnain says. “There aren’t a lot of books on the topic that are targeted to children, so I thought this could potentially help. I wrote this book to help make it easier for kids to discuss their feelings with their parents, which is something kids don’t often do.”

“My hope is that it will help parents recognize the signs and symptoms of depression so they can take the appropriate action,” says Hasnain, who is pursuing a career in child and adolescent psychiatry.



## Annual Big Give Breaks Record

The New York Tech community made a big showing at the fifth annual Big Give, raising a record-breaking \$415,915 from 939 donors and exceeding last year's total by just over \$60,000. Over the event's five-year history, the Big Give has raised more than \$1.5 million, supporting the student experience at campuses in New York City, Long Island, Vancouver, and Jonesboro.

Thanks to the generosity of a member of the New York Tech Board of Trustees, additional challenge dollars were offered to the school or college with the most faculty and staff donors. At the conclusion of the Big Give, the School of Health Professions received \$5,000.

**Daniel Ferrara (D.O. '86)**, vice chair of the Board of Trustees, offered a match challenge gift of \$25,000. The first 25 gifts of \$1,000 or more were matched with an additional \$1,000 by Ferrara.

College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) alumna **Raysha Crawford (D.O. '14)** offered a \$20,000 challenge, which was unlocked when the medical school reached 175 donors.

Other challenges and winners included:

School with the most dollars raised:	NYITCOM
School with the most donors:	School of Architecture and Design
School with the most alumni donors:	College of Engineering and Computing Sciences
School with the most student donors:	NYITCOM-Arkansas

"While tuition allows us to operate, it is fundraising efforts like this that empower us to provide students and faculty with cutting-edge tools and resources, make investments in our campuses, and support our students in the ever-changing ways they need us," says Patrick Minson, Ed.D., vice president for development, alumni relations, and external affairs.

## IDC Foundation Grant Brings Total Support for the School of Architecture and Design to Nearly \$3 Million

The School of Architecture and Design received two additional grants from the IDC Foundation, a legacy of the Institute of Design and Construction. A \$250,000 innovation grant will span two years and contribute to the expansion of the Fabrication Lab on the New York City campus by adding a Robotic and Advanced 3-D Printing Smart Lab, initiate the first phase of a Bio-Technology Research Lab on the Long Island campus, and provide skills training for students on new software and equipment and topical workshops.

An additional \$100,000 will support student scholarships and help to attract and retain the most talented, promising students. The funding will also provide graduate research scholarships and spur graduate program development.

This additional \$350,000 in IDC Foundation grant funding brings its total support of New York Tech to nearly \$3 million since 2018.

CHRISTOPHER APPOLOTTI

## "Engineering" Solutions for Healthier Brains



Could artificial intelligence help solve the mental health crisis? What if an algorithm allowed neurologists to know the area affected by a brain seizure?

These are just two of the questions that Maryam Ravan, Ph.D., assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, aims

to address. Working on two separate studies, she proposes the use of cutting-edge algorithms and techniques that could provide noninvasive solutions for clinicians to treat neurological and psychiatric conditions more effectively.

Normal brain activity, including mood and thinking processes, relies on a balance of fast and slow brain waves. Imbalanced brain wave activity is associated with neurological issues such as epilepsy and psychiatric conditions like bipolar disorder and major depressive disorder.

One technique clinicians use to detect brain wave imbalances is electroencephalography (EEG). This diagnostic test uses sensors to measure the electrical activity on a patient's scalp, which is representative of the brain wave activity taking place underneath. Brain wave data collected through an EEG holds valuable information regarding an individual's neurological and mental health. Existing software models that process EEG brain wave data use a mathematical technique called exact low-resolution brain electromagnetic tomography (eLORETA).

In collaboration with McMaster University psychiatrist Gary M. Hasey, M.D., Ravan co-authored two studies that leverage machine learning, a form of artificial intelligence (AI), to improve the treatment of mental health conditions.

In one study, Ravan helped develop a machine learning algorithm to analyze patients' brain waves and categorize their patterns as biomarkers for bipolar disorder or major depressive disorder.

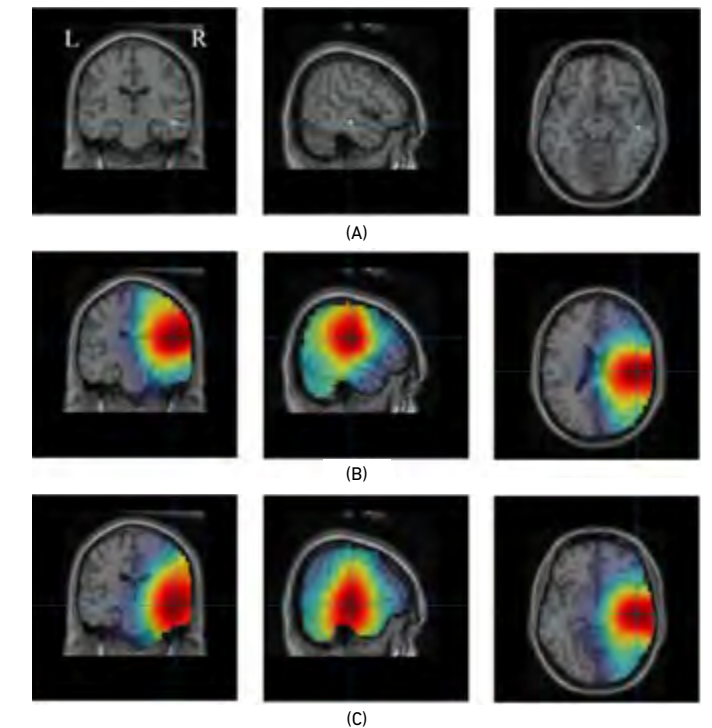
The researchers pose that, given its abilities, machine learning could be useful in analyzing a patient's EEG results and determining whether a patient is experiencing bipolar disorder or major depressive disorder. With Ravan's expertise, the team developed a new algorithm called ReLORETA, which accounts for multiple variables known to impact brain source estimates, including head geometry and misaligned brain electrodes, among other factors.

"The accuracy of our algorithm, which was derived from a large sample of patients, successfully distinguished bipolar disorder from major depressive disorder more accurately than

the existing methods available to clinicians," says Ravan. "This suggests that our method may hold significant promise as a clinical tool."

A second mental health study explores how brain wave data could be used to predict how patients with major depressive disorder will respond to the antidepressant sertraline (sold under the brand name Zoloft) versus a placebo treatment.

While antidepressants are often the first line of treatment for major depressive disorder, it can take months of trial and error and multiple medications before reaching an effective treatment. If predictive biomarkers can inform how a patient will likely respond to a certain treatment, clinicians may be able to eliminate this frustrating process and fast-track a patient's recovery time.



▲ ReLORETA (Row C) predicted the true brain source (shown in Row A) with more precise estimates than eLORETA (Row B).

The study's other co-authors include College of Engineering and Computing Sciences alumni **Thomas Oakley (M.S. '22)**, **Jonathan Coskuner (M.S. '21)**, and **Andrew Cadwallader (M.S. '22)**.

ANDRE KOPINSKI

## FRIENDS Helping Friends

On October 26, for the 14th consecutive year, alumni, students, faculty, and guests gathered for the School of Architecture and Design's annual Alumni and FRIENDS Reception. More than 200

attendees gathered at the Frank Gehry-designed IAC HQ Building in New York City, raising more than \$150,000 in support of student scholarships, new initiatives, capital improvement, travel, and lectures.



FROM LEFT: Peter Bentel, Paul Bentel, Carol Rusche Bentel, Dean Maria Perbellini, Daniel Horn, Robert A. McConnell, and Arianna Armelli

The annual FRIENDS event also honors alumni who have made significant impacts in architecture, design, and construction. This year, the FRIENDS executive committee introduced three new award categories:

- Distinguished Alumni Award: **Robert A. McConnell (B.Arch. '82)**, president, EwingCole
- Emerging Alumni Award: **Arianna Armelli (B.Arch. '12)**, founder and CEO, Dorothy, and **Daniel Horn, AIA, LEED GA (B.Arch. '13)**, architect/designer, ESKW/Architects, and co-founder, ORLI+ LLC
- Legacy Award: Bentel & Bentel Architects, honoring the late Fred and Maria Bentel

"Our goal with this expanded program is to drive a stronger connection between students and alumni at various levels of professional career growth, creating new and exciting opportunities for multigenerational mentorship, the exchange of innovative ideas, and to promote and ensure pathways to a more diverse and inclusive profession," said **Tom Scerbo (B.Arch. '98)**, chairperson of the FRIENDS of the School of Architecture and Design.

## Partnership Promotes Access to Education

New York Institute of Technology and the National Supermarket Association (NSA) have teamed up to help provide access to education to NSA members, their employees, and their families.

The related missions of the two organizations provide a strong foundation for this collaboration. The NSA is a trade association representing more than 200 members who own 400 supermarkets in New York and other cities throughout the East Coast, Mid-Atlantic region, and Florida. It was founded in 1989 by Hispanic entrepreneurs and is committed to supporting education for its members' approximately 20,000 employees and their families. For more than 60 years, New York Tech has been guided by its mission to provide all qualified students access to opportunity to receive a career-oriented professional education and is recognized

for the diversity and social mobility of its student body.

Beginning in the spring 2023 semester, the NSA began promoting information about New York Tech undergraduate programs as well as M.B.A. programs to its members, their families, and employees. Accepted students are eligible for scholarships; NSA scholarships will cover at least 25 percent of related students' full-time tuition.

The two organizations will also work together to provide internship, experiential learning, and other career-related opportunities. The two will also collaborate on fundraising efforts in support of student scholarships, and NSA will encourage its members to support New York Tech's Grizzly Cupboard food pantries, part of the Bear Bytes initiative, which provides students with food as well as health and wellness resources and information.

## How to Help Address America's Youth Mental Health Crisis

In an op-ed in *Salon*, Assistant Professor of School Counseling Cameka Hazel, Ed.D., explains how an increase in school counselors in grades K-12 could help address America's youth mental health crisis.

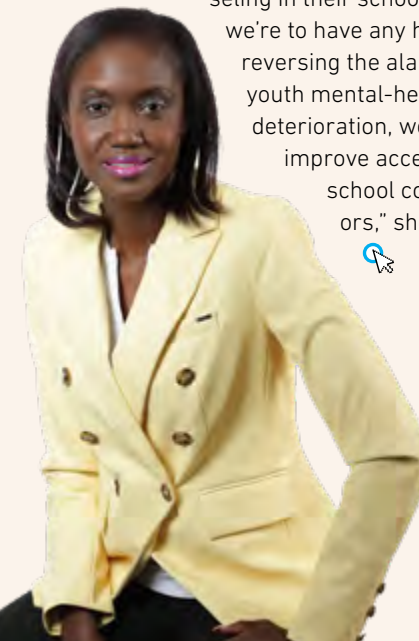
School counselors are trained to help students reach their goals by addressing academic, career development, emotional, and social challenges. In addition to the effects of the pandemic, other causes of youth depression and anxiety include cyberbullying, traumatic experiences, marginalization, and school shootings, which have far-reaching effects and can also traumatize those who did not personally experience the violent acts, Hazel notes.

School counselors' skill sets go beyond assisting students with navigating classroom conflicts and college readiness; they are also trained to recognize mental health warning signs. And yet they remain all too uncommon.

The American School Counselor Association recommends one counselor for every 250 students, but the average ratio nationwide is about one to 400. But roughly a fifth of all students in grades K-12 have no access to counseling in their school.

"If we're to have any hope of reversing the alarming youth mental-health deterioration, we must improve access to school counselors," she says.

LORENZO BEVILAQUA  
STEVEN GAINES: YOUR BEAUTY STUDIOS



▲ The 2023 Alumni Award honorees, from left: Patrick O'Shaughnessy (D.O. '99); Andrew Berner; Martin Diamond, D.O.; Hala Sabry (D.O. '07, M.B.A. '07); Ted Triana (D.O. '89); and Raysha Crawford (D.O. '14) (not pictured: Christina Berner)

## Honoring Their Positive Impact

On May 2, the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) recognized seven alumni and supporters for their positive impact on the education of future physicians and significant contributions to the field of medicine at its annual Alumni Awards held at NYIT de Seversky Mansion on the Long Island campus.

Dean Nicole Wadsworth, D.O., noted that many of NYITCOM's achievements—including the 100 percent match rate achieved by the Class of 2023; robust, recognized research departments; and strong relationships with external clinical partners—would not be possible without the actions and support of NYITCOM's network of alumni and friends.

"Your work inspires and supports each class of osteopathic medical students that come after you. Your commitment to those future physicians and to NYITCOM has helped shape our past, and I look forward to working with each of you to shape our future," said Wadsworth.

### 2023 Honorees:

- Distinguished Alumnus: **Patrick O'Shaughnessy (D.O. '99)**
- Alumna of the Year: **Hala Sabry (D.O. '07, M.B.A. '07)**
- Young Alumna: **Raysha Crawford (D.O. '14)**
- Excellence in Medicine: **Ted Triana (D.O. '89)**
- Community Partner: Andrew and Christina Berner
- Honorary Alumnus: Martin Diamond, D.O.

[Learn more](#) about this year's awardees.

## Alumni Named to Board of Trustees



agement LLC, which provides consulting services including business development strategies, entrepreneurial startup planning, management, and financial advice.

All three are actively involved in helping New York Tech deliver on core elements of its mission, including giving all qualified students access to opportunity and supporting efforts to provide career-oriented professional education. For example, Keville and Van Laan have both served on the Dean's Executive Advisory Board of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences since 2018 and 2013, respectively. And Vogel serves on the School of Management Dean's Advisory Board.

"The example set by these consummate professionals in offering their expertise to help guide and differentiate New York Tech as we position ourselves for continued growth is a powerful one for our current students to emulate and reflects the high regard these alumni have for the education they received here," says President Hank Foley, Ph.D.

Three additional New York Institute of Technology alumni have been elected to the Board of Trustees. **John R. Keville (B.S. '88)** is the managing partner for the Houston office of Sheppard Mullin, a full-service law firm with 1,000 attorneys across 16 offices in North America, Europe, and Asia. He also is a partner in the Intel-

lectual Property Practice Group. **Thomas J. Van Laan (M.B.A. '84)** is chief executive officer of CloudCalc, Inc., a Houston-based provider of software to the civil and mechanical engineering market, which he founded in 2014. **Debra A. Vogel (A.A.S. '85)** is president and founder/owner of Las Vegas- and New York-based Paradigm Man-

## Architecture Alum Joins New York Tech

**A** School of Architecture and Design alumnus has returned to his alma mater. **Donald Booth (B.S.A.T. '91)** has joined New York Tech as vice president of capital planning and facilities. In this role, he will oversee facilities operations and the development of capital projects across all campuses.

Specifically, he will provide leadership in the operation, maintenance, renovation, and construction of university buildings and grounds, real estate, and other physical

plant infrastructure.

Reporting to President Hank Foley, Ph.D., Booth brings more than 30 years of experience as an owner's representative, constructor, and registered architect, with a focus on institutional facilities. He most recently was an assistant vice president at Northwell Health, the largest health system in New York, where he was responsible for all central region capital projects, encompassing six hospitals, a regional ambulatory network,

and corporate portfolio for the health system.

In addition to his extensive experience in healthcare facilities and capital planning for hospital systems, Booth has more than a decade of experience practicing architecture and construction in private industry.

"I'm excited to be at New York Tech, creating world-class spaces for faculty, staff, and students," he says. "The fact that I am a graduate of New York Tech makes it even more exciting. I am



looking forward to making a difference in the student experience and helping them reach their goals."

COURTESY OF JOHN R. KEVILLE; COURTESY OF THOMAS J. VAN LAAN; MICHAEL LEBRECHT II

## New York Tech Celebrates the Class of 2023

On May 21, graduates, family members, and friends joined faculty, staff, and administration on the Long Island campus to celebrate the university's 62nd annual commencement. The event saluted 2,611 candidates from 73 countries and throughout the United States. Students from the university's campuses in New York City and Long Island, as well as from Vancouver, British Columbia, attended the ceremony.

President Hank Foley, Ph.D., conferred honorary degrees upon Antonio Bianco, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, and alumnus **Eli Wachtel (B.S. '72)**, co-chief information officer (CIO) and founding member of the hedge fund Wachtel Capital LLC.

Congratulations to the Class of 2023!



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: President Hank Foley, far left, with Board of Trustees Chair Peter Romano (B.Arch. '76), far right, and honorary degree recipients Antonio C. Bianco, left, and Eli Wachtel (B.S. '72); commencement speaker Zoya Haq (B.S. '23) addresses her fellow classmates; Caitlyn Ashley Silva Dy (B.Arch. '23) sings the national anthem; a graduate celebrates with family; students at the university's 62nd annual commencement.

LORENZO BEVILACQUA (TOP LEFT); MICHAEL J. LEBRECHT II

YOU BELONG



New York Tech is one of the most diverse universities in the country. New initiatives aim to help all students feel welcomed, supported, and connected.

By Renée Gearhart Levy  
Illustration by Ryan Johnson





**A**cross the nation, many colleges and universities have committed to increasing campus diversity. Despite their efforts, many of these institutions have not significantly changed their student enrollment or faculty composition. According to a recent analysis by consulting firm McKinsey & Company, it would take another 70 years at the current rate to recruit enough Asian, Black, Latinx, and Native American students for college enrollments to reflect America's demographics.

But attracting a diverse student body hasn't been a problem at New York Tech, where nearly three-quarters of undergraduate students and two-thirds of graduate students identify as non-white. *The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education* ranked New York Tech No. 2 in New York state and No. 8 in the United States for Environment, a pillar that measures inclusion, diversity, and international student representation. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* rated the College of Osteopathic Medicine as the top producer of minority graduates among colleges of osteopathic medicine in 2020–2021.

While many institutions would be satisfied by those statistics, New York Tech has doubled down on its commitment to diversity and inclusion, focusing on efforts to support its diverse student body, faculty, and staff to foster a sense of belonging and connection across its campuses.


"You can have a diverse population—and we have one of the most diverse enrollments nationwide—but for many reasons, students may not feel comfortable on campus and may not thrive the way we would like them to," says Brian Harper, M.D., M.P.H., chief medical officer and vice president for equity and inclusion.

As an incoming biology student at New York Tech, it didn't take **Kaylah Dewar (B.S. '23)** long to realize she was one of the few Black female students in her major. When she changed her major to criminal justice, she became the only Black female in her classes. Although she found it difficult to relate to some of her peers, Dewar didn't let being an "only" get in her way. Instead, she joined the New York Tech Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) advisory committee as a student leader on the Long Island campus. "I'm helping administrators see the school the way I see it," she says. "My goal is to help ensure that every student's voice and concerns on our campus are heard."

According to Dewar, who served as president of the Black Student Union on the Long Island campus, inclusion comes in many forms, from the foods served in campus dining halls to the types of events held on campus. "The DEIB committee has made tremendous efforts to help the campus feel equal, diverse, and inclusive," she says.

### AN INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY

Those efforts began in 2018, when New York Tech launched the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force. Recognizing its diversity as a strength to foster, the task force was charged with



developing strategies to promote a culture of inclusion that offers all community members access to a meaningful teaching, learning, and working environment.

Out of that work came the recognition that to be truly effective, those efforts needed to be fully institutionalized. Harper, who chaired the committee, was named the school's first vice president for equity and inclusion in January 2021. In October 2022, New York Tech created the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, and the task force transitioned into the DEIB advisory committee.

"We are institutionalizing efforts to create that sense of belonging so that everyone in our community can reach their full potential," says Harper. "Ultimately, we want all departments and colleges to take on diversity, equity, and inclusion as something that they incorporate as a matter of routine into their operations."

Harper's initial goals were to educate the entire campus community on DEI issues and to conduct a survey to learn about specific concerns and perspectives about New York Tech on matters of DEI.

Last spring, faculty and staff across all campuses completed an online DEI training module. "It's important that everybody is on the same page in understanding the dynamics we're talking about and the terminology we're using," he says.

Following the training, the entire New York Tech community—students included—was invited to complete a campus climate survey about their own impressions and experiences related to diversity and belonging on campus. "We had no idea what we would get back and were somewhat pleased that people were fairly comfortable with the environment at New York Tech," he says.

But there's always room to improve and to lead. Dewar says a series of small changes implemented across campus have already made a meaningful impact for students, including the addition of gender-neutral bathrooms on the New York City and Long Island campuses, the adoption of a preferred-name policy that allows students to use a first name other than their legal name, and increased outreach and support for the university's identity-based clubs.

"Understanding the lived experiences and needs of the students we serve is crucial to our work in higher education," says Felipe Henao, Ed.D., dean of students and co-chair of the DEI Advisory Group and Committee. "Systemic change won't happen until we start inviting and involving all parties and voices around the table and talking more to one another in our shared spaces."



### DIALOGUE AND OUTREACH

Henao draws from his own experiences as a first-generation Latino college student who attended a predominantly white institution. After joining New York Tech as dean of students for both the Long Island and New York City campuses in 2021, he was intentional about working with the organizations that represent various interests, from the Bengali Student Association and Black Student Union to LGBTQ organizations. "My office coordinated listening sessions with every single group so we could hear directly from students about their experiences, both good and bad," he says. "Students will not feel valued or supported unless you're intentional about the collaborations and the relationships and the trust that you build."

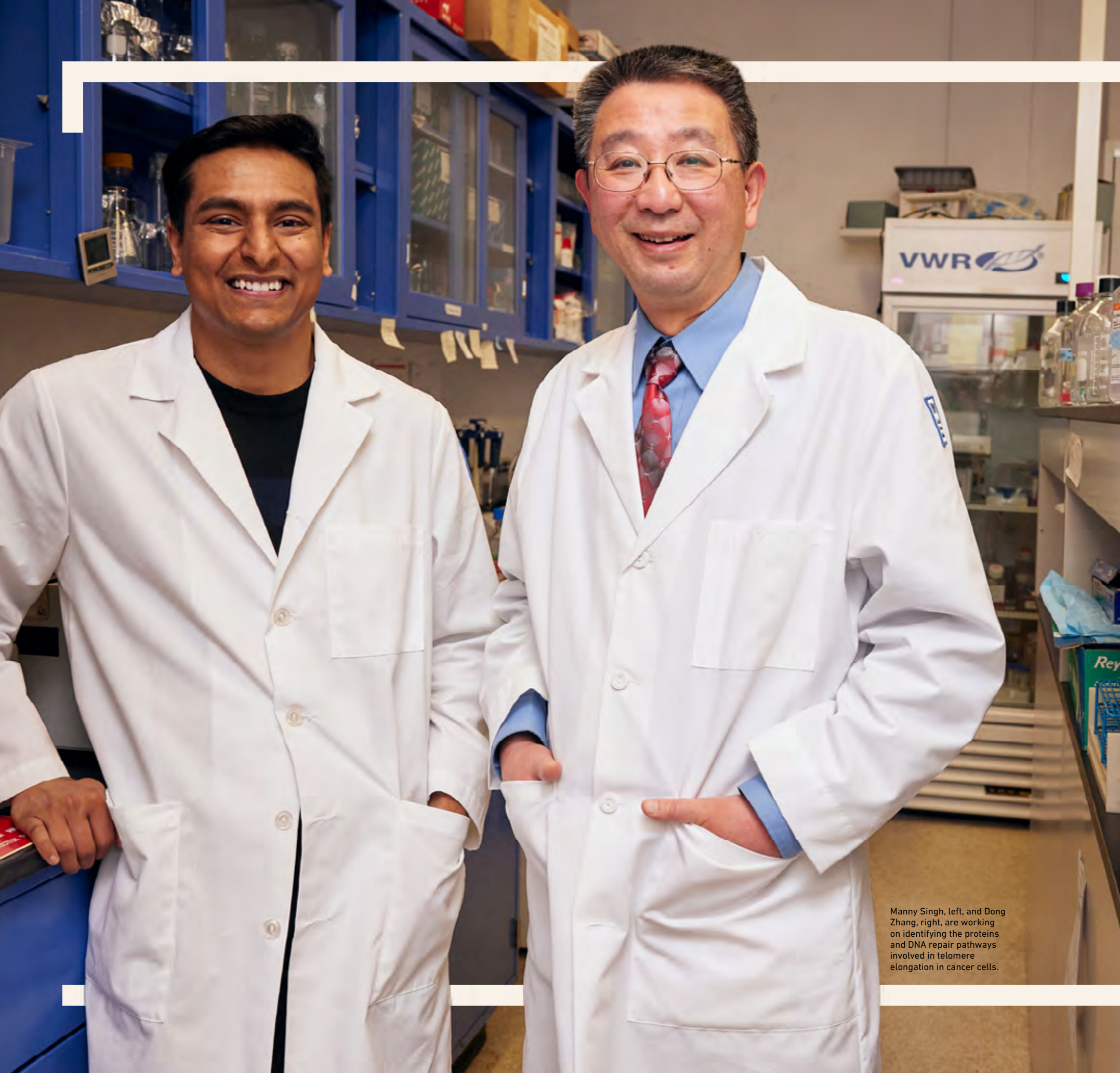
While diversity is often associated with skin color or cultural background, Henao stresses that New York Tech sees DEIB through a wider lens, incorporating religious differences, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic background, learning differences, and veteran status. "There are populations that go day to day being unnoticed or experiencing microaggressions, and we want to make sure we are providing opportunities for them to be seen, valued, heard, and included."

Some of that work begins before students set foot on campus. Harper has placed a priority on developing community partnerships. During his 20 years working in public health capacities to reduce health disparities, he witnessed the difference a community organization or church could make in getting patients to trust a medical organization or treatment. The same is true with higher education, he says.

"We've expanded our outreach to build and maintain relationships with high schools and other organizations in historically underrepresented communities," Harper says. "If we're an active part of helping them with their community efforts, we become more visible, and the organization is more likely to recommend our institution. Those relationships can also become a vehicle for internships or mentorship for students."

But Harper is also being proactive in that regard through the creation of a DEIB Alumni Advisory Committee. Similar to alumni boards that advise New York Tech's schools and colleges, Harper is recruiting successful alumni of color to serve in an advisory role to his office as well as in a mentorship capacity to students. "We envision this as a group we can draw from for campus speakers, to facilitate corporate visits and internships, and to provide individual mentorship to students. It's sometimes easier for students to imagine their own success when they see and hear from people with backgrounds similar to their own."

Harper views New York Tech's diversity as an important strength, particularly at a time of nationwide divisiveness. "Having the opportunity to learn and grow from people different from ourselves and to understand other cultures and beliefs is an exceptional opportunity," he says. "It can only help students as they navigate their lives and their careers." **N**



Manny Singh, left, and Dong Zhang, right, are working on identifying the proteins and DNA repair pathways involved in telomere elongation in cancer cells.

# Tackling Cancer's Thorniest Questions

**New York Institute of Technology's Center for Cancer Research brings together clinicians, scientists, and students from the Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering and Computing Sciences to investigate new ways to detect, treat, and prevent cancers.**

**By Amy Sacks  
Photographs by Rick Wenner**

**During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when many academic and medical school research laboratories across the United States were shutting down and pausing investigations, New York Institute of Technology's Center for Cancer Research was just getting started.**

The campus-wide multidisciplinary initiative, led by Associate Professor of Biomedical Sciences Dong Zhang, Ph.D., brings together clinicians, scientists, and students from the Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM), Arts and Sciences, and Engineering and Computing Sciences to tackle cancer's thorniest questions.

"Our mission is to work together to discover novel therapies, develop new diagnostic tools, conduct translational research, and provide unique educational experiences for our students so they have better opportunities going forward," says Zhang, whose lab focuses on DNA damage response, DNA repair, and telomere biology therapy. (Telomeres are repetitive DNA at the end of a chromosome.) For the past 30 years, Zhang has investigated the molecular function and targeted therapies for cancers with BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations, the genes most affected in hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. In a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, Zhang and New York Tech colleagues [identified a novel drug target](#) to treat a particu-

lar group of cancer called the ALT-positive cancers. "Now we're looking to raise funding to identify the inhibitor for that target and hopefully develop small molecule drugs for oncology applications," he says.

### **CHARTING A PATH FORWARD**

When Zhang joined New York Tech in 2014, research was starting to flourish across the institution, but the faculty involved in cancer studies remained scattered across different colleges and campuses. In 2018, that began to change when Zhang's interaction with a colleague from the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences helped launch his idea for the Center for Cancer Research. Azhar Ilyas, Ph.D., assistant professor of electrical and computer engineering, sought faculty with cancer research expertise to help him write a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant to fund a biomedical engineering project to detect circulating tumor cancer cells.

"I provided a letter of support for his NIH grant, and then we started talking about finding faculty from different colleges interested in joining us," recalls Zhang. With approval from Provost and Executive Vice President Jerry Balentine, D.O., then dean of NYITCOM and vice president of medical affairs and global health, the group began organizing seminars where the faculty introduced themselves and their research. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, Center for Cancer Research faculty continued to meet over Zoom, brainstorming their ideas to expand cancer research and chart a path forward.

### **AN INCLUSIVE PATH FOR STUDENTS**

"Today, it's all about translational research and educating our students," Zhang says.

For the last two years, Manrose "Manny" Singh, a fourth-year Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine/Doctor of Medical and Biological Sciences (D.O./Ph.D.) candidate, has worked in Zhang's lab on a project focused on identifying the proteins and DNA repair pathways involved in telomere elongation. "The more we understand how telomeres get elongated in cancer cells, the better we can design treatments to stop this from happening," says Singh, who has published several first-author papers in the Zhang lab.

Among Singh's collaborators are a recent NYITCOM graduate [Danny MacKenzie \(D.O. '22, CERT '18\)](#); Associate Professor of Biomedical Sciences Randy Stout, Ph.D.; and Senior Research Associate Lars Udo-Bellner, who imaged the telomere fusions with advanced super-resolution microscopy techniques.

Overall, his hands-on cancer research experience at New York Tech has propelled Singh closer to his dream job: balancing clinical



Bernard Saks, left, works in the lab of Azhar Ilyas, right, to help fabricate and test devices for disease diagnostics.

work caring for patients and conducting translational research in the laboratory. "Beyond just the data and results, I'm grateful for all the other skills that the process teaches me," he says.

Singh is also excited for future students to benefit from New York Tech's expansion of its cancer research through the center. "One of the underappreciated aspects is that you don't have to be a biology major or in healthcare to be involved in cancer research," he says. A few New York Tech students are proving this point.

For Navjot Guru, a third-year medical student in the D.O./Ph.D. program, growing up in a village in Punjab, India, before emigrating to New York in 2012 helped spark her interest in pursuing can-

cer research. "Witnessing health disparities within my village and lack of basic healthcare motivated me to pursue a field where I can make a difference by being involved in the solution itself," she says. Today, Guru conducts her graduate research under the guidance of Haotian Zhao, Ph.D., NYITCOM associate professor of biomedical sciences, whose lab studies the biological processes responsible for [childhood brain tumors](#). Guru's project focuses on understanding the mechanism behind the choroid plexus tumor—a rare malignant pediatric tumor—examining the choroid plexus cilia pattern and its contribution to the development of tumors. As an undergraduate at Hunter College, Guru gained cancer research



Mary Margaret Sanchez, left, assists Niharika Nath, right, to identify abnormal cervical cancer cells on a Pap smear using digital technology.

**“This hands-on experience has helped me learn the fundamentals of scientific research and to think outside the box when it comes to solving scientific problems.”**

—Mary Margaret Sanchez

experience in labs at LaGuardia Community College and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and now pays it forward by helping train undergraduate students in the Zhao lab.

### **NANOSCIENCE, PATHOLOGY, AND OTHER EXPERTISE TO UNRAVEL CANCER**

A significant strength of the Center for Cancer Research is diversity in its faculty and student backgrounds, education, skills, and experiences.

“The center has helped broaden our understanding of cancer because everybody has different expertise,” says Ilyas, a trained engineer who heads the [Bio-Nanotechnology and Biomaterials \(BNB\)](#) Laboratory. His research focuses on disease diagnostics

and bone regeneration using biomedical engineering, nanoscience, and nanotechnology.

In the BNB lab, Ilyas and his medical and engineering students are working on creating nanofabricated and microfluidic point-of-care (POC) devices to identify tumor cells floating in the bloodstream for early detection. When tumors get in the blood, that means the cancer is spreading in the body. After treatment, monitoring those cells could catch the metastasis early, Ilyas explains.

His co-principal investigators, Zhang and Maria Plummer, M.D., associate professor of clinical specialties at NYITCOM and a pathologist who provides tissue samples and interprets slides for the projects, offer Ilyas complementary skills that he lacks.

“As an engineer, I don’t have the clinical perspective: how many false positives or negatives were we expecting and what challenges will we face when we work with human samples,” Ilyas says. “I’m looking at the biomechanical properties of cancer cells. I can use my technology expertise to develop new devices using the nanofabrication techniques.”

**Bernard Saks (B.S. ’21)**, a graduate student pursuing a master’s in bioengineering in the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences, helps with the fabrication and testing of the devices for disease diagnostics. Saks has worked with Ilyas in the BNB lab for the past three years researching disease diagnostics using microfluidic devices. Saks created a POC device using polydimethylsiloxane to count the circulating tumor cells and is working on developing a rapid and cost-effective HIV/AIDS diagnostic and monitoring system utilizing optical enumeration with a smartphone camera.

### **USING TECHNOLOGY TO TARGET CANCER CELLS**

For Niharika Nath, Ph.D., a cancer biologist and professor of biological and chemical sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences, her current research on breast and cervical cells is twofold. In a collaboration with City College of New York, Nath designs medicines, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) derivatives, like aspirin and ibuprofen, to release nitric oxide and other gaseous transmitters. “That can be used to inhibit the growth of tumors in animal studies and to kill cancer cells,” Nath says. “What I focus on is the different kinds of signaling molecules that we can target and how they cause cells to die.”

Over the last several years, Nath has been working on using [digital technology to identify abnormal cervical cancer cells](#) on a Pap smear using images in datasets from a hospital in rural India. The artificial intelligence technology, she says, could eventually replace manually analyzing the cells under a microscope, which can be subjective, prone to error, and take time.

“Machine learning would be beneficial if there is no pathologist on-site or can help a pathologist find the abnormal cells more effi-

ciently or faster,” Nath says. She is also looking to categorize the tumors and fine-tune that classification with the help of machine learning.

While Nath loves finding answers to problems, mentoring New York Tech’s biomedical students is in her genes. She enjoys advising students and encouraging them to participate in research projects, submit papers to journals, and present at conferences.

[Mary Margaret Sanchez](#), an undergrad majoring in life sciences with a concentration in biomedical engineering (now bioengineering), is among Nath’s many mentees. In the spring of 2022, Sanchez joined Nath’s volunteer project as a research assistant and has worked on two projects analyzing Pap smear images using digital technology. For her part, Sanchez helped develop a deep learning convolutional neural network (CNN) algorithm, which produced a model that trained and distinguished cervical cancer cells into normal, mild, moderate, and severe dysplastic categories.

“This hands-on experience has helped me learn the fundamentals of scientific research and to think outside the box when it comes to solving scientific problems,” says Sanchez. She is also working on a study that analyzes an entire cellular Pap smear image, rather than just the nucleus, using a dataset from the Herlev Hospital in Denmark.

Sanchez submitted her work to the Sigma Xi Student Research Showcase in May 2022 and won second place for best undergraduate research.

### **REAL-WORLD TRAINING FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

The center’s researchers hope to find more government, private, and community funding. Still, its top priority is getting students excited about science and cancer research and providing them with real-world experiences.

To that end, a new collaboration between New York Tech’s Center for Cancer Research and the Catholic Health Cancer Center Institutes, part of the Catholic Health healthcare network on Long Island, has created even more opportunities for medical students and New York Tech undergraduates. “We plan to involve undergraduates, especially the premed, life sciences, B.S./osteopathic medicine, D.O. students, in the future. However, at present, we decided to start with our medical students,” says Zhang.

The partnership allows medical students to gain practical experience working with an oncologist, which can help match them with an outstanding residency program, and undergraduates can gain experience working with physicians.

“There are a lot of exciting research programs and new opportunities happening in cancer research at New York Tech,” Zhang notes, “but interacting with and educating our students remains our biggest mission.” ■

# MAKING BIG MOVES

 **broadway  
tech centre**

As New York Tech-Vancouver continues to grow, the university's Canadian campus is making the move from two locations to one, creating a cohesive community within a new 40,000-square-foot multibuilding complex.

By Kathrin Havrilla-Sanchez



◀ The new spaces feature vibrant colors and include student lounges, plenty of natural light to show off views of the surrounding trees, large classrooms equipped with state-of-the-art technology, and a new green screen studio, among other improvements.



**A**fter a brief delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York Tech's campus in **Vancouver**, British Columbia, has completed its much-anticipated campus expansion.

The move, which nearly doubles the college's available space, unifies two campuses and four graduate-level academic programs into a multibuilding complex at Broadway Tech Centre, creating a more cohesive community for an already close-knit campus.

### The Need for Change

Since 2018, New York Tech-Vancouver has been operating from two locations: one downtown and one 7.5 kilometers (about 4.5 miles) away at an eight-building urban business campus called Broadway Tech Centre. The two locations housed different academic programs, meaning that students, faculty, and staff either stayed separated from peers and colleagues in other departments, or spent 20 to 45 minutes commuting from one location to the other by car, bus, or SkyTrain.

The move to consolidate into one location will help create a more cohesive community—an important element of a university in which 100 percent of the students are international.

"We're so excited for this brand-new space in part because we'll all be on one campus," says Maria Mejia, student engagement coordinator. "Many of our international students come to New York Tech and leave their families, neighborhoods, and communities behind, so we

become their new family. You can feel a true sense of community and kinship here, and we are thrilled to have a physical space for us all to be together."

The Vancouver campus expansion is also critical to accommodate the college's exponential growth.

"We've been on an upward trajectory for quite a while now, growing from around 160 students when I started in 2016 to now around 717," says Irene Young, Ed.D., executive director and campus dean. "We continued to do well even through the pandemic, and now we're excited to see this long-awaited expansion come to fruition for our community."

Young's words ring true; while many other higher education institutions faltered due to the pandemic, New York Tech-Vancouver continued to thrive due in large part to interest in popular programs. Standouts include the M.S. in cybersecurity; the master's in energy management; and the M.B.A., which offers a general degree and concentration options in finance and business analytics, which is new for the spring 2023 semester.

### A New Home

As of December 2022, New York Tech-Vancouver closed its downtown location and moved into an expanded and redesigned space at Broadway Tech Centre. The new campus totals nearly 40,000 square feet across three different buildings, which are connected by covered



CHRIS CHONG, BUTTER STUDIOS

walkways. During planning, architects closely considered how students, faculty, and staff will use the space.

"We've committed a fair amount of square footage to spaces where students can spend time, whether they're studying or just being together," says Gregory Gerber, Ed.D., associate campus dean. "We have student lounge space in two buildings that totals three times the size of the one lounge downtown, and we now have a number of quiet and group study spaces, as well as areas to sit and relax in between classes."



The new campus features vibrant colors, audio-dampening panels to reduce noise, and plenty of natural light to show off views of the surrounding trees. Classrooms are large and equipped with state-of-the-art technology, and a new green screen studio offers the latest equipment for students designing multimedia projects, working on real-time broadcasting, and creating professional video résumés to reflect the new state of hiring in a digital world.

"The technology in each one of the classrooms and throughout the student spaces is top-notch," says Gerber. "We have invested heavily



▲ The Broadway Tech Centre boasts landscaped grounds, including waterfalls and ponds.

“Our students come from all over the world. They’ve given up everything they love and care about—their families, cultures, languages, and homes—to come to New York Tech-Vancouver and further their education, and we want to welcome them all with open arms.”

—Shannon Svingen-Jones

in ensuring we have a learning environment that is tech-integrated so that we are preparing graduates for jobs of the 21st century.”

“We have taken seriously President Hank Foley’s call to put the ‘Tech’ back in New York Tech,” says Young.

The campus also celebrates its first physical library space, complete with reference materials, quiet study areas, a print lab, and project meeting rooms. The Innovation Lab, which in the downtown location shared space with faculty offices, now has its own footprint, plus 3-D printers and additional workstations for more student collaboration.

In addition to the more vibrant indoor space, Broadway Tech Centre boasts outdoor beauty as well—from landscaped grounds to waterfalls and ponds to sports areas.

“Not only are we excited about the consolidated campus, but we also have amazing outdoor space for more activities practically year-round,” says Mejia. “Broadway Tech Centre has courts for basketball, volleyball, and soccer, as well as a great barbecue area that will allow us to facilitate more collaborative activities.”

### Many Cultures, One Family

Bringing students physically together in the new campus space will also help build bridges across cultural lines.

“Our students come from all over the world,” says Shannon Svingen-Jones, director of student affairs. “They’ve given up everything they love and care about—their families, cultures, languages, and homes—to come to New York Tech-Vancouver and further their education, and we want to welcome them all with open arms.”

With so many cultures coming together, New York Tech-Vancouver relies on a robust student affairs team to create connections and offer support, from hosting orientations that incorporate the song “We Are Family” into the theme to celebrating all the different cultural holidays.

“We have a great student affairs department, which can be a huge selling point when people are going to uproot their lives,” says Young. “They create lots of events and excursions so students can get accustomed to each other and what’s happening on campus and in Vancouver. We like to provide a balance of work and fun.”

In addition to honoring each other’s cultures, New York Tech-Vancouver also ensures that students are educated about the indigenous cultures that are native to the area.

“We ensure that information about indigenous cultures is an integral part of the New York Tech-Vancouver experience,” says Svingen-Jones. “It starts at orientation, where we invite an indigenous speaker to talk about their people’s cultures and history, and it continues throughout our curriculum. We have a unique opportunity and a responsibility to teach newcomers to our campus how precious indigenous peoples and cultures are, and they tend to grow a different level of respect for these communities than many domestic students have.”

CHRIS CHONG, BUTTER STUDIOS

### Preparing for Lifelong Success

Another reason for New York Tech-Vancouver’s impressive progress and need for additional space is the success of its graduates.

“A lot of our growth also has to do with the ability of our students to find employment and stay in Canada—an important criterion for international students,” says Young. “After graduation, they are eligible for a three-year work permit, which can lead to permanent resident status and eventually citizenship. The government of Canada wants these students to come and to stay.”

More than 90 percent of New York Tech-Vancouver’s graduates stay in Canada to work and achieve residency, after which they often bring over additional members of their families.

“There are so many businesses here in Vancouver and even within Broadway Tech Centre that are aligned with the skills of our graduates, from energy management to cybersecurity to business administration,” says Young.

Vancouver is home to offices for global giants like Amazon, Google, Hootsuite, Electronic Arts (EA), Lion’s Gate Entertainment, and Lululemon Athletica, proffering opportunities for internships, co-ops, and long-term employment. The college has also recently signed an affiliation agreement with international security company Fortinet that gives them access to their training materials—a boon for the cybersecurity program.

### The Evolution Continues

To celebrate the introduction of the new campus location for the spring 2023 semester, New York Tech-Vancouver will hold a grand opening event in June. They plan to invite all the companies from Broadway Tech Centre, which includes Nintendo and decision analytics software firm Copperleaf, among others, to facilitate networking connections from the very start.

The expansion also continues throughout the year, when an additional 10,000 square feet of space will be turned into more faculty and staff offices, as well as state-of-the-art meeting rooms. ■

### Land Acknowledgment

At the New York Institute of Technology Vancouver Campus, we strive to empower and educate our students to become historically informed, inclusive, and respectful citizens in Canada’s multicultural society. We are committed to participating in the truth and reconciliation process to contribute to the continued healing among Indigenous People. We acknowledge that the lands upon which our campuses are located are traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō, and Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. We are grateful for the Aboriginal people’s stewardship of the land and acknowledge how they have shaped, and continue to shape, our experiences here.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

New York Tech graduates are going places. In every issue, we look at alumni who are making an impact on their professions, communities, and beyond. Read on to find out how your fellow Bears are doing, making, innovating, healing, and reinventing the future.



## Sheena Howard

(M.A. '07)

When Sheena Howard, Ph.D., won a coveted William Eisner Comic Industry Award in 2014 for her book *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation*, it caught her by surprise. Considered the Oscars of the comics world, Howard was also the first Black female recipient of the honor.

"It totally caught me off guard," says Howard. "I was surprised, and it turns out that I was the first Black woman to win an Eisner, ever, so it really became this important thing."

The book initially started from a dissertation Howard wrote on the history of Black artists and writers in the comic industry. "I had to put together a timeline of Black-created comic strips from the beginning to about 2010," she says. "That was a groundbreaking dissertation."

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Howard studied communication arts at the College of Arts and Sciences. The author, filmmaker, and professor of communication at Rider University in Lawrenceville, N.J., is also the founder of Power Your Research, a company that helps guide and leverage professors in branding themselves outside the classroom as experts and authorities.

"I think it's important for experts to know how to build their platforms, especially in an age where everybody has the ability to disseminate information," says Howard. "I create experiences for free thinkers to feel empowered when they're challenging

the status quo. Everything I do is to help people be the best person they can be."

Outside of guiding fellow educators toward greater success, Howard is also a comics author and recently contributed to the Marvel's *Voices* anthology series with one of five stories featured in *Wakanda Forever #1*, based on the Black Panther franchise.

At the core of Howard's work as a writer is equality and justice. In 2014, she wrote *Black Queer Identity Matrix* and *Critical Articulations of Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. Two years later, she wrote, directed, and produced the documentary *Remixing Colorblind*, which delves into how the educational system can shift one's perception of race. And in 2017, Howard co-wrote (along with David F. Walker) the comic book *Superb*, about a teen superhero, Jonah Watkins, with Down syndrome.

Howard is now working on an academic branding book based on Power Your Research and another project with Darryl McDaniels (DMC) from iconic rap group Run DMC. The mother of a 5-year-old, she is also penning a number of children's books. "I guess it's only natural for me to write children's books," she laughs.

Whatever Howard puts out into the world next will always be fulfilling to her, as long as she can continue writing. "I'm a writer," says Howard. "I would write even if I wasn't paid to write."

RECHILLIY

## Alan Wong

(D.O. '03, M.B.A. '03)

Everything came full circle for Alan Wong. In high school, he volunteered as a researcher at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. Then, right out of medical school, his first rotation was at Mount Sinai South Nassau in Oceanside, N.Y., where he now serves as chief medical officer and senior vice president for medical affairs, overseeing operations across several departments.

In his new role, Wong will work with the hospital to bring more complex care to the South Shore of Long Island. Pre-pandemic, Wong says, patients were typically taken into New York City for specific surgeries; post-pandemic, fewer people want to go far from home. "We're bringing the complex care here," he says, which includes advanced cardiac care, neuroscience, and oncology. "In addition, we are bringing multispecialty ambulatory sites, which is new to the South Shore."

"We are aiming [to build] a full tertiary care hospital, and the footprint is expanding," says Wong. A new tower will house an emergency room and operating room, and 40 intensive care unit beds will be added to an existing pavilion. "The plan is to bring complex surgeries to Long Island. We're trying to bring more expanded care since there is no major trauma center or advanced cardiac care within our area. The impact we can make with what we're doing is exciting."

At New York Tech, Wong earned his M.B.A. at the School of Management, and a Doctorate in Osteopathic Medicine at the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM). After graduation, he worked at several area hospitals, including Good Samaritan University Hospital in West Islip and most recently Mercy Hospital in Rockville Centre, where he served as chief of critical care.

Before transitioning into administration, Wong worked in internal and pulmonary medicine, and later expanded his medical certifications in critical care, neuro-critical care, and hospice and palliative care. It was during his time at Mercy Hospital when he made the switch, serving as vice president for patient safety, chief quality officer, chair of internal medicine, and chief of pulmonary and critical care.



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(Continued)

Over the years, Wong has remained involved with NYITCOM and the School of Management by participating in teaching seminars and mentoring interns and students. In fact, one of his interns at Good Samaritan is now his primary doctor.

“I’m giving back to the hospital I started in,” says Wong. “I have an intern one day, and he becomes my doctor another. That’s what makes it a full circle.”

## Farrah Désir

(B.S.A.T. '99)

At first, Farrah Désir never intended to work in construction. Architecture was always her dream, so she came to study at the School of Architecture and Design.

“Since high school, I wanted to major in architecture,” says Désir, who also took interior design classes at the Fashion Institute of Technology while she was in high school but decided to major in architecture and went to New York Tech, where she could study both.

Several years after graduating from New York Tech, Désir met a former classmate who told her about a position at their company JR Construction. “It was something I never thought I would do,” shares Désir. “[When] the company called me [about] an opening for a general contractor, I initially turned it down and said, ‘No way, I love architecture. I’m an architect.’ Eventually, I was motivated to consider other career options besides architecture because drafting behind a computer all day for 10 hours was exhausting, which did not fulfill my interest in designing projects.”

Désir later took on the role of project manager at JR Construction in New York City and never looked back. “At first, I thought I would do it briefly while looking for an architectural position and had no intention of staying,” admits Désir. “But I eventually fell in love with construction management.”

After stints at the YMCA, construction management and engineering company URS/AECOM, and Gilbane Building Company, where she oversaw construction projects around New York City, such as libraries, schools, and commercial spaces—Désir started to build the foundation of her company, Creative Form Development, by working part-time on residential projects.

The company soon expanded into something more significant and is now a full-service construction management company. “There aren’t many Black-owned female construction companies in the industry,” says

Désir. “So I decided to fill this gap by creating my company and taking a chance and going full-time.” Today, Creative Form Development is also a certified New York City Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise. Some of her projects include a mechanical upgrade to a church in New York City, as well as proposals for several projects, including work with John F. Kennedy International Airport, the New York City Port Authority, the New York City School Construction Authority, the New York City Housing Authority, hospitals, and retail and commercial spaces.

“Working in construction, I feel like an alchemist because we virtually create something significant out of nothing,” says Désir, who also enjoys engaging with different people regularly and collaborating with a team. “Creating a building where one didn’t exist is an honor—whether it’s an empty lot or a renovation—and being a part of that process keeps me going.”

COURTESY OF FARRAH DÉSIR



## Soyeb Barot

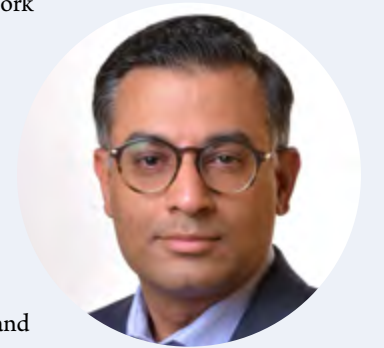
(M.S. '05)

According to Soyeb Barot, “Excellence is not a skill. It’s an attitude and perseverance is key.” The New York Tech grad and New Jersey resident can attest to this philosophy firsthand. Growing up in Mumbai, India, his parents always emphasized the importance of education. “Even though they never had the opportunities to continue their studies, they made sure I had the resources—even through financial struggles,” he says.

When he lost his mother during his undergraduate years, he worked to help support the family, but his father always ensured that his education goals stayed on track. He was able to graduate, and in 2004 came to New York Tech to pursue a master’s degree in computer science.

COURTESY OF SOYEB BAROT

“The courses New York Tech offered aligned with what I wanted and offered me the ability to explore multiple substreams within computer science,” he says. “And in a time before WhatsApp and Facebook, the admissions and computer science departments worked really hard to ensure international students got the support they needed to transition to a new country and educational format.”

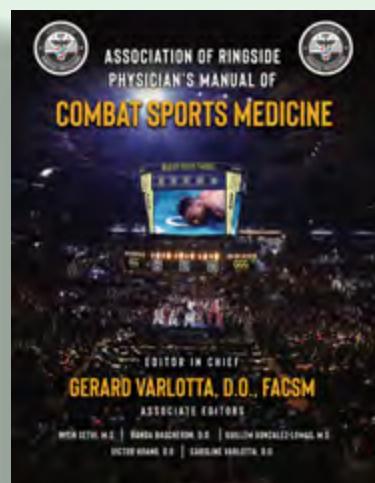
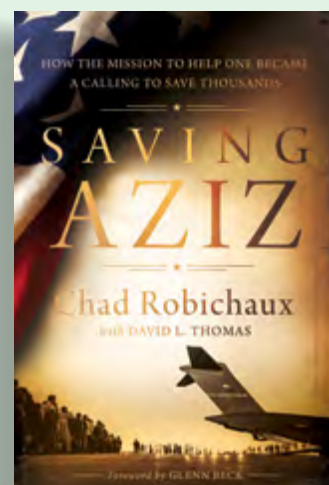
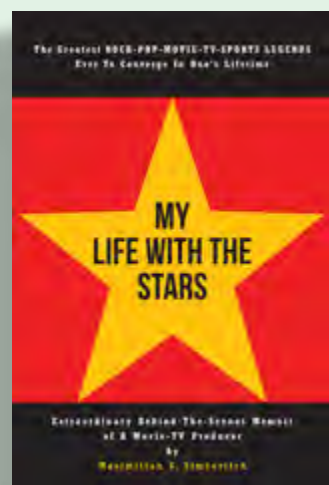


While pursuing his master’s, Barot met the love of his life and settled in New Jersey, where he and his wife love to grow vegetables in their garden, cook, and take road trips. He has also found success in his chosen field, serving as a vice president at Gartner Inc., a research and advisory firm that provides actionable, objective insights to build next-generation technologies for global organizations. “As an analyst, I cover topics on machine learning and artificial intelligence,” he says. “In the role of chief of research, I am responsible for the research and content strategy—including completing 250 to 300 research notes per year—for technical professionals across the domains of data and analytics, enterprise applications, infrastructure and cloud, and security across the entire industry.”

Barot also prioritizes giving back to the school that gave him so much. He is a mentor in the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences [CAMPUS Mentoring Program](#) and serves on the college’s advisory board. “I am a big believer that mentors play a critical role in your professional as well as your personal life. You learn from the experiences and viewpoints of others who have taken different paths to realize their dreams,” he says. “Being a mentor gives me an opportunity to give back in a similar way as I have always learned from my personal ‘board of mentors,’ as I refer to them.”

Barot finds that he gains a lot from the program. “It’s rewarding to learn from mentees, how they look at challenges and what motivates them. I am often impressed and inspired by them,” he says, adding that the university fosters supportive and productive environments for growth. “New York Tech provides a fantastic home for a diverse community, which makes it a meeting place for students to come up with innovative ideas and solutions.”

New York Tech alumni have recently published a slew of new books, covering everything from a care manual for combat sports athletes and a fictional story of battle to a memoir of mingling with celebrities and a musical children’s book teaching about the Black men and women whose inventions changed everyday life.



**Loren E. Brereton’s (B.S. ’84)** children’s book *Other Famous African Americans* is the product of a song she created to help her elementary school students learn about Black History Month. Set to the tune of “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer,” young readers will learn about Black men and women who have created objects we use daily, like Alfred Cralle (the ice cream scoop) and John Lee Love (the hand-cranked pencil sharpener).

Ohio’s Brooke Skylar Richardson made headlines in 2017 when she was accused of murdering her newborn daughter, Annabelle, in her family home’s backyard. **Sonia Chopra (M.A. ’95)** was the only reporter who spoke to Richardson and sought to uncover the truth—that the teen’s eating disorder triggered a stillborn birth, and she did not commit a crime. Chopra chronicles the true story of this gripping criminal case in *Saving Skylar: The Brooke Skylar Richardson Case*.

In *The Battle at Brooksville Hospital*, **Dana Ford’s (B.A. ’10)** character Big Jim Dunning, a rough and burly biker, returns home from a road trip only to find his world has been turned upside down by the sudden hospitalization of the heart and soul of his family, his father Pop Dunning. In this novel, Big Jim must learn to combat, alongside a few new friends, a mysterious disease and the spiritual forces at work around him in a battle far more intense than anything he’s had to fight before.

In *Act Naturally: The Beatles on Film*, music journalist **Steve Matteo (B.F.A. ’89)** follows the origins, filming, and fan reception of the Beatles’ theatrical film releases throughout the band’s

storied career. The comprehensive account of an underappreciated part of the Beatles’ creative output explores the movies’ production processes, home video releases, and soundtracks, as well as the parallel of the film releases during a period of unprecedented artistic and commercial innovation in British and world cinema.

**Sylvia Nagginda (M.A. ’89)**, queen consort of the kingdom of Buganda, a Bantu kingdom within Uganda, published her autobiography *The Nnaabagereka of Buganda Queen Sylvia Nagginda Luswata*. Filled with secrets revealed for the first time, the tell-all details her efforts to maintain the status quo of being a traditional wife while playing an active role in shaping her community—a kingdom on the rise among crumbling African monarchies.

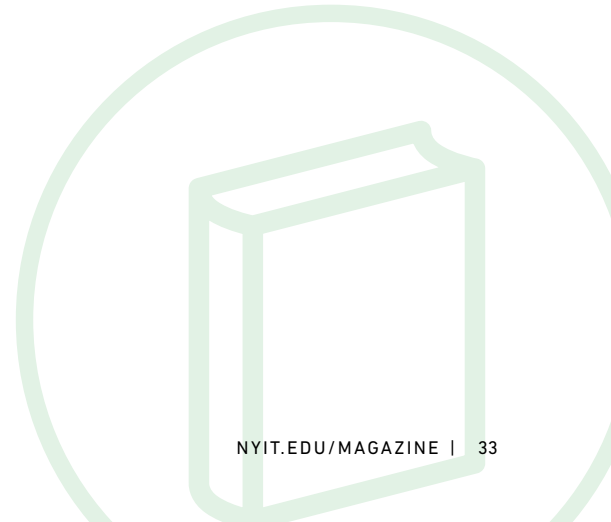
**Robin Pandey (M.B.A. ’03)**, also known by his spiritual name Moksha Mukti, invites readers to discover the god in themselves in his book *Mirror*. While seeking spiritual enlightenment, Pandey realized the five senses determine one’s impression of who they are, which is interpreted by their mirror image. But he notes, if there is no interpretation by the mind, then there are possibilities for one to see who they really are—achieving consciousness, or the “quantum plexus.”

In *Saving Aziz*, **Chad Robichaux (M.B.A. ’07)**, a former U.S. Marine Corps Force Recon Marine, details the rescue mission that evacuated his longtime friend, interpreter, and the book’s namesake, Aziz. Robichaux also tells of the missions during his eight deployments to Afghanistan that evacuated more than 17,000

Americans, Afghans, and allies who were left in the grip of the Taliban’s violent regime as the U.S. military withdrew from the south Asian country in August 2021.

After 40 years as a motion picture and television producer, **Maximilian Simcovitch’s (B.F.A. ’66)** *My Life with the Stars* chronicles his moments of hobnobbing with world-famous names from musical acts like the Beatles and Frank Sinatra to cinema stars like Clint Eastwood and Bette Davis. The memoir recounts his behind-the-scenes moments with the stars who, when the cameras are off, he says are just as human as anyone else.

Father-daughter duo **Gerard Varlotta (D.O. ’83)** and **Caroline Varlotta (D.O. ’20)** penned *Association of Ringside Physician’s Manual of Combat Sports Medicine* to create a comprehensive manual for competent care of the combat sports athlete. This reference guide is an accumulation of the knowledge and experience of physicians with expertise relevant to the health and safety of combat sports participants and is meant to provide a basis for healthcare providers and sports officials to further their learning to care for combat athletes.



# Alumni Notes

## 1970s

After **Mark Hehl (B.S. '72)** retired, he created a [website](#) and is giving back to the community by speaking at professional societies. He is currently writing a fourth book, *How Organizations Fall Short: What Fifty Years in the Corporate World and as a Consultant Has Taught Me*.

**Chester Schnepf (B.F.A. '72)** recently retired from Gateway Community College in New Haven, Conn., where he served as a department chair and professor.

**Retired Lt. Col. C. Bruce Pickette (M.B.A. '75)** is the national president general of the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

**Michael J. Ricca (B.F.A. '77)** is retiring and moving to Florida. He says the best times of his career were as production editor at the *Journal of the Audio Engineering Society*.

**Pasquale (Pat) Tamburrino Jr. (B.S. '77)** was promoted to chief administrative officer and board treasurer of the NobleReach Foundation, a nonprofit firm dedicated to linking technology and talent across the government, industry, and academic ecosystem to address the nation's most pressing security issues.

**Howard Rowland (B.S.A.T. '78, M.B.A. '88)** is president and chief executive officer of E.W. Howell Construction Group. Headquartered in Plainview, N.Y., and with an office in Manhattan, the firm provides construction services throughout the region to clients, including retail, education, government, cultural, and healthcare organizations.

## 1980s

**Victor Dadras (B.Arch. '81)** was honored by New York state senator John C. Liu, with a proclamation: "For his exemplary service to his community and state."

**Edward Butera (B.F.A. '82)** is a graphic designer, photographer, and Internet entrepreneur. He is perhaps best known for being the father of pop singer Ariana Grande.

**Jacqueline Velez (B.S.A.T. '85)** was elected the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Queens chapter president. "I am honored and delighted to be the AIA Queens chapter's second female and first Latina president," she says. "This new position entails a lot of hard work, commitment, and dedication. I am very much looking forward to this challenge."

**Patricia Young, Ph.D. (B.F.A. '85)** was presented with the Indiana University School of Education Dean's Medallion, a lifetime achievement award given to individuals who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment and distinguished contributions to the betterment of society through education.

**Rob Isbit (B.S.A.T. '86)** has been promoted to senior project manager at E.W. Howell Construction Group, one of the region's leading builders. He is currently project manager at Brookhaven National Laboratory's Science User and Support Center, a new 70,000-square-foot administrative and conference center under construction at Discovery Park.

**Carl Esposito (M.B.A. '87)** is the information technology director and chief information security officer for the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board.

**Randy Friedman (B.F.A. '87)** founded [Rite Academy](#), a company that provides emotional and social intelligence skills training for police officers.

**Marc Saunders (D.O. '87)** was the featured guest at an open house at Atmore Community Hospital in Atmore, Ala.

Owner of Signarama in Huntington, N.Y., **Dawn Ziccardi Tiritter-Bent (B.F.A. '87)** is celebrating 35 years in business.

Signarama is certified as a Woman Owned Business Enterprise in New York state and New York City.

## 1990s

**Steve Pasmanik (M.B.A. '90)** has joined the leadership team at AireSpring as senior vice president of service delivery. He joined AireSpring from AT&T, where he held various management leadership positions during his long tenure.

**Humayun J. Chaudhry (D.O. '91)** has been named one of the 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare by *Modern Healthcare*.

Owner of Cavallo Fine Jewelry and Gifts in Red Hook, N.Y., **Connie Rovigo (B.F.A. '91)** is celebrating 25 years in business. "I thank New York Tech for the knowledge I was given to pursue a career in the queen of all crafts: jewelry design and jewelry manufacturing," she says.

**Amir Gefen (M.A. '95)**, manager of the AI in Education Lab at the Israeli Ministry of Education, was the featured guest speaker at an event held on New York Tech's New York City campus called Artificial Intelligence, Education, and ChatGPT.

**Wen C. Liang (D.O. '95)** has joined the Hoffberger Breast Center at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, Md. She provides comprehensive medical and surgical care for patients diagnosed with breast cancer, benign breast disease, and those who are at high risk for developing breast cancer. She is board certified by the American Osteopathic Board of Surgery and has more than 20 years' experience in surgical practice. Liang completed her residency at Kettering Health Dayton in Ohio and her fellowship at Grant Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio.

**Discell Charlton Jr. (B.S. '96)** started a new position as senior budgeting and

finance specialist at the National Education Association in Washington, D.C.

**Vincent Sadusky (M.B.A. '96)** delivered the commencement address at Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University on May 6.

**Frank Chiodi (B.S. '98)** is the president of Strategic Protection Services, Inc., a security and investigation solution company based in midtown Manhattan.

**David Park (D.O. '98)** was inaugurated as president of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) during the ACOFP Annual Convention in Orlando, Fla., March 29 through April 2.

**Adena Leder (D.O. '99)** was quoted in an article in *Newsday* about the opening of a new Parkinson's disease rehabilitation program at Glen Cove Hospital.

## 2000s

**Bill Sorice (B.F.A. '00)** played the role of New York City Police Department Detective Lieutenant Campisi in the episode "Flopped Cop" on the Paramount+ series *FBI*.

**Julie Bikhman (D.O. '02)** works at Atrium Medical, P.C., a medical clinic in New York City. Bikhman grew up in Siberia and came to the United States in 1993. After graduat-

ing from medical school, she furthered her training with a residency in internal medicine at Lenox Hill Hospital. She is board certified in internal medicine through the American Osteopathic Board of Internal Medicine; among her academic appointments, she serves as an adjunct instructor within the Department of Medicine at NYU Grossman School of Medicine.

VirTra, Inc., a global provider of judgmental use of force training simulators and firearms training simulators for the law enforcement and military markets, has appointed **Alanna Boudreau (A.A.S. '00, B.S. '02)** as chief financial officer.

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DENNIS DASILVA

## Light the Lamp

**George Giosi (B.F.A. '14, M.A. '16)**, a video producer for the New York Islanders, won two New York Emmy Awards with his production team. The [43 Oak Foundation feature series](#) was the winner in the Sports Story—Short Form Content category and "[Islanders Cinematic Recap: Eastern Conference Final](#)" took the prize in the Editor: Sports—Single Shift/No Production Time Limit category. Winners were announced at the 65th Annual New York Emmy Awards gala at the New York Marriott Marquis on October 8, 2022.



GOLFERS FROM NASSAU UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER AT THE 2022 NYITCOM GOLF CLASSIC. FROM LEFT: ANTHONY BOUTIN, M.D.; MEGAN RYAN; GRACE TING, M.D.; AND CRAIG RIZZO

## “Fore” a Good Cause

Join friends and colleagues on August 7 for the College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) Golf Classic at the Woodside Club, just 6.2 miles from the NYITCOM campus in Old Westbury. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m., followed by an 11 a.m. shotgun start time. No worries about rushing back to the clubhouse for lunch—it will be served alfresco on the course. A cocktail hour and sit-down dinner will follow. All proceeds will benefit NYITCOM. Learn [more](#) or call 516.686.3801.

(Continued)

**D.K. Bartley (M.A. '03)** was named to the board of the Association of Latino Professionals For America (ALPFA). Founded in 1972, ALPFA's mission is to “empower and develop Latino men and women as leaders of character for the nation, in every sector of the global economy.”

**Michael Lantier (AAS '01, B.S. '04)**, assistant vice president and deputy market director of education at H2M architects + engineers, has worked with nearly 40 school districts on Long Island on construction projects, including those that strengthen school security.

Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited has opened a New York office, expanding the exchange group's international footprint and supporting its growing global client base. The office is headed by **Roger McAvoy (M.B.A. '04)**, managing director and head of business development for North America.

**Fairfield Bain, DVM (M.B.A. '05)**, received the Vaughan Equine Achievement Award, which recognizes an Auburn College of Veterinary Medicine alumnus who exemplifies the Auburn spirit through leadership, dedication to and passion for the profession, hard work that improves individual and community outcomes, and humility. Bain earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Auburn in 1983.

**Evangelos Loukas (D.O. '05)** was named medical director of Plainview (N.Y.) Hospital, part of the Northwell Health system.

**Rocco DelGuercio (M.B.A. '06)** was appointed secretary of Investcorp Credit Management BDC. He also serves as chief financial officer, chief compliance officer, and treasurer of the company.

**Carlos Smith (M.B.A. '06)** was named chief financial officer (CFO) of Paragon

Space Development Corporation, advising company leadership on key financial issues. He brings more than 30 years of financial leadership experience, having served as CFO at several aerospace and defense companies. Paragon develops and produces solutions for life support and thermal control challenges in the space and defense markets.

Lucid Group, Inc., promoted **Faisal Sultan (M.B.A. '06)** to vice president and managing director of Lucid Middle East. He joined Lucid in 2019.

Managing Director of Saemaul Undong **Anas Talhouni (B.S. '06, M.B.A. '08)** was a keynote speaker at the Seoul International University Convention Meeting in South Korea and spoke about implementing sustainable projects in developing countries. During Talhouni's stay in South Korea, an MOU was signed between Saemaul Undong, Jordan, and

Halal Korea Ltd., to introduce halal culture in South Korea and raise awareness of halal products.

**Colt Moedl (M.B.A. '07)** joined Primoris Services Corporation as president of its utilities business segment, overseeing the segment's strategic direction, encompassing operational excellence, quality performance, client relationship, and employee development. Moedl has more than 20 years of experience in the utility construction industry. Most recently, he served as president of Power Delivery, Inc., where he managed the development and capital deployment of startups for power delivery entities.

The Illinois State Board of Education announced that Elgin-based School District U-46 Superintendent **Tony Sanders (M.B.A. '07)** became state superintendent of education, effective in late February.

**Alim Fridie (B.P.S. '08)** registered Masai United International, an international nongovernmental organization, with the Masai tribe in Kenya. Fridie is building a public school for the community and will start to help build housing in the near future. Fridie is pursuing a master's in sustainable development practice at the School for International Training.

French animation studio Xilam Animation appointed **Jérôme Lacarrière (M.A. '08)** as vice president of digital business development. He is responsible for continuing the growth and expansion of the company's digital ecosystem and footprint. Lacarrière is based in Xilam's head office in Paris.

**Clint Schroeder (M.B.A. '08)** has been named president of the Hagadone Newspaper and Media Groups, overseeing each of the companies that comprise the corporation's media holdings in Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Hawaii.

**Aaron Franko (M.B.A. '09)** is vice president of immersive technology at Saritasa. He

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STEVEN GAINES

ANDRE KOPINSKI

## Alumni Connections



Dear Alumni and Friends,

This academic year, we returned to a full schedule of in-person events and traveling around the country to reconnect with you. We are so happy and excited to hear your New York Tech stories and how much your time as a student meant to you. During these interactions, we also discovered how you want to get involved and stay connected with your alma mater. This has led us to formalize an alumni volunteer program.

### Who are alumni volunteers?

These fervent alumni bleed blue and gold through and through. They seek out ways to volunteer for New York Tech. They serve on boards, mentor, lecture, hire, and more. While pride is almost always the foundation of their service, alumni volunteers are professionals who bring vital skills that promote the university's and the Alumni Association's mission. Their service is integral to what we do in Alumni Relations.

### So, how can YOU get involved?

In previous letters, I shared information about the launch of a university-wide mentorship program that supports our current students as they navigate academics and find their career paths. Mentorship is a great way to volunteer your time and talent.

Volunteers are also needed in various regions to work with our staff to help engage more New York Tech alumni. Our goal is to establish alumni chapters throughout California, Texas, Florida, and the New York tristate area by the end of 2023, with the hope of adding new chapters throughout the country and around the globe in the coming years.

We are also passionate about connecting alumni not just based on where they live but also through a variety of affinities. Our first affinity group, the Alumni Chapter of DiGamma Omega Xi, is leading the charge in this area and will help set the foundation for future affinity groups.

Lastly, we will be relaunching our Alumni Admissions Ambassadors program, which aids the undergraduate and graduate admissions teams as they recruit the next generation of doers, makers, healers, and innovators.

We developed an [application form](#) and shared it on social media and the Alumni Association's [website](#).

We invite you to lend your support in creative, personally meaningful ways that will help inspire others. There are myriad ways you can give back to your alma mater, including volunteering and through financial support. When you lend a hand—wherever you are, however you can—you are joining other alumni volunteers as we strive to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive world.

As always, I welcome your suggestions and ideas. Please feel free to reach out to me at [spolidor@nyit.edu](mailto:spolidor@nyit.edu).

Go Bears!

Sabrina Polidoro  
Director, Alumni Relations

## Matthew Schure



In February 2023, Matthew Schure, Ph.D., the university's second president, passed away.

His tenure spanned from 1982 to 2000, carrying on the legacy of his father, Alexander Schure, the university's inaugural president. During his term, the university expanded to include a Central Islip, N.Y., campus in 1984 and its first international program in China in 1998. Matthew Schure used instructional technology to expand the university's outreach and career-oriented academic programs and oversaw the launch of *LI News Tonight*, a student-run cable news program; American Open University, the university's first virtual campus; the Carleton Group, a student-run advertising agency; and the College of Osteopathic Medicine's first clinical campus at St. Barnabas Hospital.

During his presidency, New York Tech reached several other milestones—the Bears scored the first of their four NCAA Division II men's lacrosse national championships; the College of Osteopathic Medicine opened the Adele Smithers Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center; and *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the university among the nation's leading institutions of higher learning.

From 2001 to 2014, Schure served as president of Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. He earned a bachelor's degree from Queens College (CUNY), as well as two master's degrees and a doctorate from Columbia University.

(Continued)

currently leads Saritasa's immersive technology business unit focusing on virtual, augmented, and mixed reality for business. He is also responsible for sales, production, marketing, and service delivery.

**Joseph Weinreb (B.F.A. '08)** is a member of the 2023 Beautiful Bizarre Art Prize jury panel, along with other influential figures in the art world, including gallerists, curators, artists, and commercial and philanthropic arts champions. He is a director of Haven Gallery in Northport, N.Y.

After graduating from New York Tech, **Terrence Kamal Oates (B.S. '09)** became a teacher in special education. Oates is now creating digital edutainment content for grades K-12.

Last fall, **Meaghan Meehan (B.A. '09)**, a Long Island-based artist, created artwork with the community at the Baldwin (N.Y.) Public Library's Great Give Back event. Meehan's Poetry and Prose community art project includes "little poems, or quotes from community members, about life, hope, and inspiration on how they got through the pandemic," according to Meehan. The sculptural hanging wall art will be exhibited at the Baldwin Historical Society.

**Brooke Weekes (M.A. '09)** joined South Carolina Educational Television as its curriculum coordinator. In this role, Weekes will coordinate the installation and use of the new education studio space, which will allow students and teachers to use the latest broadcast and multimedia equipment and learn how to use it in an educational setting. She previously worked in production for *The Wendy Williams Show* and *Good Day New York*.

### 2010s

**Abigail Marcelo Horace (B.F.A. '10)**, owner of interior design studio Casa Marcelo, was featured in *Madame Architect*,

BARRY SLOAN

where she spoke about her work, inspiration, and giving back to the community. "I think I would be happy if I offered representation for another Black or Latina girl who wants to head into this field," she said in the article. "When I was in college, I didn't see anyone who looked like me, and now I feel like I see a substantial amount of Black and Latina designers. I am happy to be part of the group who have risen up during the past few years."

The United States Merchant Marine Academy's assistant baseball coach, **Lou Bernardi (B.S. '11)**, will be inducted into the 2023 class of the New York State Baseball Hall of Fame.

**Chris DiStiso (M.B.A. '09)** is dean of academic affairs at Paier College in Bridgeport, Conn.

**Lemuel Guidos (B.S.A.T. '11)** of TPG Architecture became a registered architect in New York state.

**Robert B. Dickman (M.S. '12)** has joined D&B Engineers and Architects as principal engineer in D&B's electrical department in the firm's Woodbury, N.Y., office. Previously, he was regional lead electrical engineer in the government and environment market at Black and Veatch in Tampa, Fla.

**George Karavias (B.F.A. '12)** is chief executive officer of Dream Hospitality Group, a full-service hospitality company specializing in nightlife marketing.

**Karan Lal (B.S. '12, M.S. '16, D.O. '16)**, a dermatologist, was recently quoted in an article in *Marie Claire* about the best hair removal creams in 2023.

**Devin Kulka (B.S. '15)** has joined the Board of Directors of HIA-LI, one of the region's largest business advocacy organizations. He is chief executive officer of the Kulka Group, a construction company engaged in construction management, general contracting, property management, and

## Stanley M. Greenwald, P.E.



Professor and Chairperson Emeritus Stanley M. Greenwald, P.E., passed away in November 2022.

In 1963, he taught his first class at New York Institute of Technology. In 1982, while working for the New York State Department

of Education, he approved the registration of the university's engineering program. At that time, then-president (and founder of New York Tech) Alexander Schure offered him the job as dean of the College of Engineering and Computing Sciences (formerly the School of Engineering and Computing Sciences). Ten years later, Greenwald saw a need for a specific type of engineer and developed a graduate program in environmental technology and sustainability.

Greenwald's impact on the school and its students went far beyond the classroom. In 2018, he funded the Professor Stanley M. Greenwald Environmental Technology Scholarship, which was awarded to incoming environmental technology and energy management students.

development. He also serves on the boards of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and the Long Island Builders Institute and co-chairs the Next Generation Committee for the Long Island Real Estate Group.

**Arron Gravina (CERT '16, D.O. '18)** joined ENT and Allergy Associates, LLP, as an otolaryngologist.

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## NOTES TAKEN

We welcome all kinds of news for Alumni Notes. Submit your latest accomplishments—and remember to attach the pics!

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# In Memoriam

## Eugene J. Mitacek, Ph.D.



Professor of Life Sciences Eugene J. Mitacek, Ph.D., passed away in November 2022.

He was a member of the New York Tech community for more than 50 years. When he joined in 1970, the university was 15 years old and just beginning

to grow its research areas. At the time, he applied for grants to help build the programs.

As time went on, he thought it was important to give back to the place that supported his career and recognize the exceptional work by students and faculty members.

In 2018, he contributed two \$20,000 donations that fund the Eugene J. Mitacek Award for Excellence in Chemistry and the E.J. Mitacek Prize Fund.

M.B.A. and M.Sc. in international business. He is now Middle East and North Africa financial institution relationship manager for Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

### 2020s

**Paolo Mendoza (B.Arch. '20)** was appointed emerging professionals director at the American Institute of Architects United Kingdom and the UK representative and architect licensing advisor at the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards. Mendoza is an urban designer at Arcadis UK, a global design, engineering, and management consulting company.

**Zachary Singleton (B.S. '20, M.S. '21)** is a cybersecurity analyst for the U.S. Department of Defense in Washington, D.C. He was among the speakers at the first Long Island STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) Hub Career Conversations event held at the Cradle of Aviation Museum in January, sharing information about careers in technology with high school students.

**Debjit Mukherjee (M.B.A. '21)** was promoted to business intelligence consultant at Deloitte in New York City.

**Maria Lazaridis (B.Arch. '22)** is an assistant project manager at Mark Design Studios Architecture in Hicksville, N.Y.

as a communications coordinator and one year as a communications manager for the Huntington's Disease Society of America.

**May Sefin (M.B.A. '18)** started a new position as a digital marketing associate director at Arcadian.

After graduating from New York Tech, **Xingyu Wang (B.F.A. '19)** received an

(Continued)

**Peter Izzo (B.P.S. '18)** is a cast member on *Bachelor in Paradise* and co-owner/chef of two [Peter's Pizzeria](#) locations in Florida—one in Port St. Joe and a newer one in Boca Raton.

**Matthew Santamaria (B.F.A. '17, M.A. '18)** joined the Alzheimer's Association Long Island chapter as media relations manager. Santamaria previously spent three years

### MARRIAGES :

**John Holst (B.S. '86)**  
to Meaghan Kelly Holst

### PASSINGS :

**Kerry P. Meehan (B.S. '63)**  
**Kenneth W. Schmidt (B.F.A. '69)**  
**Robert Trainor (B.F.A. '75)**

**Thomas Compitello (B.S. '79)**  
**Beverly Jean Perlow (M.S. '90)**  
**Edward D. Richards (M.S. '95)**  
**Michael S. Friedman (B.S. '02)**

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Northern Boulevard, P.O. Box 8000,  
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