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FALL
2023

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200 years look good on us!



Dear Alumni,

In 2024, we're marking one of Jefferson's most momentous occasions – our 200th anniversary of the founding of an institution that, because of you, is one of today's most respected universities, health systems and health insurance organizations.

For two centuries, our alumni – over 77,000 strong – have set the foundation for an inspired third century. In 1824, we began as Jefferson Medical College – among the first to require students to have hands-on experience with patients, and the nation's first medical school to open a clinic for the poor. We set out to change the practice of medicine and selflessly support those in need of our help. We did that and inspired so much more.

Today, Jefferson is a professions-focused, research university with 10 colleges, three schools, 200+ diverse academic programs on the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels; a nationally ranked, 17-hospital health system; and an award-winning health insurance organization. We're a community of healers, creators, builders and explorers – all dedicated to improving lives – by seeing things others can't, reimagining things others won't, and doing things others don't. This is our legacy. Your legacy.

Our 200th Anniversary will be a celebration of all of you and the major milestones we've marked along the way, like the founding of the Philadelphia Textile School and the merger of Thomas Jefferson University and Philadelphia University in 2017. It will be a year-long event – with a host of activities to mark the occasion and showcase to the world how we've shaped the future of higher education, medicine and patient care.

We invite you to join us to participate in the many initiatives we have planned – to honor our past and to celebrate the next generation of Jefferson leaders who will boldly, and unapologetically, define what's possible in our next two hundred years.

Joseph G. Cacchione, MD
CEO | Jefferson

Susan Aldridge, PhD
Interim President | Thomas Jefferson University





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As you get older, your birthday takes on a different meaning. It stops being about the party or presents; eventually it's not really about you, either. You celebrate the people you love, the lives you've changed.

Next year is Jefferson's 200th birthday, and we find ourselves thinking not about the institution—the firsts, the milestones, the rankings—but people like you. Alumni. Students. Donors. Faculty. Parents. We're curious about your story, and how your experience at Jefferson—and Textile and PhilaU—is woven into your life.

Textile taught Bill Finn '67 (page 42) "that education doesn't finish when you leave." He just established the Finn Directorship of the Design,

Engineering and Commerce Core Curriculum—the first endowed professorship donated to a legacy Textile/PhilaU program.

A former point guard for Herb Magee, Jordan DeCicco (page 38) launched the now-global Super Coffee brand. The secret he learned at Jefferson, he says, is that success is "the culmination of people that you have on your team."

We also celebrate our newest Jeffersonians, welcoming our interim president, a new provost, and new chief community impact officer (pages 6–9).

What's your story? We want to hear it. Because it's our story, too.



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Get to Know Interim President Dr. Susan Aldridge

online learning and president of Drexel University Online.

From her Reichlin House office on the East Falls Campus, she spoke about her goals, advice for new students, Jefferson's strong alumni network, and more.

What excites you the most about starting this position, especially on the eve of Jefferson's 200th anniversary?

It is an honor to serve this University. We have an extraordinary enterprise with Thomas Jefferson University, a world-class university, Jefferson Health, and Jefferson Health Plans. Every person I've met is professionally accomplished, intellectually respected, and passionate about our model for professions-based learning, students, patient care, and research.

What's a major goal for your tenure?

At Jefferson, we improve lives. Today, students want to know they will receive value for their investment and pathways to jobs at graduation. Professionals are also returning to school to enhance their careers, and we have to show them the trajectory. We must cultivate the synergy between Thomas Jefferson University, Jefferson Health, and Jefferson Health Plans, and provide better opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and research in real-world scenarios. The opportunities

for faculty and students at Jefferson are enormous.

What are some of the biggest challenges in higher education today, and how do you plan to address them?

We're seeing tectonic shifts in higher education. In the past couple of years, over 100 universities and colleges have merged or been acquired. Over 500 universities are on a financial watch list.

These are challenging economic times as universities enter the post-pandemic environment. The federal dollars that financially supported these institutions during the pandemic are gone, so now they're looking at their real financial situation.

It's also a challenge for families trying to pay tuition, so we must communicate the value of investment these students will receive for their education. We have worked hard to ensure that there's no disconnect between what we teach and what the industry expects of our graduates. Jefferson is dedicated to making sure that our students are ready for the future of work.

We must always align our academic programs with the urgent needs of industry, and we must stay on top of this every year.

What advice can you share for new students as they start their Jefferson journey?

There is something very special in Jefferson's DNA. Our

Susan Aldridge, PhD, wants to get to know you. Since the interim University president took office, she has met with countless students, faculty, and staff, toured the nooks and crannies of campus, and shaken many, many hands. And with the semester underway, plan to see her cheering on the Rams at games this fall.

Aldridge splits her time between Jefferson's Center City and East Falls campuses. "The student stories are inspirational to me—not just their history, but what they're working on that excites them."

Aldridge served on the Jefferson board of trustees and is an accomplished higher education leader, strategist, and futurist. Having held executive leadership positions at some of the country's largest universities, she recently retired from Drexel University after serving five years as senior vice president for

students know their faculty and advisors. We have a nurturing, supportive environment that differentiates Jefferson from other universities. We want you to grow and be safe and successful. Be intellectually inquisitive and rely on the people on campus who really care about your future. Get an education you're proud of, but have some fun while you're here. Build lasting relationships with fellow students, faculty, and alumni. They will want to hear about your future successes.

In your welcome letter to students, you write how you strive to be readily accessible. Why is it crucial for you to have this regular dialogue with them?

When I spend time with students, I know the world will be a better place. They're so engaged, intelligent, focused, and hopeful. Our students have phenomenal talent. We try to inspire them, but I think they inspire us. I can't wait to see what projects they create this year, and I look forward to attending as many presentations as possible. There are seven days in a week and a lot of hours every day. I promise to be visible.

How important is alumni support to the University's vitality?

I've met with many alumni in my role as a trustee and now interim president. We have dedicated, generous alumni from Philadelphia University and Thomas Jefferson University. They're engaged with our students and want to mentor

them. We're fortunate to have such longevity in our alumni base, and I want to continue to nurture alumni relations with our students and the University.

I'm curious about their successes and how they've applied their degrees. Our alumni need to feel engaged and comfortable coming back, but I also want students to know the alumni care about them, contribute toward their education and provide resources. Students should remember that these alumni become part of their broader network in their careers and can be wonderful professional advisers.

What's something people might be surprised to know about you?

I've spent decades working on international partnerships and launching academic programs overseas, traveling to over 150 countries and islands. I have a keen interest in this global environment our students will enter. Regardless of their career paths, our students will work in diverse teams, frequently from many countries and cultures.

I also will be spending time with our international students, making sure they're comfortable. They will return to their countries to make revolutionary changes, and I want to hear about their global trajectory and how we can best support them. 🇺🇸



Leadership Announcements

New Dean Appointed for Sidney Kimmel Medical College



Said Ibrahim, MD, MBA, MPH, has been appointed the Anthony F. and Gertrude M. De Palma Dean of Sidney Kimmel Medical College and president of Jefferson University Physicians (JUP), effective December 1, 2023. Dr. Ibrahim brings expertise and a wealth of higher education and healthcare experience to this crucial leadership role.

He will join Thomas Jefferson University from Northwell Health, where he serves as senior vice president of the Medicine Service Line. In that role, he also chaired the Department of Medicine at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, and the Donald & Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell.

Previously, Dr. Ibrahim was professor of healthcare policy and research and the founding chief of the Division of Healthcare Delivery Science and

Innovation at the Department of Healthcare Policy & Research, and the inaugural senior associate dean for diversity and inclusion for Weill Cornell Medicine. He also served at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and as chief of Medicine at Philadelphia's VA Medical Center.

Dr. Ibrahim has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity within the medical community. He brings not only a deep understanding of the evolving landscape of medical education, but also a vision for furthering Jefferson's reputation as a hub for academic excellence, cutting-edge research, and compassionate patient care.

In an interview with the Philadelphia Tribune, Dr. Susan Aldridge, interim president, said, "Dr. Ibrahim is an extraordinary researcher, physician, scientist, and educator. Not only will he continue to be involved in health disparity research, but he will help us in recruiting additional faculty and students from diverse areas of the country and diverse backgrounds, so we are very excited to have his talent and leadership here."

Matt Dane Baker, PA-C, DHSc Named University's Provost



Matt Dane Baker, PA-C, DHSc, has been appointed as provost of Thomas Jefferson University. In addition to his role as senior vice provost for Academic Affairs, he has been serving as interim provost since July 1, 2022.

Baker will continue to act as chief academic officer of the university, with a focus on the operation and overall performance of Jefferson's academic programs, the management of research, and the coordination of affiliated institutions and partnerships.

"Dr. Baker has more than 40 years of higher education and healthcare experience, having held multiple positions in clinical, academic, administrative, and research settings," says interim University president Dr. Susan C. Aldridge. "He has spent nearly 30 of those years at Thomas Jefferson University—and legacy Philadelphia University—demonstrating his devotion to creating a positive and inclusive

environment for students, faculty, and staff.”

Baker was lauded for accomplishments including leading teams responsible for a focus on the future of work; substantial enrollment growth; new program development and academic and clinical partnerships; enhanced academic support services; faculty recruitment and retention; and curriculum revision.

“I am thrilled and grateful that Dr. Joe Cacchione, Dr. Susan Aldridge, and the Board of Trustees have placed their faith in me to lead this talented academic team,” says Baker. “My experiences at Jefferson and Philadelphia University have given me a deep appreciation for the amazing faculty, staff, and administrators who are dedicated to our mission of excellent education, groundbreaking research, and student-centered support services. We have a lot to be proud of with our growth in enrollment, research activity, and reputation, and I am confident we will continue this journey into our next 200 years.”

Jefferson Names Keith Leaphart, DO, MBA, New Humana Chief Health Equity and Community Impact Officer



Keith Leaphart, DO, MBA, has been named Enterprise Executive Vice President (EVP) and Humana Chief Health Equity and Community Impact Officer for Thomas Jefferson University, Jefferson Health, and Jefferson Health Plans.

This new role is endowed by a generous gift from Humana, which earlier this year announced a gift of \$15 million to advance community health and health equity, and support population health efforts. “Jefferson is committed to community health, and a renowned leader in healthcare, higher education, and research,” says Leaphart. “I am honored to be back to focus on expanding its community impact and extensive efforts to improve health equity throughout our region.”

Working closely with stakeholders across the organization to develop strategies and tactics to implement health equity and

inclusion policies, practices, and trainings across the enterprise, he also oversees the Jefferson Collaborative for Health Equity, partnering with local and national leaders and organizations to advance health equity throughout the region.

“Dr. Leaphart is a respected physician, renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist, and celebrated Philadelphian,” says Dr. Joseph G. Cacchione, Jefferson CEO. “His extensive medical training, keen leadership skills, and business acumen add great value to our organization as we further advance our commitment to promoting health equity, reducing disparities, and cultivating an inclusive workplace.”

Leaphart completed his residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in 2007 and maintains an active medical license. Prior to joining Jefferson, Leaphart was chair of the Board of Directors for The Lenfest Foundation and in 2018, launched Philanthropi®, an innovative digital and social engagement platform designed to transform charitable giving and amplify awareness and excitement for lifelong philanthropy. [👉](#)



George J. Willauer, MD 1923 and the White Throated Song Sparrow

*Adapted from "Legend and Lore: Jefferson Medical College"
Chapter 6: Unusual Jefferson Alumni by John Y. Templeton III, MD '41,
the Samuel D. Gross Professor of Surgery (1967-1968)*

It is May of 1967. Joe Stayman, MD '42, and I sit in the wooden Peterborough on Lac Pythonga near the clubhouse in western Quebec awaiting our transportation.

Joe is chief of surgery at Chestnut Hill Hospital and beloved by generations of surgical residents and medical students fortunate enough to enjoy this affiliation. They appreciate his surgical skills and particularly his endless devotion to teaching.

We are both veterans of Dr. Gibbon's surgical residency and have spent many hours with Dr. George Willauer in and out of the operating room. He is a hard taskmaster, but we love him dearly. He possesses immense clinical knowledge and surgical skills, particularly in the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis. A born teacher, he has worked long and hard

to impart this knowledge to us. He is completely honest, and for him the welfare of his patients is paramount. He jealously guards the integrity of his profession and roundly condemns any real or fancied derelictions of his colleagues. He holds his friends dear and neither gives nor asks quarter of his enemies. He is not always at one with the medical establishment and can at times be something of a maverick. For these things and more, we admire and respect him, but we are also intrigued by his unique lifestyle.

Always the impeccably dressed gentleman, he sports a black opera cape. His language is often strong and laced with colorful figures of speech. He rides in a 1935 black Packard convertible with his chauffeur, Glynn. Glynn steers and manages the foot pedals. Dr. Willauer shifts gears and

gives detailed instructions as to speed and course. He makes loud critical comments, easily audible from the open automobile, about the driving habits of fellow motorists. He enjoys himself immensely.

We hear Laurentian's Beaver coming in from Rocklands, its sound rising in pitch as the pilot sets the power for landing. We go ashore and wait as Johnny Whiteduck, later chief of the Algonquins in Maniwaki, brings the floatplane up to the dock, the big R-985 turning over so slowly we can hear each cylinder individually. We bid our friends farewell, load the gear, and head for home, just ahead of the impending onslaught of black flies and mosquitoes that make June in that part of the north so unpleasant. As always, it has been a good trip, this time notably so because of the White Throated Song Sparrow.

Now you know and I know that there are White Throated Sparrows and there are Song Sparrows, but there are no White Throated Song Sparrows. Dr. George Willauer, however, believed in White Throated Song Sparrows, and that, for purpose of this story, is the important thing.

The American Association for Thoracic Surgery met in New York City in April 1967. Tom Holder was there. He too had been a resident with Dr. Gibbon and had then gone on to study pediatric surgery with Dr. Robert Gross. He became a prominent Kansas City pediatric surgeon making many contributions to the field, particularly in the management of congenital atresia of the esophagus.

Tom invited Dr. Willauer and me to lunch, and we repaired to the Americana Hotel. We were on holiday, so cocktails were in order. Dr. Willauer ordered a hot buttered rum against a rather dreary, cold, and drizzly day. Serious problems arose. Both waiter and bartender were from the Caribbean, where, probably because of the tropical climate, this drink is not very popular despite its rum content. Very precise instructions followed, sticks of cinnamon were found somewhere in the dark recesses of the pantry, and, in due course, a drink acceptable to the maestro appeared. Spirited conversation followed, spurred by the good companionship and the affection and respect that Tom and I felt for Dr. Willauer.

If there was anything that Dr. Willauer loved as much as surgery, it was the outdoors,



▲ (l-r) P. Vidor Sencindiver, MD '52, George J. Willauer, MD 1923, and John J. McKeown, MD '47, arriving at fishing camp on Miramichi River, New Brunswick, on a venture into Canada from Willauer's usual Maine fishing haunts.

specifically the outdoors in Maine. He had been very seriously ill in his younger days, and his classmate, W. Emory "Mose" Burnett, MD 1923, and Dean Parkinson of Temple took him to Maine to convalesce. It was his custom to return twice each year. In the spring, he fished the Allagash for speckled trout or the Narraguagas for Atlantic salmon. In the autumn, he hunted deer from Round Pond on the Allagash. An early conservationist, he took only such game as he, his family, and friends could eat. He was a superb wild game cook, and his venison dinners were greatly relished by those fortunate enough to participate. His dear friend in Maine was Willard Jalbert, the famed Old Guide of the Allagash. Not only did Dr. Willauer gain much of his wilderness knowledge from Willard, but many of the

colorful, pithy expressions and figures of speech that he was wont to use, particularly in times of stress in the operating room, came from Willard and his friends.

Inevitably, therefore, conversation turned to the outdoors, and I mentioned that Joe Stayman and I planned a fishing trip to the Pythonga Club in western Quebec in a few weeks. Without urging, Dr. Willauer volunteered the following instructions on how to fish northern waters correctly. As in all matters, they were well thought out, specific, detailed, and to be followed to the letter. First, he said, the fisherman should go through the snow to the cabin at water's edge while the lake is still completely frozen. The lake is watched closely, and, one day, a pair of loons is seen. This is the signal to put all the equipment

in readiness, because the next day, the ice will go out. Spring has not yet come to the north, but the fish, voracious after the long winter under the ice, will come near the surface. Vigorous fishing is begun immediately using streamer flies, Mickey Finns, Grey Ghosts, and such like.

After a few days, as the water warms and the fish go deeper, lures are changed and fished at moderate depth. Then flocks of swallows appear, gorging themselves on the first insects of the season. The fisherman may now use wet and dry flies, carefully matching the hatch. Eventually, the day comes when the voice of the first White Throated Song Sparrow is heard. In Maine, he says “Mr. Peabody, Peabody, Peabody”—in Canada, “O Canada, Canada, Canada”—in descending cadence. At this sound, the alert, experienced fisherman moves to the inlets where streams run into the lake and the temperature of the water and the supply of food are better. From the canoe, casts are made into the stream and the lures slowly

retrieved. Finally, fishing is abandoned, and the expedition terminated when the black flies arise from the water and the female simulium make their bloodthirsty attack.

Well, this was excellent lunchtime conversation, and I salted the information away. The following month, Joe Stayman and I found ourselves on Lunch Lake, a small speckled trout lake, with our French guide, Michell. The morning fishing was disappointing, yielding only one small fish for a rather poor lunch at the old lean-to. The afternoon was no better, and we paddled aimlessly around.

Discouraged, we were about to give it up when to my great pleasure the unmistakable song of the White Throated Song Sparrow came to ear.

There he was, singing happily away in an alder at water’s edge. I announced to my skeptical companions that I knew exactly how we could catch fish and asked Michell to take us to the stream inlet.

Michell’s response was, “She no good there.”

My response was, “She no good here.”

So, over we went and followed Dr. Willauer’s instructions. In short order a number of very nice speckled trout were taken. This pleased and surprised us. It would not have surprised Dr. Willauer.

So, when you hear the White Throated Song Sparrow, remember Dr. George Willauer and fish the inlets of streams. 🐟

Share Your Story

Do you have a great story about a unique Textile/PhilaU/Jefferson faculty member, colleague, or alum? We want to hear it!

In 2024, we celebrate our institution’s 200th anniversary, and we’re gathering stories—a new collection of “legends and lore,” if you will—about what makes the University and its people so special.

To submit your story, recollection, or connection, visit us at [Jefferson.edu/Story200](https://jefferson.edu/Story200) or email us at editor@jefferson.edu.



FASHION ALUMNA

CREATES THE LOOKS FOR

HOLLYWOOD STARS

For Charlese Antoinette '05, a career of dressing Hollywood stars like Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Naomi Ackie, Stanley Tucci, and Daniel Kaluuya began in East Falls.

The fashion merchandising and management graduate—now a TV and movie costume designer for A-listers—spent hours putting on fashion shows with the Black Student Union, absorbing skills from fashion, textile, and business professors, and importantly, quizzing Gutman librarians and scouring the University archives.

"It's part of why I'm so good at research now," Antoinette says. "It's a huge part of my career."

She also attributes Jefferson's Marianne Able Career Services Center to helping her land a Black Retail Action Group internship at Macy's in New York City after her junior year. "From there, I expanded the ideas of who I was and who I could be," Antoinette says.

After graduating, Antoinette worked for Armani and Bloomingdale's and dressed models for Betsey Johnson and Calvin Klein at New York Fashion Week for 10 seasons. The connections made through the famed fashion event, plus many late nights, led to jobs as a costume production assistant.

Costume designer Charlese Antoinette's credits include 'Judas and the Black Messiah,' 'Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody,' and 'Air.'

BY MIKE BEDERKA





▲ *Charlese Antoinette served as costume designer for the biographical drama "Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody." (Photos/Emily Aragones; Copyright: © 2021 CTMG Inc. All Rights Reserved.)*

Antoinette worked on "Newlyweeds" and "The Inevitable Defeat of Mister and Pete," both of which went to Sundance in 2013. After this early career success, she moved to Los Angeles—an unexpectedly difficult transition that left her homeless and couch-surfing with friends.

"A lot of promises people made for work didn't happen, and I ended up in an emotionally and financially abusive relationship," she shares. "I had to rebuild my life."

Antoinette continued to hustle for years, traveling the world and working on projects that inspired her. Then, her big break came.

The "Newlyweeds" director, Shaka King, and Antoinette kept in touch over the years, and he contacted her to be the costume designer for his next big picture, "Judas and the Black Messiah." The 2021 biographical crime drama about the betrayal of Black Panther Party member Fred Hampton earned six Oscar nominations and won two awards.

"It was truly life-changing in how I looked at myself as an artist and the world around me," Antoinette says. "I'm really grateful this is the project that propelled me."

Since then, Hollywood keeps calling for her skills. As a costume designer, Antoinette creates characters for a film or TV show through clothing, setting the looks from the extras to lead stars. She collaborates with directors, writers, showrunners, production designers, prop masters, and more.

To prep for the 2022 biographical musical drama "Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody" and recreate some of the superstar's iconic looks, she spent hours watching documentaries, reading books, and combing through old photos. A companion book details Antoinette's work behind the scenes.

Her next big project was "Air," which hit theaters and streaming in April. The Matt Damon and Ben Affleck film centers on Nike's game-

changing partnership with Michael Jordan to create the Air Jordan brand. She also has a Damon/Casey Affleck heist movie in the works.

With Antoinette's star on the rise, she looks to help other designers as much as possible. She created the Black Designer Database to support Black designers by amplifying their work and connecting them to new consumers and media opportunities.

"It's about community building," says Antoinette, who notes the importance of finding support from others. "Work with your peers to build and create your own stories and projects to showcase your collective work. That's how I got here. The director for 'Judas' also did my first film."

For students looking to follow her lead in Hollywood, she urges patience and persistence too.

"It's not an instant gratification kind of industry," Antoinette says. "The focus should be on being the best artist you can be and creating amazing work that you're happy with." 📌

Keeping It in the Jefferson Family: Majority of Jefferson College of Nursing Graduates Begin Their Careers at Jefferson

In recent years, nearly 60% of Jefferson College of Nursing graduates have begun their nursing careers at Jefferson Health.

Marie Marino, EdD, RN, the Dean of the College of Nursing, and Kate FitzPatrick, DNP, RN, the Connelly Foundation Chief Nurse Executive Officer at Jefferson Health, have a unique relationship that allows students to enhance their skills at hospitals within Jefferson Health.

"The clinical training opportunities my students have at Jefferson Health lay the strongest foundation for our graduates," Marino says. "We believe this training positions them to be successful anywhere, but also believe the best place to actualize their first professional role is here at Jefferson Health."

Donna Hendrickson, a 2023 graduate, accepted a position as a registered nurse in the medical intensive care unit (MICU) at Jefferson Abington Hospital. She says her experience as a Jefferson student shaped how she will continue her career.

"Going to Jefferson for clinical rotations gave me a taste of what working at Jefferson would be like. I've already gotten to know my manager and coworkers," she

says. "Jefferson was my dream school. It was the only school I applied to. I'm thrilled I will stay in the Jefferson family."

At Jefferson, students receive hands-on clinical training to prepare them for the workforce. For example, nursing student Armani Gregory recently accepted a position at 5W, the advanced heart failure intensive coronary care unit at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

"Be outgoing and get your hands dirty," Gregory advises incoming students. "If you see something you like, dive in."

Using Invasive Species for Natural Dyes

The push for sustainability in the textile industry is gaining more momentum than ever, but what will that shift actually entail? "Sustainability is such a multifaceted question," says textile design professor Becky Flax. Everything from the fiber a textile is made from to the chemicals used in dyeing and processing can impact the environment.

One way Flax promotes sustainability is by repurposing Pennsylvania's invasive



▲ "Going to Jefferson for clinical rotations gave me a taste of what working at Jefferson would be like," says Donna Hendrickson, a 2023 graduate. "I'm thrilled I will stay in the Jefferson family."



▲ Nursing student Armani Gregory recently accepted a position at 5W, the advanced heart failure ICCU at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

plant species into natural dyes. Together with biology professor Anne Bower, PhD, Flax recently tested if the roots of Japanese barberry, wineberry, and oriental bittersweet could be used to dye organic cotton and wool. Flax and Bower also investigated if using the invasive red oak acorn as a mordant—a substance that prevents the dye from running—intensified the root-based dyes. Their results, published in the *Journal of Natural Fibers*, showed that the three invasive plants and red oak acorn mordant all had potential applications as commercial natural dyes.

The roots along with the mordant yielded dyes tinted bright citron green, dusty rose, and chocolate brown. To assess the longevity of the dyes, Flax and Bower conducted tests to mimic laundering, perspiration, and

rubbing up against other fabrics. Though the tests did lead to some fading, Flax says the dyes just need to be used in the right circumstances. “I wouldn’t recommend this being used on children’s clothing, because kids tend to stress and strain their fabrics a lot,” explains Flax. But, she says, the dyes could work well for a formal garment or winter apparel.

Flax hopes to develop more techniques to improve the dyes’ colorfastness, and to determine if other parts of the plants, such as the stems or berries, can be used for dyes.

University Receives Pennsylvania Hunger-Free+ Campus Designation

The commonwealth’s Department of Education has designated the University

as a Pennsylvania Hunger-Free+ Campus to recognize work done to address its community’s needs.

“With this designation, the University will have access to annual grant opportunities that will allow us to expand our anti-hunger work on campus,” says Katie DiSantis, PhD, associate professor of public health in the College of Population Health.

While pandemic-related issues prompted the initiative’s creation, Jefferson’s efforts predate that, with the Ramily Market opening on the East Falls campus in 2018 and since expanding to Center City to help ease the food-insecurity burdens.

“We have been addressing the unfortunate needs of the campus community far before the pandemic,” says Jeff Cromarty, EdD, senior vice president of campus operations.



▲ Left: The Ramily Market, located in the Kanbar Campus Center in East Falls. Right: The Ramily Market in Center City hosted biweekly, fresh pop-up markets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

Built on the East Falls model, Center City's Martin Hall location opened in 2021 and the effort expanded to the Dixon Campus in 2022. The healthy food-focused pantry offerings include whole grains, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables, and shelf-stable proteins. Non-food basic-need items, including feminine products and soap, are also popular.

DiSantis notes that the market is staffed by master of public health students completing their applied learning experience. Many have focused their capstones on the issue of food insecurity among graduate students, she adds.

"Access to nutritious food is one of the key social determinants of health and promotes success by reducing hunger so students can focus on their education and achieving their goals," says Jennifer Fogerty, associate provost of student affairs.

Alumni and donors have been critical to supporting these efforts, including a major gift from alumnus Michael Nissman '64 to endow the Ramilly Market.

Jefferson becomes just the third university in Philadelphia to receive the designation, according to a list of grant recipients provided by the Department of Education, which awarded \$1 million in grants this year. Now, work will continue to address food and nutritional disparities faced by students at all University campuses.



▲ *The Fashion Scholarship Fund recognized fashion design senior Lyla Duffy, and juniors Satchel Smith and James Mamrol as Class of 2023 Scholars.*

Five Students Named Fashion Scholarship Fund Scholars

Once again, Jefferson fashion design students earned one of the industry's biggest honors. The prestigious Fashion Scholarship Fund (FSF)—a leading fashion-oriented education and workforce development nonprofit organization—named five

University students Class of 2023 Scholars.

"Winning the FSF scholarship is such a door opener," says Carly Kusy, assistant professor of fashion design. "It provides students with unparalleled support, not just financially, but professionally. Being named an FSF Scholar provides them with a lifelong membership to an incredible network of support in our industry."

Two students earned the FSF Case Study Scholarship, and another three won the Virgil Abloh "Post-Modern" Scholarship Fund, which aims to foster equity and inclusion within the fashion industry by providing scholarships and opportunities to students of academic promise of Black, African American, or African descent. Abloh, who passed away in 2021, was an artist, architect, engineer, designer, musician and DJ, chief creative director, and artistic director. Throughout his career, he

focused on advancing equity and inclusivity.

With the prompt of "create the brand of the future from within," students designed a collection that combines a brand's existing identity with their own creative vision for the brand's future design direction, Kusy explains. The collection had to create a meaningful connection to a specific consumer group and evolve the retailer/brand into the future of fashion.

"I'm so proud of the thoughtful and hard work

our students do for this scholarship," she says. "They all developed projects focused on creating a more inclusive and sustainable future, so it showcases our students not just as talented designers but as changemakers and problem solvers."

The five students each received at least a \$7,500 scholarship and will be honored at a gala in New York City this spring.



▲ Fashion Scholarship Fund Scholars senior Sam Stern and senior Kierra Lee.

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Climate Change on Your Block

BY KARUNA MEDA
ILLUSTRATION BY OLLIE HIRST



In Philadelphia, summer is nearly 22 degrees warmer in some neighborhoods than others. Researchers and city agencies are teaming up to address this environmental disparity.

Wisps of pastel pink and orange tinge a dark blue sky as dusk settles on a summer's eve in the city of Philadelphia. The soothing hues belie the intense heat that researcher Radika Bhaskar, PhD, can feel radiating off the pavement. She kneels to place a temperature sensor in the ground, moving cautiously on the hot surface. Across the street, her colleague Megan Heckert, PhD, does the same. "It's so much more bearable here under the trees," she calls out. Bhaskar nods—with a research journey traversing both ecology and environmental engineering, she knows all too well the cooling properties of plants. A beep on the sensor app catches her attention and she's taken aback by the reading—a blistering 95°F, even at sundown. She stands and surveys the surrounding houses in concern, thinking about their inhabitants who will have to sleep through this uncomfortable heat. It's a troubling snapshot of the planet's warming in our own backyard.

In just the last 30 years, Philadelphia's average summer temperatures have increased by 3°F, making it almost as hot as Atlanta, Georgia. Average annual rainfall has also increased. In 2021, Hurricane Ida was a terrifying example of the havoc wreaked by severe storms, with record flooding along the Schuylkill River that displaced hundreds and killed five.

These local patterns are reflected globally. In fact, some of the most devastating effects of climate change have happened in the past year alone—floods in Pakistan that submerged a third of the country; record-

breaking drought in China that dried up dozens of rivers and reservoirs; massive wildfires in Europe that destroyed more than a million acres of land. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's leading body on climate science, indicates we are now on track to surpass acceptable limits of warming as early as 2037. We have reached a "code red" and extreme weather events and their cascading effects will likely happen more frequently and severely.

The rate of warming that has brought us to this precipice has indisputably been driven by humans burning fossil fuels, which emit heat-trapping gases. Yet, while all of humanity's fingerprints are present, the impact will be felt unevenly. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Black and Latino communities in the U.S. are 40–50% more likely to live and/or work in areas with the highest projected increases in temperature and flooding compared to other demographic groups. These populations also experience higher incidences of conditions like hypertension and asthma, symptoms of which are worsened by rising temperatures.

Understanding this environmental injustice, at least in cities, requires focusing on the urban environment. For the past four years, Bhaskar, an engineering professor at Thomas Jefferson University, has embarked on an ambitious partnership with researchers in geospatial mapping and industrial design, and Philadelphia's Water Department

and Office of Sustainability, to study how climate change impacts the city's hardest-hit neighborhoods. The team is combating the local trends of a warmer, wetter planet by combining human engineering with tools from Mother Nature herself.

Using Green Infrastructure to Combat Increased Stormwater

The approach of integrating natural systems and engineered systems has been a driving force behind Bhaskar's research, from studying how to use plants to pull pollutants from the air and soil to measuring fluid dynamics in trees that live in drought conditions. "I'm always thinking about how we can bring ecology into our urban environments," she explains. "How do we then measure the different functions of these nature-based solutions?"

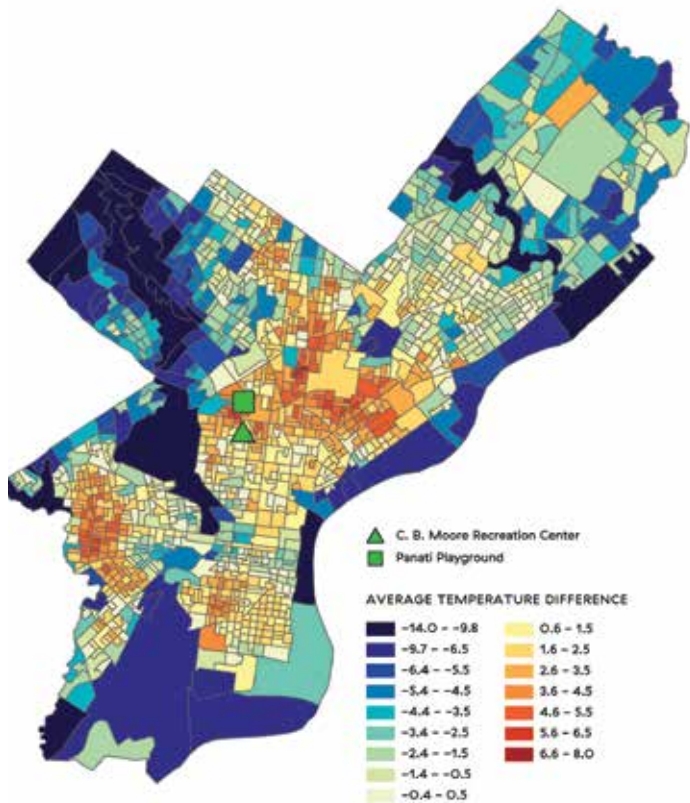
These were similar questions that Philadelphia's Water Department sought to answer in its Green City, Clean Waters initiative. Started in 2011, the project aims to combat stormwater overflow. Two-thirds of Philadelphia is served by an older water-drainage system called the combined sewer system, meaning a single pipe collects both household sewage and stormwater. During increasingly wetter seasons due to climate change, this system often overflows and billions of gallons of stormwater and diluted sewage pollute local waterways. This harms aquatic life and hinders recreational activities like swimming.

"The urbanization of our environment has resulted in more impervious surfaces," explains Matthew Fritch, an environmental engineer in the Water Department. "When it rains heavily, stormwater has nowhere to go."

Green City, Clean Waters applies green tools or infrastructure that 1) use the natural properties of plants to both absorb rain and to physically intercept it before it hits the ground; and 2) also contain the stormwater in an underground catchment area made of rocks and absorbent material, to ensure it has time to soak into the soil and release more slowly into the sewage pipes. The city has already installed nearly 3,000 structures across the city, which have kept almost 3 billion gallons of sewage overflow out of Philadelphia's waterways over the past 10 years.

"Philadelphia is a national, if not international, leader of green stormwater infrastructure," says Fritch. "But it is challenging—we are used to dealing with pipes, not plants. It's a different world."

A world, however, very familiar to Bhaskar, whose knowledge of engineering and plants' adaptive mechanisms made her an ideal collaborator. In 2018, Fritch teamed up with her to test different materials and plants for a green roof, one of the many types of Green City, Clean Waters installations. They wanted to evaluate how well the roof was absorbing water, using sensors placed in the soil. They also wanted to measure a process called evapotranspiration, whereby water taken up by the plants' roots is released back into



Visualizing Heat Across Philadelphia

The researchers created a map of temperature variation across Philadelphia using data provided by the Water Department. Each shape represents a census block group, and those in orange and red are the hottest neighborhoods of the city. The researchers chose study sites within these areas (in green) to measure the cooling effect of green infrastructure. Many of these blocks overlap with the areas identified as most vulnerable to heat by the city’s Heat Vulnerability Index, due to the prevalence of conditions exacerbated by heat, like diabetes and hypertension, and lack of cooling resources. Many of the darkest blue or coolest areas correspond to the presence of big parks and/or water bodies. The cooling effects of these spaces spread to adjacent areas, in lighter shades of blue.

the atmosphere. This moisture-laden vapor cools the surrounding air.

“Plants not only act like sponges, soaking up the excess rainwater, but also like air conditioners,” explains Bhaskar. It’s not the only way plants cool—they cast shade, and reflect sun rays off their leaves, preventing paved surfaces like asphalt from heating up as much. This combined cooling means that urban green spaces can reduce surface temperatures by 1–4°F during the day.

As they collected the measurements from the roof, it occurred to Bhaskar: Could these green tools be used to combat another major effect of climate change—rising temperatures?

The Urban Heat Island Effect and Environmental Injustice

While this question percolated in her mind, Bhaskar serendipitously met Saleem Chapman at a panel on climate change in early 2019. At the time Chapman was the chief resilience officer in the Office of Sustainability and recently became its director. The conversation quickly turned to warming in Philadelphia.

Local climate projections predict that by 2030, the number of days with temperatures reaching 95°F or higher is expected to double in Philadelphia, from 21 to 42, which would be nearly half of the summer season. But warming is not distributed evenly across the

city—neighborhoods that have more buildings, pavement, and black rooftops are warmer than those with more trees and parks. Because of deep-seated inequities and discriminatory practices like redlining, tree cover or canopy is not equitably distributed in Philadelphia, with 40% in some areas and 3% in others. The latter experience an intense “urban heat island” effect, and on a peak summer’s day, they can be nearly 22°F warmer than the coolest neighborhood. It’s like living in two different climates.

These heat islands face other stressors. In 2018, Chapman’s office and the Department of Public Health created a Heat Vulnerability Index that combines data on daytime temperature,

There is a direct link between a person's surrounding and their mood

availability of resources like pools and cooling centers, and socioeconomic factors like income, age, and incidence of disease. It's a tool that several cities across the world have used to pinpoint hotspots to keep residents safe during the summer.

An area is more vulnerable if it is both very hot and the people who live there are more sensitive to the effects of high heat—for instance, older citizens, people with pre-existing medical conditions, and those who don't have access to or cannot afford air conditioning. The index indicates that regions in North and West Philadelphia are the hottest, and that Black and Latino communities and people experiencing poverty are disproportionately vulnerable to that increased heat.

As Bhaskar and Chapman discussed the injustices of these urban hotspots and the sensors on the green roof, they arrived at the same questions—could they use similar sensors to measure the temperature at green infrastructure sites and identify a possible cooling effect? And

if so, how could this encourage the placement of future green infrastructure in areas that are vulnerable to both increased heat and stormwater?

“Heat mitigation was not a primary consideration of the Water Department's green stormwater infrastructure program,” says Chapman. “But it is a potential co-benefit that could promote collaboration between city agencies, exactly the kind of approach we need to confront multiple environmental stressors.”

They started a research partnership to explore tackling two climate change birds with one green stone. After more discussions and successfully acquiring funding from the William Penn Foundation, they began assembling a team.

Zooming in on Heat, at Night

Bhaskar brought in the expertise of Megan Heckert, an urban geography researcher at West Chester University who uses geographic information systems and spatial analysis to explore issues like sustainability and tree

equity. They shared the goal of collecting information on small scales, more relevant to the experience of urban warming.

“Much of the research on urban heat relies on satellite data, which while informative, is not at the resolution we need to understand temperature differences across short distances,” explains Heckert. “What is it like to live on a shady street or city block, compared to one with fewer trees?”

Many green stormwater infrastructure installations are considerably smaller than city parks, the types of urban green spaces typically studied for mitigating urban heat. Thus their potential cooling effect might be limited, in both magnitude and geographic reach. This also motivated the researchers to take a finer-scale approach to understand what level of cooling can meaningfully impact the on-the-ground experience of heat.

A significant aspect of that experience is the effect on health. During the day, extreme heat can lead to dehydration, cardiovascular stress, and increased risk of heatstroke. But the danger lasts into the night. Surfaces like concrete and asphalt can bake up to 140°F degrees on a hot day and radiate that stored heat back into the air at night. It forces residents to incur higher energy costs by running air conditioning or fans through the night, which is prohibitive for some. Without the ability to cool down sufficiently, higher nighttime temperatures disrupt sleep, thereby increasing susceptibility to disease and worsening existing conditions like hypertension. In fact, one analysis showed that elevated nighttime

temperatures were a major factor in heat-related mortalities in Philadelphia from 1983 to 2008.

“Residents living in these urban hotspots can maybe escape the heat of the day by being in an air-conditioned place of work or cooling center,” says Bhaskar. “But at night, they’re literally trapped.”

Average summer-night temperatures in Philadelphia have increased by nearly 4°F since 1970. But unlike daytime temperatures, less is known about how this increase is distributed across the city, let alone a city block. The researchers therefore decided to gather their temperature measurements after sundown, hypothesizing that the effects of shading and evaporative cooling provided by the green infrastructure persist into the night. The next step was to determine how and where.

Measuring Climate Change on a City Block

With reliable sensors ready to be deployed, Heckert mapped out potential locations, prioritizing green infrastructure sites in neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability, low surrounding tree cover, and high energy costs. The team decided on two sites with green infrastructure built by the Water Department in Upper North Philadelphia, one of the hottest parts of the city: the Panati Playground, which has a rain garden with trees, and the Cecil B. Moore Recreation Center, which has tree trenches incorporated into the sidewalk.

In the summer of 2021, Bhaskar and researchers in her lab, including rising senior Cianna

Quintana, installed the sensors in and around the study sites. Quintana, who grew up and still lives 15 minutes away from the study sites, was shocked at the stark temperature differences from block to block. “We have lots of trees where I live, so even on a really hot day, the shade provides relief,” she says. “But as I commuted to the study sites, I would see fewer trees, and not even a strip of grass in some places. There’s no escape from the heat.” The experience has inspired her to develop a pavement material that will release less heat at night for her senior team project, and to seek a career path in climate resilience.

One of the first things they noticed was a difference in nighttime temperatures based on geography: At night, the temperatures of their study sites in Upper North Philadelphia were nearly 10°F warmer than Chestnut Hill, one of the coolest neighborhoods in the city. While this is less than the daytime disparity (22°F), it provides evidence that nighttime heat should be factored into existing health disparities. It could also account for the sixfold increase in heat-related mortality expected to hit Philadelphia by the end of the century.

They then compared surface temperatures of the green infrastructure sites to their surroundings. On average, the temperatures within both sites were approximately 4°F cooler compared to the adjacent sidewalk at night. The Panati Playground rain garden was more than 10°F cooler than the sidewalk across the street. In fact, the spatial analysis showed that this cooling

effect reached the paved surfaces at the corner of the playground, which were also cooler than the sidewalk across the street. “It suggests that a green stormwater infrastructure’s cooling could have a reach at the level of a city block, but more needs to be done to determine the precise geographic reach,” says Heckert.

“This magnitude of cooling was quite surprising, especially considering how small these green spaces are and how hot the study locations are,” says Bhaskar. “It shows us that, at least on a short time scale, these green tools have a measurable cooling effect at night.”

Engaging City, Community, and Health Stakeholders

Much more needs to be done to build on this work—the team hopes to replicate its findings at other green infrastructure sites in the city and determine their geographic reach of cooling. But it was an important proof-of-concept for how to approach climate change. “We’re dealing with moving targets, so we have to be nimble and action-focused,” says Elaine Montes, who recently joined as a program manager of infrastructure resilience in Philadelphia’s Office of Sustainability. “This means maximizing our resources, and getting buy-in from the agencies that manage those resources.”

The cost of building green stormwater infrastructure can run into the six-figure range, then requires continuous maintenance by grounds crews. It also relies on coordination with the departments of Parks and Recreation and Streets. Because of

silos among government agencies, communication is key. Montes has been working with Bhaskar on developing messaging around their pilot study for key city stakeholders.

For Bhaskar, it has underscored the complexities and roadblocks of government work around climate. But she has appreciated the urgency with which the city has approached this project. “It’s made me realize how vital it is to have civic collaborators for research like this,” she says. “I’m excited to co-design more studies with those who shape climate policy, in the hopes that it translates into action.”

An equally important priority is starting dialogues with the public. “When we were out in the field, nearby residents would sometimes stop and ask what we were doing,” recalls Quintana. Some people were curious; others were mistrustful and worried the green infrastructure would pose a nuisance. But many didn’t even know the city had installed these tools. “Without engaging community members, it’s hard to convince them that a tree is going to have a positive impact. Especially when they are facing so many other stressors.”

Community outreach is one of the main goals of the city’s first Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, announced in February 2022. Bhaskar is one of 17 members who will make recommendations to the mayor’s office and be ambassadors for climate equity. Through the committee, Bhaskar met Mariel Featherstone, a student in the Master of Public Health program at the University of Pennsylvania. There she’s done work with

Eugenia South, MD, showing that urban green spaces significantly improve mental health. She and Bhaskar aim to have conversations out in the community to see if green infrastructure has influenced well-being. “There is a direct link between a person’s surrounding and their mood,” says Featherstone. Violent crime increases on hotter days, and people who face climate-related natural disasters frequently struggle with mental health problems. “Climate change is no longer just an environmental issue, it’s a public health issue.”

Learning From Ecological Resilience

Bhaskar hopes involving other health experts, students, and community members will bring varied perspectives to a multilayered challenge. Her approach is inspired by an ecological concept she studied in her postdoctoral work called response diversity.

The theory describes how diversity can confer resilience: an ecosystem is made up of various species with different properties—some that tolerate drought, some that withstand high temperatures, and others that handle extremely wet conditions. Any one of them might struggle in one of these extreme conditions, but as long as the others thrive, the ecosystem as a whole can still function. “We can learn from how living systems with diverse responses can withstand a changing climate and apply it to engineered systems like green infrastructure,” Bhaskar says.

But she fears we are dangerously close to a tipping

point, a permanent shift that even the most resilient ecosystem will not be able to prevent. “It is urgent that we take action now, or the most vulnerable will continue to pay the price,” she says. “Drawing on different areas of expertise and experiences, we can strive to build equitable climate resilience.” 📌

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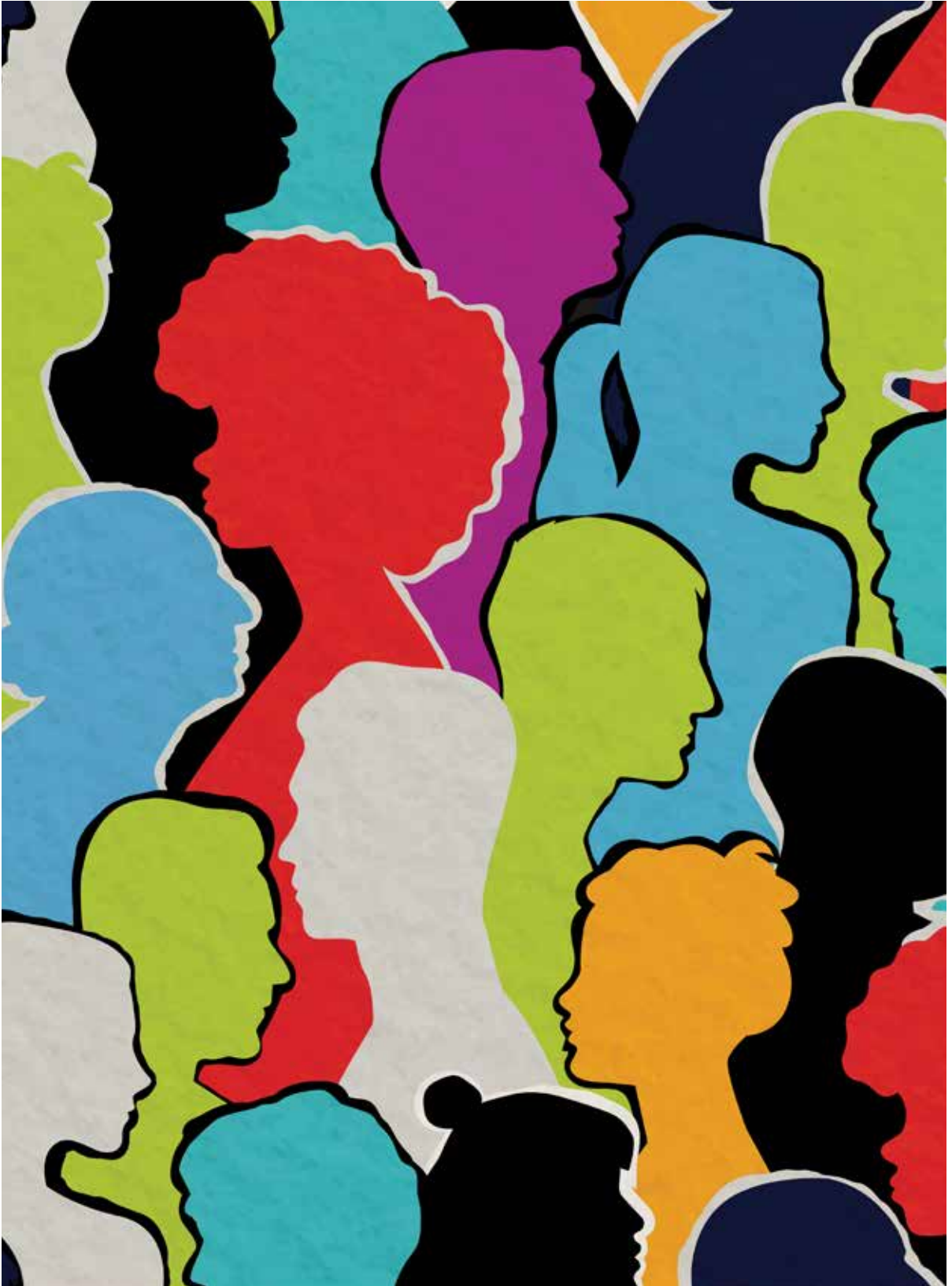
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Humana and Jefferson Announce Collaboration to Advance Health Equity

In March, Humana announced an endowment and current use gift totaling \$15 million to Thomas Jefferson University to advance community health and health equity, and to support Jefferson's population health efforts.

Most of the gift—\$12 million—will be used to fund three endowed positions focused on health equity: a deanship in the College of Population Health (see sidebar), a professorship of community health and equity, and a chief community health and equity office for the health system.


The remaining \$3 million will establish the Humana Insights for Action Fund, which will deploy data analytics and advance research to expand focused interventions, narrow health disparities, and improve access to care for patients. It will also enhance community engagement activities and access to health resources in underserved populations alongside other key partners and bolster evaluation of health equity and population health

efforts, aligning to Humana's larger health equity efforts.

"Our focus at Humana is influencing and enabling an equitable healthcare ecosystem so that every person has a fair, just, and dignified opportunity to reach their full health potential," said J. Nwando Olayiwola, MD, chief health equity officer and senior vice president at Humana. "We are honored to partner with Thomas Jefferson University and Jefferson Health to further the important health equity efforts of this organization. This collaboration demonstrates our shared commitment to advancing community health and health equity and co-creating solutions to address challenges for populations that have historically been marginalized and underserved in healthcare."

Like many major cities in the U.S., Philadelphia has lower health outcomes. With the addition of Humana's robust support, Jefferson's equity efforts will be amplified throughout the region and beyond.

Joseph G. Cacchione, MD, CEO of Jefferson, expressed gratitude for Humana's generosity, which will help the organization further fulfill its mission of improving lives. "Advancing health equity is core to our mission at Jefferson and we look forward to implementing the Humana Insights for Action Fund to enhance our efforts to address health disparities," he said. "This incredible gift will not only bolster the Jefferson College of Population Health, which was established in 2008 as the country's first college of population health, but will advance health equity projects and programming across our entire health system."

This gift by Humana builds on its long-standing commitment to advancing health equity to improve health for its members, patients, and communities by helping to remove structural barriers, improve access to high-quality care, and address social needs that influence health. 



Top left: Baligh R. Yehia, MD, MPP, MSc, FACP, President of Jefferson Health; Top right: Dr. Chad-Everett Allan and Billy Oglesby, PhD; Left: Population Health team at the Investiture Ceremony

Oglesby Named Humana Dean

On May 4, at an investiture ceremony in the Dorrance H. Hamilton Building, Billy Oglesby, PhD, was named the Humana Dean of Jefferson’s College of Population Health (JCPH).

Dr. Oglesby joined Jefferson in 2016, served as interim dean of the College of Population Health starting in 2019, and was appointed dean in 2022. In this role, he works with key leaders across the Jefferson enterprise and with external stakeholders locally, nationally, and globally to develop new academic initiatives that promote healthcare quality and patient safety, improve operational effectiveness and efficiency, and advance public and population health.

“Under Dr. Oglesby’s capable leadership, Jefferson will leverage these new resources to drive meaningful change for Jefferson students and residents in the Greater Philadelphia area,” says university provost Matt Baker. “This is a significant move in a field where our College of Population Health is already established as a leader.”

Oglesby is a population health strategist, scientist, and results-driven leader with more than 20 years of consulting and operational experience improving population health outcomes, leading operational efficiency, and expanding access to prevention and care services. He has worked with a spectrum of health stakeholders to lead meaningful and sustainable population health improvement.

“It is an honor to be named the Humana Dean of Jefferson’s College of Population Health,” says Oglesby. “This strategic partnership with Humana should prove to be transformational for the College and the region. Humana is an ideal partner for this initiative, as its interests align with ours. We will continue to push the work of population health forward to where it needs to be in the future.”

Oglesby holds a PhD in Public Health from the University of South Carolina, where he also completed a master of science in public health. He received his MBA from Kent State University and completed the Advanced Finance Program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.



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KIMBERLEE DOUGLAS

PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

More than 80% of the U.S. population lives in cities, and that number is expected to grow. With that increased urbanization comes a shift in the landscape and the loss of forests, grasslands, and other natural areas. For many people living in cities, the main access to nature is in the form of urban green spaces like parks, gardens, and walking trails. This matters because studies show that people who spend as little as two hours in nature each week report higher levels of wellbeing compared to those who don't.

Unfortunately, the access to urban green spaces is not equitable. A recent report of the U.S. showed that “in the 100 most populated cities, neighborhoods where most residents identify as Black, Hispanic and Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native or Asian American and Pacific Islander have access to an average of 44% less park acreage than predominantly white neighborhoods.” Another report showed that 70% of low-income communities also live in areas lacking green spaces.

Researchers like Kimberlee Douglas, director of landscape architecture at Jefferson's College of Architecture and Built Environment are working with communities to repurpose urban vacant lots into low-cost, high-quality green spaces in under-resourced neighborhoods. Read on to learn more about her projects and research goals.



BY KARUNA MEDA

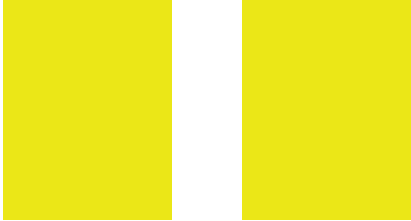
■ What are your research interests?

KD: I am interested in connecting children with nature—research suggests there are a myriad of benefits for children from being outdoors, yet these experiences are often isolated and exclusive (think ecological injustice). I started this research with wanting to bring nature into the everyday life of urban youth by using contiguous vacant lots to create a network of high-quality outdoor spaces.

Children are growing up in a very different world than their parents; one of the most significant differences is most children, in urban areas or otherwise, do not engage with, or have access to, nature. What is necessary to succeed in life is not only excelling in tests but also developing skill sets such as perseverance, curiosity, optimism, and self-control. All of these are skills that can be learned from the outdoors—children learn all sorts of skills maneuvering a log or watching an ant drag food back to its nest or identifying what bird is singing—unfortunately children in under-resourced and low-income communities lack stimulating and safe outdoor environments. There is a movement to develop “green” playgrounds in schools, but we feel more needs to be done to provide these environments in a contiguous green network where children can be immersed in nature. We feel this has huge implications for combating poverty by empowering children to achieve self-sufficiency through contact with nature, their neighbors, and their neighborhood resources. These spaces will help in developing skills necessary for lifelong success.

■ What’s one project in which you are exploring your research goals?

KD: I developed the Park in a Truck (PiaT) initiative as well as the Park Ambassador (PA) Program. PiaT is a community-operated green network, established through low-cost, fast-turnaround renovations of vacant lots, that not only improves environmental, social, and physical health in under-resourced neighborhoods, but also unites efforts to keep them intact and helps residents lead revitalization and reinvestment efforts. This open space initiative builds upon the ongoing community development work of many



We are now working hand in hand to improve the neighborhood and I continue to engage with them on what improvements or programs they are interested in adding to the community.

great organizations by repurposing underutilized spaces to fill in the gaps. No one should ever be far from a safe, high-quality green space.

The Park Ambassador is a paid intern whose role is to be an advocate, educator, manager, and liaison for the parks. The PA’s role is to ensure the success of the park by creating an environment that welcomes the community and manages the park’s maintenance and programs. The PA provides information on the park’s design and implementation, provides daily maintenance, and assists in rule enforcement and programming for park events.

■ **What first sparked your interest in this work?**

KD: Touring Philadelphia schoolyards and realizing most playgrounds were asphalt and chain link fencing. At the time I worked for a large design firm and did not often do local design projects. I realized I wanted to work with communities to co-create natural green play-spaces and outdoor environments for neighborhoods most in need.

■ **What's a unique fact, surprising statistic, or a myth about your study subject?**

KD: That those in the urban environment don't think "nature" is important or necessary for their children. And while Philadelphia boasts that 95% of their residents have a park within a 10-minute walking distance, many of those so-called parks are unusable.

One core value for our work is that we do not "hit and run," but continue to serve the community in a variety of capacities, depending on where they are in the process of creating equitable accessible green space. We keep showing up until that trust is established. For instance, while working in Mantua, the location of the first Park in a Truck, it took me three months to get my foot in the door—the area and its community have been over-studied and overpromised and did not trust anything I had to offer. We are now working hand in hand to improve the neighborhood, and I continue to engage with them on what improvements or programs they are interested in adding to the community.

Since that first park was built, we have developed an open-source Park in a Truck toolkit so people of all abilities can turn local empty lots into parks. The toolkit gives detailed, step-by-step instructions on the park design, build, and maintenance. The goal is to translate the toolkit into different languages and expand the Park in a Truck program nationally.

■ **Is there a piece of advice that stuck with you or that you try to pass on to young researchers?**

KD: While we often hear "follow your passion," which in my case was how PiaT came about, our interests change and we need to possibly follow many "passions" in order to find a trajectory of research. Engage in exploratory activities—it's fun and may lead to a great idea! 🍷

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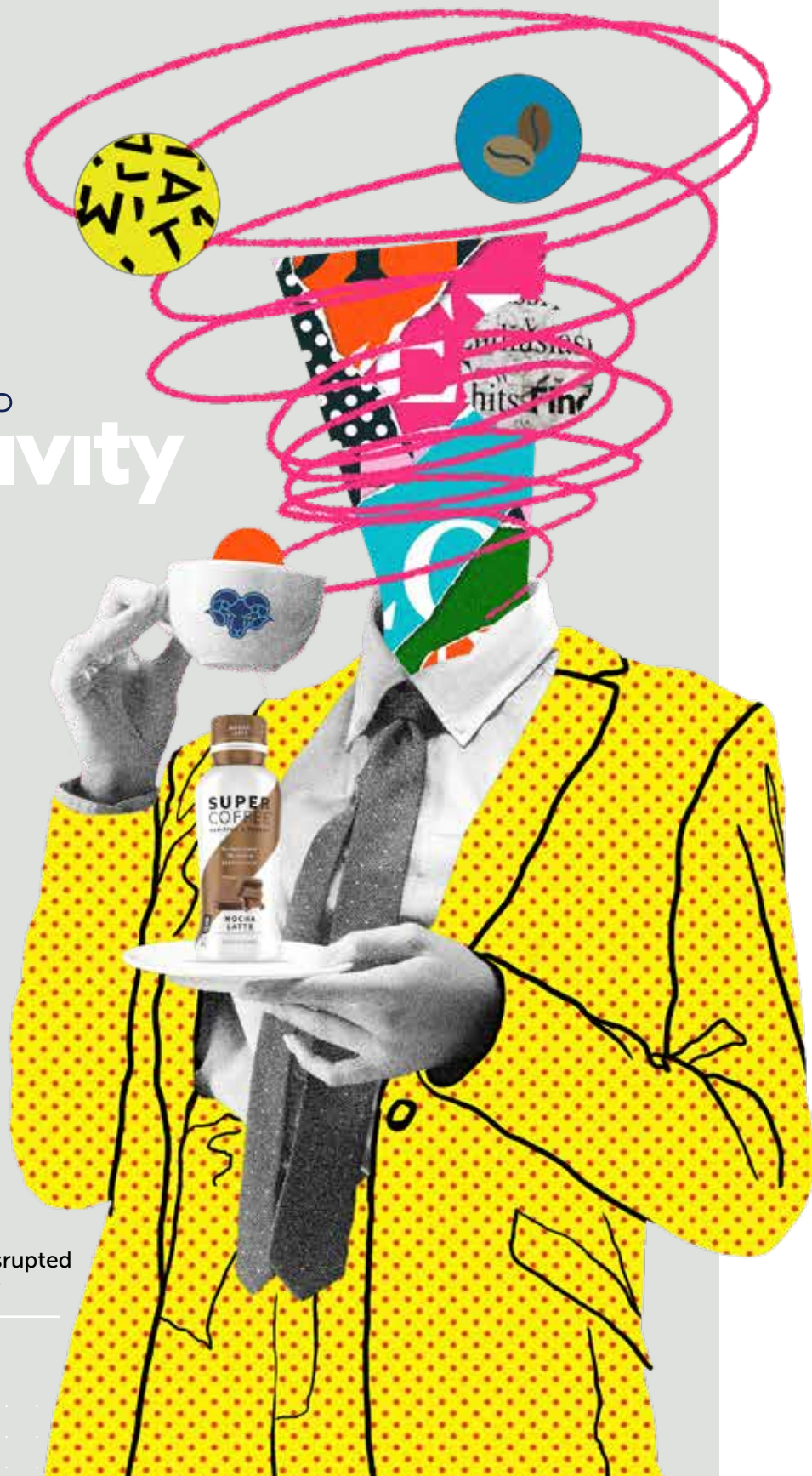
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How Super Coffee Disrupted
the Beverage Industry

BY KASEY SHAW

Maybe you've seen them lining the shelves of your local grocery store—or perhaps you've already tried the ready-made keto coffee drink for yourself—either way, there are grounds to be excited for the third-largest pick-me-up-potion on the market today. Super Coffee is perking up the industry, emerging as a fresh yet formidable contender against long-established java juggernauts like Starbucks and Dunkin'.

The idea for the enhanced coffee concoction first percolated in an East Falls dorm room back in 2015, inspired by a feeling any first-year student could relate to: Student-athlete and business major Jordan DeCicco was tired.

Early morning basketball practices for the point guard and extensive study sessions took a toll on him. Searching for a healthy way to stay alert and focused throughout his long days, Jordan was disheartened by what was available. Sugar-laden, nutritionally-dense options dominated the caffeinated beverage market.

That's when Jordan took matters into his own hands, and his blender.

In his dorm room, with the help of his older brothers, Jimmy and Jake, he blended protein with coffee and incorporated healthy fats from coconut oil.

"At the time, it didn't taste too great, but it provided me with energy and was a healthier choice," recalls Jordan. "That's how it all began."

Despite the initial taste imperfections, the brew fueled Jordan and motivated him to

provide a health-conscious alternative to existing products. How many people, he wondered, were searching for the same thing?

Jordan found himself on a quest to perfect his recipe. He enlisted his basketball teammates as willing—but brutally honest—taste testers.

"They told me it didn't taste good, and I realized that it had to taste fantastic and be good for you; it couldn't just be healthy," laughs Jordan. "I was okay with failing. Sometimes it was funny, sometimes it was a little hard, but it helped me make the product better."

Jordan then sought valuable guidance from professors and made the most of the resources available at the Blackstone Launchpad on campus. He forged beneficial partnerships with local food scientists, including the Rutgers Food Innovation Lab, which then served as an external partner for the University. These collaborations played an instrumental role in crafting the early formulations of Super Coffee. Although the recipes have undergone significant evolution and improvement since then, this cooperative journey taught Jordan invaluable lessons in formulating and adhering to stringent food safety requirements.

Jordan left school after his first year to focus on the business, and by 2016 Super Coffee had found its footing and launched as a full-bodied brand. The company boasted a trio of employees, none other than the DeCicco brothers. Jimmy, the eldest of the siblings, took charge of branding efforts,

assuming the role of chief brand officer. Jake, the middle brother, oversaw all sales endeavors as the chief revenue officer. Jordan, the youngest of the three, held the titles of founder and chief operating officer, spearheading the operational aspects of the business.

A year later, in 2017, the company picked up its first non-relative employee.

It was a good thing that they did, too—as it would turn out, the brothers and Super Coffee would need all the help they could get in the years to come, as they could never anticipate the surprises and successes that awaited them.



It's difficult to discern what's more embedded within the DeCicco DNA—entrepreneurship, competitiveness, or coffee—but it's clear all three come naturally to the brothers.

Hailing from Kingston, New York, the sibling squad was raised by sports-loving parents who imparted values that transcended athletic prowess and monetary achievements. Kindness, compassion, and humility took precedence, allowing the brothers the freedom to express themselves fully.

"For three boys who grew up close in age and highly competitive, we had much to learn along the way," Jordan admits. "We weren't born entrepreneurs, but the way we were raised allowed us to become entrepreneurs."

During the early stages of Super Coffee, the brothers



▲ Left to right: Mike Loudon, Jr., Coach Jimmy Reilly, and Jordan DeCicco



dabbled in every aspect of the company, resulting in a lack of structure and organization. The clash of opinions often led to moments of chaos as they navigated the steep learning curve inherent in running a business.

“As executives, we had to treat each other like executives to benefit our consumers and people,” says Jordan. “It took a couple of years to figure that out.”

In 2019, the brothers stepped out onto a national stage, landing an appearance on the hit ABC show “Shark Tank.”

Super Coffee’s pitch for their product was compelling, a tantalizing promise of a healthier, low-calorie alternative to traditional coffee offerings enriched with nourishing ingredients such as protein, MCT oil, and antioxidants. Their product range encompassed ready-to-drink bottles, creamers, and grounds, featuring robust and captivating

flavors like vanilla, mocha, and hazelnut, catering to individuals seeking a convenient and nutritious option for their active lifestyles.

Although the panel of investors did not strike a deal, they were impressed with Super Coffee and the creator-siblings.

“You’re enormously disciplined, and you have high energy,” businesswoman and shark Barbara Corcoran told the brothers. “It’s obvious how you feel about your product.”

“You’ve got a great name that’s eye-catching and will make people interested,” entrepreneur Mark Cuban added.

Reflecting on the experience, Jordan thinks of it as nothing short of unbelievable.

“Not striking a deal was a combination of the sharks not loving the concept of the product as much as we thought they would, and then us asking for a higher enterprise valuation on the business that they thought would be acceptable for their investment,” explains Jordan. “I think we could’ve gotten the deal done if we lowered the enterprise valuation they were asking for, but it turned out to be the best thing ever.”

Despite not earning an investment, Jordan credits the substantial viewership of 8 million for the pivotal growth that Super Coffee experienced in the aftermath of the episode.

“Shark Tank gave us the publicity we wanted and needed at the time to grow the brand,” he says. “It was a pivotal turning point in our trajectory.”



I was okay with failing. Sometimes it was funny, sometimes it was a little hard, but it helped me make the product better.

The brand's success continued through 2019 as Super Coffee expanded from a team of four employees to 85, and the DeCicco brothers gained recognition for their business prowess by being featured in Forbes's coveted "30 Under 30" list.

By 2023, the business had grown even further, employing over 100 full- and part-time staff members. The company experienced a remarkable surge of 106% during the same year, achieving \$55 million in revenue. This impressive growth attracted the attention of over a thousand investors, including celebrities such as Jennifer Lopez, Patrick Schwarzenegger, and Jordan's childhood idol, Aaron Rodgers, resulting in Super Coffee garnering a valuation of \$400 million.

But Super Coffee isn't stopping there.

According to Jordan, the key to their prosperity lies in their staunch commitment to prioritizing their customers and employees.

People first, always," Jordan emphasizes. "It's all about the people."

While the customer's needs are paramount, so too are the needs of the company's internal team. Jordan is quick to add that, as a leader, it is crucial to take care of your employees' safety, security, and comfort to help them succeed in their roles, but it is equally as important to support them outside of their professional responsibilities.

"If you're a leader or an entrepreneur, just realize that, yes, you started the company, but you will not be the reason the company is successful," says Jordan. "It will be the culmination of people that you have on your team."

In line with the unconventional approach that propelled them to success, the DeCicco brothers and Super Coffee continue challenging and disrupting the status quo.

"Being disruptive means taking risks and being at the forefront of developing new concepts and products, and not being afraid to launch them," says Jordan. "Ultimately, you have to try new things. It's going to be hard, you're going to learn new lessons, but that's the cost that you pay for living on

the frontier and creating new things."

Many of his lessons on disruption and business Jordan attributes to his time as a Ram, where he acquired mentorship from professors and built a supportive network of peers.

"When you get together with students and actually are challenged to create concepts or theses and actually do the work to prep getting ready for a business, and then researching businesses that actually were successful and how they became successful was very valuable and eye-opening," he says. "Because I was creating my business at the same time...I think [this] propelled me to actually start the company."

In spring 2023, Jordan returned to East Falls with alumnus Mike Loudon Jr., the vice president of divisional sales for Kitu Life Super Brands, to offer advice for aspiring Jefferson entrepreneurs.

"Right now, while you're in school, the time is to ideate," he said. "Find a problem you want to work on that's important to you. The four years here, and the four years after school, are the best years to try something. Enjoy the time you're here—it's going to fly by. So, leverage your network, leverage the time that you have, put the work in, and learn as much as you can." 📌

AN HISTORIC PRECEDENT

William A. Finn '67 establishes two historic endowments
BY IRISA GOLD



▲ *William A. Finn '67*

“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means.”

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

From his time as a textile engineering student at what was then called Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science to today, alumnus William A. Finn '67's vision for where his alma mater would—and could—go has been limitless. Thanks to his continued generosity and infinite imagination, Finn is setting an exciting example of the power of philanthropy—and possibility—ahead of Jefferson's upcoming Bicentennial celebration.

A committed alum and early advocate and champion of the Kanbar College of Design, Engineering, and Commerce, Finn has generously created two historic endowments—the William A. Finn '67 Director of the Design, Engineering and Commerce (DEC) Core Curriculum and the William A. Finn '67 Student Leadership Program.

Finn's remarkable gift is literally making history. Prior to the merger, there had never been an endowed professorship donated to Textile or PhilaU. The Finn Directorship of the DEC Core Curriculum will be the first on the East Falls campus. It is also the first professorship endowed as part of the Bicentennial campaign. Current program director Dana Scott will be named as the inaugural holder. A multidisciplinary artist and accomplished

educator, Scott has exercised the leadership to modernize and update the DEC Core Curriculum to address several Hallmarks learning outcomes, satisfy the university Creativity Core requirement, and anticipate future university Computational Thinking requirements.

Akin to a leadership institute or honors program, the unique Finn Student Leadership Program will provide academically talented, driven, and intellectually curious Kanbar College students three years of substantive curricular and co-curricular experiences in organizational leadership, innovation, and creativity, ensuring direct and meaningful contact with faculty, outstanding peers, and industry leaders. A cohort of 10 individuals will be selected starting in their sophomore year, using the DEC Core Curriculum as a mechanism for identifying leadership potential, with the ultimate goal of better preparing them for their roles as the next generation of industry leaders in their chosen professions.

Growing up in Milton, Massachusetts, Finn came by his interest in textiles organically, through his family's business. "My grandfather was a very successful, self-made textile mill owner in Canton, Massachusetts," he says. "From a very young age, I wanted to study textiles. Starting at age five, I used to go to the mill with my father, who worked there at the time."

For Finn, a self-billed "engineer at heart," Textile was a perfect fit. "I had a great experience studying textile engineering," he shares. "I learned a lot not only about my field, but also

about leadership, and about myself. I was involved in many different activities on campus. As president of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, I formed great friendships, and still stay in touch with my classmates. All of that is probably what led me to engage in a lot of different community activities throughout my career."

During his junior and senior years, Finn worked as a lab technician as an intern for Asten Hill, an industrial textile company. In the early 1970s following graduate school and a year-long stint in the Army, Finn returned to work for two years at Celanese Corporation, a fiber manufacturing company, followed by a return to Asten Hill, which became AstenJohnson, where he remained for 54 years, the rest of his career. "It was never boring!" he says. "I was hired to be plant manager, which began my career in management. I loved it. I went on to be national sales manager, general manager at one of the big divisions in the company, and then was invited to be CEO."

The Philadelphia-based company grew and prospered under Finn's leadership, and today is a global business headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina, with 17 plants located across the world. "We grew the brand globally and I was always reinventing myself and reinventing the company," he shares.

No matter where in the world Finn's career took him, his connection—and commitment—to Jefferson never wavered. "I learned from Jefferson that education doesn't finish when you leave—it continues," he says. His leadership, advocacy,

and early championship for the collaborative academic model were instrumental in helping to create the Kanbar College, ushering in an exciting era of innovation on campus with the adoption of the DEC Core Curriculum.

"From the first time I heard about the vision for the DEC program, I was a supporter," Finn shares. "I loved it when I heard it. Higher education is full of silos, and this was an attempt to structurally break them down. I know the importance of having well-rounded young leaders that are willing to step out of their traditional career lanes and take on new responsibilities that will help build management and leadership skills. The best, the brightest, the most productive people that I ever had worked with were cross-functional and weren't educated in silos. Starting this process as an undergraduate gives DEC graduates a big advantage in their careers. The program provides a more well-rounded education, particularly to go into the business field."

Finn's generosity, ambassadorship, and advocacy on behalf of the Kanbar College have been instrumental not only in its creation, but also in the ongoing success and future of the program. "I think the excitement was the opportunity to fundamentally change education, and to look at a different approach in developing very good leaders," he says. "People are looking for students with a professional education, and we are on the forefront. This is going to move history forward for the school and its students."

"Bill's gift is a reflection of his conviction and leadership in

the Design, Engineering, and Commerce curriculum and the promise it holds for the success of our students," says Geoffrey Cromarty, EdD, senior vice president of operations for the East Falls campus. "This transformative gift will truly help to change lives for the better."

Finn served on the board of trustees of Philadelphia University from 2008 to 2018, was vice chair of the board from 2012 to 2018 at the time of the merger with Jefferson, and continued on with the Jefferson board for a short time thereafter. He also served on the Jefferson Academic Board, the Sigma Phi Epsilon Scholarship Committee, and is a member of the Tapestry Society. Jefferson recognized his stalwart leadership and dedication, bestowing the Leader of Innovation Medal at the 2014 Celebration of Innovation and the Graham J. Littlewood III '42 Time, Talent, & Treasure Award in 2017.

The creation of the William A. Finn '67 Directorship and Student Leadership Program endowments was inspired by his own Jefferson experience. "As an undergraduate I was very grateful for the scholarships I received to assist with my tuition," he explains. "I always said to myself that if I was ever in a position to do the same, I would do so in honor of the people, organizations, and alumni who funded my scholarships several generations ago."

"Bill's personal and professional journey is an exemplar of how a strong

transdisciplinary education can lead to a rewarding, impactful, and enjoyable career path that will positively impact a wide range of people," says Ron Kander, PhD, executive dean of the Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce. "His support of the Kanbar

As an undergraduate I was very grateful for the scholarships I received to assist with my tuition. I always said to myself that if I was ever in a position to do the same, I would do so in honor of the people, organizations, and alumni who funded my scholarships several generations ago.

College Leadership Program will encourage our current and future students to pursue equally meaningful career paths using Bill's own story as their inspiration."

Finn's gifts have set significant precedents for Jefferson with the potential to touch generations of students. "I'm honored to fund the first

endowed professorship as part of the Bicentennial campaign and the first one on the East Falls campus," he says. "I hope it will be followed by many, many more. Jefferson is about the excellent, dedicated faculty that make a lasting impact on their students' lives and their careers. Life starts with the first steps, and my hope is that this will be the first of many endowed chairs in the years to come. Strong faculties are the backbone of great universities."

He shares, "Students of today will face many new complex challenges that will require them to become strong leaders. I hope that the Student Leadership Program will expose a group of highly engaged students to many different leaders and leadership styles who are making a difference and leading the way to a more just and sustainable future."

"The ability for me to help support Jefferson in this initiative and to fund the directorship and leadership program as part of it, is, I think, enormous," he shares. "Providing the funding is really essential to make sure that we're building something that will last and make a fundamental difference for the graduates and the people that go through this program. It's an incredible opportunity for young people to learn leadership skills in a way that they just wouldn't have had. Basically, it is about education, but also the ability to help organize, motivate, and guide people; create a vision; create a mission; and get excited about it." 🍷



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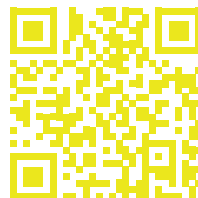
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ROUNDUP



Q&A with Sarah Doelp '19 Pre-Medicine

Q: How does what you learned as an athlete affect your life currently?

A: Being an athlete taught me a lot about time management and prioritization. Managing both athletics and studying in college required me to focus and put full effort into rowing while at practice and races, and my studies while in the classroom. Success in both academics and athletics also required a strong work ethic. These skills have carried me throughout my life and led me to continually seek out challenging opportunities, and I would not have been successful throughout my career and graduate education without them.

Q: What is your fondest memory of life on campus?

A: Living close to all of my friends and teammates gave me memories I will never forget. I miss being able to study, grab dinner, hang out in each other's dorms, and experience college life with some of my lifelong friends.

Q: What is your fondest memory as an athlete?

A: My fondest memory as an athlete was my entire senior season. This was not only my personal best season, but our team was also extremely successful as a whole. We were able to travel a lot for various regattas and our NCAA championship. My final boat included girls from all different years, and together we had such a positive attitude, pushing each other to do our best. It was such a good ending to my college rowing career.

Q: What do you believe is the greatest challenge facing athletes today?

A: I believe that one of the biggest challenges athletes face today is perfectionism. The expectations to be successful in the classroom and be the best athlete in their respective sport are mostly internal, but there are outside pressures that make this even harder to overcome. It is so easy to become hard on oneself and expect more, but I think athletes need to remind themselves that they are human, and can only do so much. They should aim to always do their best, but be aware of their limits.



Q: Describe a time that a coach/teammate/mentor inspired you.

A: It is hard to pick just one instance where a coach or teammate inspired me. Teammates are encouraging in almost all sports, but it is especially true of rowing due to its nature. During most of the time we spent upstairs in Gallagher in the erg room I was inspired by my entire team. If you have never used a rowing machine, it is very exhausting, and if you are doing a difficult workout, you rely on the encouragement of your teammates to push you through. During so many practices, my mind was telling me to quit, and my teammates not only recognized this, but knew how to encourage me to continue and improve more than I thought possible. My three years on the team were spent with many, many teammates and coaches who inspired me more than I can briefly describe.

Q: Do you have a message to share with current student athletes?

A: You are capable of much more than you think. A lot of the barriers you face in athletics are mental, but you can push yourself further than you may believe. When you get overwhelmed, remember to breathe, and refocus on your overall goal.

Q: What are you up to now? (career, family, hobbies)

A: I just started my first year of medical school at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. I accepted the HPSP scholarship for the U.S. Navy, so I will work as a naval physician after graduation.



21st Annual Robert C. Lockyer '68 Golf Invitational

On June 12, 2023, we welcomed 85 golfers to Green Valley Country Club for the 21st Annual Robert C. Lockyer '68 Golf Invitational.

With the incredible support of our golfers and sponsors, this year we have once again raised more than \$50,000. Looking back on its amazing history, the Lockyer Invitational has raised more than \$750,000 in support of Jefferson Athletics and student financial aid since its inception!

Our students and their families feel the direct impact of your support. Funds raised have provided students with much-needed scholarships, allowing them to focus less on paying for school and more on making the most of the opportunities Jefferson offers. For our student-athletes, this event provides operational support ensuring that every team has the vital resources needed to compete to their best ability. 🍷



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22nd Annual Robert C. Lockyer '68 Golf Invitational

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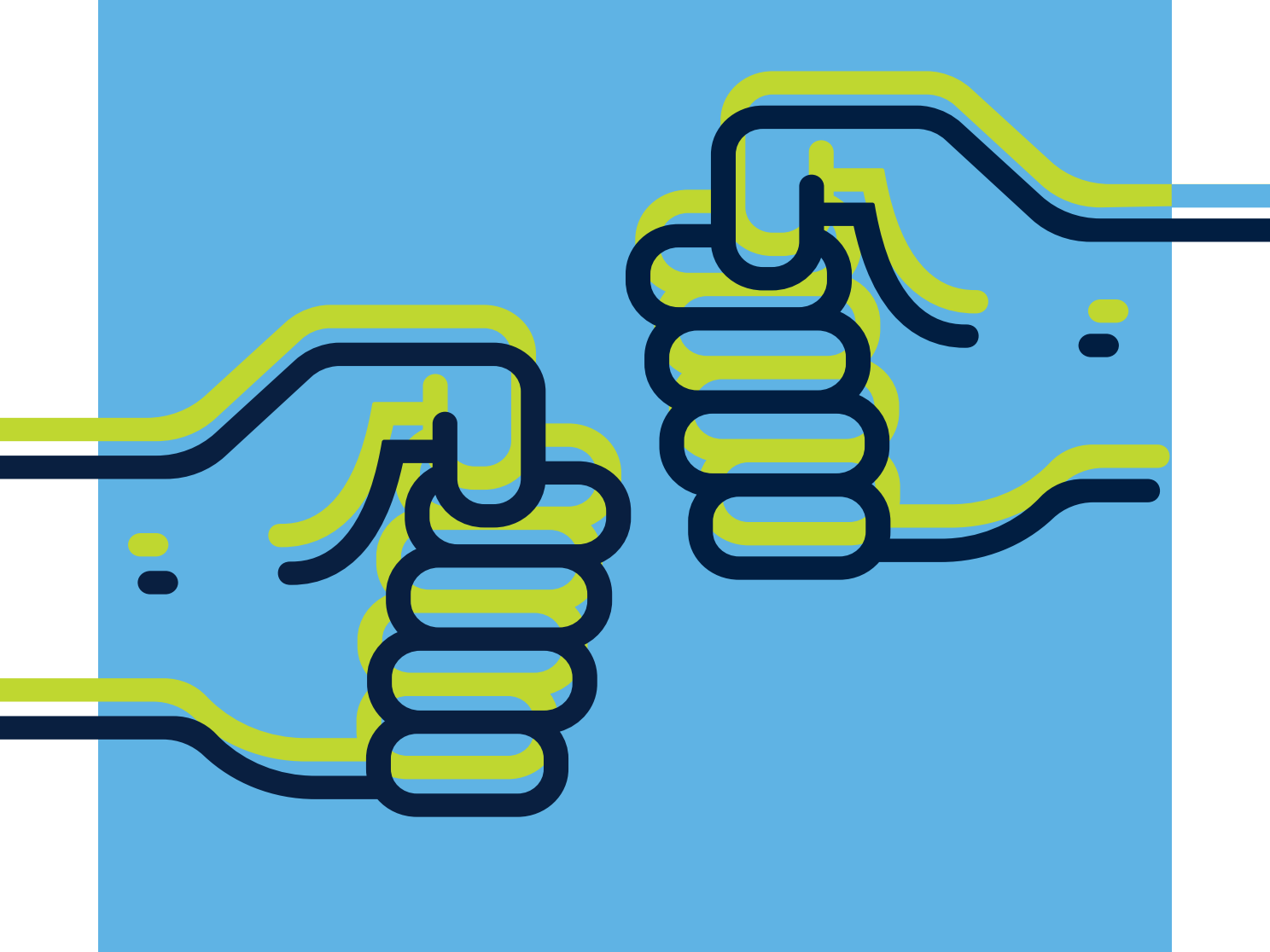


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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

12 a.m. - 11:59 p.m.



BROTHERHOOD'S ENDURING LEGACY

The History of Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity at Thomas Jefferson University

"Brotherhood is an ideal better understood by example than precept!"
—Thomas Carlyle, British essayist, historian, and philosopher

BY IRISA GOLD

The Sigma Phi Epsilon (SigEp) fraternity's illustrious history at Jefferson can be traced back to chapters at both Jefferson Medical College (now Sidney Kimmel Medical College) as well as Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. And although the fraternity is no longer active on either campus, its proud legacy is alive and well, thanks to the devotion of active, passionate alumni whose members have made it their mission to give back to their beloved alma mater and its current students.

Jefferson's first SigEp Chapter played an important role in the national fraternity's early years. Washington & Jefferson College, a private liberal arts college in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, and the site of the fraternity's third national chapter, established a medical department in Philadelphia, which would evolve into Thomas Jefferson University. From there, Jefferson's first SigEp chapter and the country's seventh, originally known as the Delta Beta Chapter, was established in 1903. All of the members were medical students.

"I'm very interested in the Chapter's history," says inaugural SigEp Pennsylvania Omicron Alumni Chapter president and current secretary Michael Costello '89, a textile engineering major. "From

the early days, the national office published a magazine, SigEp Journal. It was literally a collection of letters from the different chapters. Every quarter, each chapter would write a letter to the national office, and they would publish it in the Journal. What we know of Pennsylvania Delta Beta is from their letters. It's very interesting reading from a very different time."

The SigEp Journal's 1907 and 1908 editions reported important news about Jefferson's earliest Chapter. The October 1907 edition's news on that year's Conclave's revision of the fraternity Ritual, a secret ceremony performed when inducting new brothers as members of the fraternity that focuses on the fraternity's founding principles of Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love, revealed that ideas submitted by brothers from Delta Beta were adopted and reflect the Ritual as it is known today. In addition, Jefferson hosted the fraternity's third Conclave, and the first grand historian was a brother from Jefferson. The Delta Beta Chapter was renamed the Pennsylvania Beta chapter following a new naming convention first quoted in the Journal's October 1908 issue.

However, the Beta Chapter's soaring trajectory was short lived. In the fall of 1909, tragedy struck at Jefferson's football rival Medico-Chirurgial, when a student

died from a concussion in a game against the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy. The fallout resulted in football's ban at both Jefferson and Medico-Chi, a crushing blow to the Betas, who had three brothers on the team and celebrated the rivalry game between Jefferson and Medico-Chi as their event of the year. In addition, discussions at the sixth Conclave posited that medical schools were "out of place" in the fraternity, an insurmountable issue for Jefferson as purely a medical school. This sounded the death knell for the group, and notwithstanding the fact that it clearly played a critical part in SigEp's early years, it was only active until 1912.

The next chapter of Jefferson's SigEp story continues a little more than 50 years later on the East Falls Campus of Philadelphia College of Textiles and Sciences. The textile industry, which had traditionally been headquartered in the North, moved south. In response to the dramatic shift in location, Northern schools dropped most of their textile courses.

The future of fraternities on campuses like Textile began to unravel. The Phi Psi fraternity, whose Alpha Chapter resided on Textile's campus, introduced new restrictions on membership via the national office, requiring that all members be textile majors. This was a challenge, given

that at that time, the Chapter included members who majored in other courses of study, such as business administration, and these new restrictions would eliminate their membership eligibility. This policy shift sparked an idea—starting a new, separate, social fraternity on campus, and moving Phi Psi to a strictly honorary professional textile fraternity. Phi Psi’s Alpha Chapter decided to form a committee in the spring of 1962 to research possible social fraternities to colonize.

The following fall, Philip Spanninger ’65, a double major in chemistry and textile chemistry, was named its chairman. The group collected a list of 13 possible fraternities to investigate. “We looked at all kinds of fraternities that would carry on our culture, values, and ideals, and we narrowed it down to two, Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) and Sigma Phi Epsilon,” he says. “During the process, I

married my wife Janet. She was very much involved and was my typist.”

“We decided on Sigma Phi Epsilon because it had the requirements that we felt were important to us as a group,” Spanninger shares. After voting in April 1963, the committee sent a petition for colonization to SigEp National headquarters in Richmond, Virginia, in June. There was still no word on the request upon the students’ return to school in September, but on October 22, the group was elated to receive a letter notifying them that the petition had been accepted.

“This allowed us to organize ourselves,” Spanninger continues. “We put together the organization, I became president of the Colony, and we initiated a pledge class.” On November 15, 1963, the new fraternity was announced to other students and fraternities at the college. The Inter-Fraternity Council was approached to recognize Sigma Phi Epsilon as a competitive fraternity on campus and to note Phi Psi’s move to an honorary fraternity. “My wife and I sewed together bedsheets into a banner, spray-painted the SigEp announcement, and hung it from Althouse Hall, which was the gymnasium at the time,” Spanninger recalls. “Everybody could see it, and we had a lot of cooperation from faculty members, especially the head of athletics.”

The founding slate of officers included Spanninger as president as well as vice president Joseph Burke ’65, treasurer Philip Jawski ’66, and secretary Kenneth Takvorian

’65. The fraternity’s launch was a bit rocky, and a few members dropped off. Nevertheless, just two weeks later the group was formally installed as a colony by leadership from Sigma Phi Epsilon’s national office.

In February 1964, elections were held for new officers. The updated roster included Spanninger as president, Takvorian as vice president, Don Careatti ’66 as secretary, Walter Ruemmler ’66 as comptroller, and Roger Fetterman ’66 as recorder. The Colony petitioned to become a Chapter in April of 1964, and a 22-member pledge class was inducted that May.

The petition was approved, the Colony became a Chapter and the Charter was signed on November 14, 1964. On that day, members of the Pennsylvania Delta (University of Pennsylvania) and Pennsylvania Epsilon (Lehigh University) initiated their new fraternity brothers in a ritualistic ceremony, and that evening the Sigma Phi Epsilon’s grand president presented the Charter of the Pennsylvania Omicron Chapter, installing Chapter officers. Omicron became the ninth SigEp Chapter in Pennsylvania and the third in Philadelphia. The installation was followed by the Sweetheart’s Ball, a celebration and fundraiser for the Heart Fund. “We held these fundraisers and community service projects because the symbol of Sigma Phi Epsilon is a heart,” shares Spanninger.

The Pennsylvania Omicron Chapter remained active for about 35 years, initiating approximately 416 brothers in

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that time. The final pledge class, consisting of two brothers, was initiated about 25 years ago, on October 18, 1998. Unfortunately, as the Chapter struggled to maintain the minimum number of undergraduate brothers required, it was forced to disband, returning the Charter to the national office.

Although the fraternity is no longer active on campus, its dynamic alumni remain involved. Today, there are more than 300 living alumni of the SigEp Omicron Chapter, with an active board dedicated to partnering with Jefferson in keeping the alumni connection alive through regular communication and engagement.

For Alumni Association Chapter President Christopher Padova '89, a business major, his time as a SigEp brother extended far beyond his years at Textile, and the caring, compassion, and camaraderie have been a constant even until today. "I have had such wonderful experience as a member and brother of

Sigma Phi Epsilon," he says. "I met a lot of wonderful people, and still keep in touch with some of them. I had the opportunity to serve on the Executive Committee as the comptroller. I was also afforded the honor of being one of two students to be part of the committee to write the very first anti-harassment policy."

"During school, I'd gotten extremely sick, and the brothers came to my bedside to make sure I was doing okay after a major surgery," he shares. "I've had Crohn's disease for 44 years, and even to this day the core group of people I keep in touch with have been so helpful and compassionate, constantly checking in on me and my family. I'm really grateful for all the love, camaraderie, and brotherhood they have shown me throughout the years. It's been such a long time, and they're still there."

Padova's dedication to giving back was spurred by his time as a SigEp brother. He continues,



"One of the main things that I learned through everything that we've done as a fraternity is to give to others, and I've tried to do that throughout my life."

"To me, the reason the fraternity is important is lifelong friendships," says Costello. "My memory of college is a time that I really enjoyed. The fraternity was an important part of that. My pledge class was one of the largest in SigEp history, and I was vice president my senior year. I have lots of memories of fraternity meetings and get-togethers. The rituals and things we did together as a group drove the team feeling among us. Today, all of the people I stay in contact with from college as well as two of my best friends are fraternity brothers. The idea of brotherhood is important, and has resulted in lasting friendships."

Costello works with the rest of the alumni Chapter Board to keep alumni active, involved, and connected with their alma mater. "We try to organize something around Homecoming and host various events throughout the year, not only in the Philadelphia area, but other



states as well,” he says. “Since COVID we usually hold monthly meetings via WebEx.”

He shares, “One of the fraternity’s founding principles is brotherhood, brotherly love, and lifelong friendships. In general, most brothers involved with the alumni association have remained in contact with their fraternity brothers 30—even 40 or 50—years after they graduated. Even if you haven’t talked to someone in 20 years, if you get a phone call from somebody it’s like you talked to him yesterday.”

The Omicron Chapter’s commitment to a legacy of brotherhood and making a

difference is still going strong. Spanniger’s leadership and commitment to Jefferson came full circle almost 50 years following his championship of the founding of the Chapter when in 2014, he chaired a committee launching an endowed Sigma Phi Epsilon Scholarship Fund at Jefferson with the goal of raising \$50,000 in celebration of the Chapter’s launch 50 years prior.

Designed to benefit deserving students on the Jefferson East Falls campus who demonstrate financial need and model the SigEp philosophy of developing promising young leaders, the scholarship requires that to

be considered, candidates should embody leadership and service, and be active in student organizations and activities. The Chapter’s dedicated alumni have far exceeded their initial fundraising goal, and the scholarship has already raised more than \$150,000.

Christopher Padova sums up the powerful legacy of Jefferson’s Sigma Phi Epsilon Omicron Chapter: “That love and that camaraderie goes from era to era, all the way down the line.”



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It's true — and thanks to tax-law changes, you have several attractive options that will support our mission and secure your legacy!

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If you'd like to help Thomas Jefferson University and avoid tax liability on required minimum distributions from your IRA, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) might be the answer. If you are at least 70½, you may transfer up to \$100,000 each year directly to Jefferson. Because we're a qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you will not pay tax on the distribution.

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Lisa Repko

Vice President, Thomas Jefferson University and Planned Giving

Office of Institutional Advancement

Thomas Jefferson University and

Jefferson Health

215-955-0437

plannedgiving@jefferson.edu

jefferson.plannedgiving.org

1964
STEPHEN KAUFFMAN, MD
 Medicine

I divide my time between Virginia and Florida. Since retiring 11 years ago, I have decided that every day is Sunday—no more wake-up calls.

1970
JERRY WAYNE NEWSOME
 Textile

Happily retired.

1972
RONALD METCOFF
 Accounting and Economics

I was listed in the 2021 edition of Who's Who in America, and received their Lifetime Achievement Award.

1973
ALAN BENNETT LEVI
 Marketing



Since 2004, I have been a broker-associate with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Realty in southwest Florida. I cover Naples, Marco Island, Bonita Springs, Estero, and Fort Myers. I was awarded "Best in Client Satisfaction" by Gulfshore Life Magazine for the 15th year—

one of only 13 agents who have achieved this feat.

1980
ROBERT HILL, JR., MD
 Medicine

I recently met Joe Sodroski, MD '80, for dinner outside of Boston. I have retired after 35 years practicing emergency medicine. Joe is still teaching and conducting research at Harvard Medical School. We enjoyed reminiscing about our days in school at Jefferson.

1990
VINCENZO BERGHELLA
 Medicine

We have a growing family! Our son Andrea is in the Class of 2029 MD, PhD program at Jefferson. Our son Pietro just started working at JPMorgan in New York City. Cesare is a healthy 20-month-old, and like all three of her older brothers, Giulia was born at Jefferson on September 3, 2023. My wife, Federica, will start working at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia in January 2024. Life is great!

1992
JOSEPH DERANIERI
 Nursing



In February 2023, I was named director of the Langston Center for Innovation in Quality and Safety and associate professor at Virginia Commonwealth University.

1994
CAROLE D. LEVY, MD
 Medicine

After finishing residency in emergency medicine at Christiana in Delaware, I worked at Presbyterian Medical Center in Philadelphia. My husband and I then moved back home to Maryland, and I worked in community emergency departments while raising my two children. I became a shareholder with the MidAtlantic Permanente Medical Group, and most recently have become a medical director with Humana and am enjoying working from home!

1996
JOHN CARSON
 Architecture

After accruing more than 25 years of experience in design, construction, and project management, John is pleased to announce the formation of The Pelorus Group, which provides comprehensive project management and coordination of construction project activities as the Owner's Representative by facilitating projects from consultant selection through design, bidding, and construction. As a construction consultant, John relies heavily on his architectural education from Textile to help his clients. While The Pelorus Group's current projects are

scattered throughout the country, John resides in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania. He is an active member of the American Institute of Architects, a graduate of Leadership Lehigh Valley, and a Haag certified roof inspector.

2009
MICHAEL MACKINNON
Nursing

The American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA) presented Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) Michael MacKinnon, DNP, FNP-C, CRNA, FAANA, with the 23rd Ira P. Gunn Award for Outstanding Professional Advocacy during its 2023 Annual Congress, August 18-22, in Seattle, Washington.

2012
ELIAS LEE, MBA
Management and Operations

After completing undergrad and my MBA, I worked in the music industry in New York City, assisting independent label Loud & Proud Records' label executives. I was contracted by Sony Music to run the social media for Mack Wilds' Grammy-nominated "New York: a Love Story."

I transitioned careers into the home health care industry in 2014, working for Epic Health, where I became an executive director overseeing their operations. In 2017 I opened Lee Services, a Medicaid adult disability day center servicing more than 20 individuals a day in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, with my family.

Since 2018, I oversee the talent acquisition department in the Northeast/Mid-America markets for Aveanna Healthcare (AVAH: NASDAQ), a national healthcare provider. I was hired to lead the regional recruiting department. During COVID-19 I oversaw and was responsible for recruiting nurses for Gillette Stadium in Massachusetts, hiring 600-plus nurses and non-medical staff.

I recently spoke at the 2023 Home Health Care "Future" conference in Nashville, Tennessee, speaking about HR solutions in the home health care industry.

2013
JENNIFER MILANO
Graphic Design

After seven years in traditional graphic design, I moved into UI design and currently lead a team of 12 at the Homeland Security Investigation Innovation Lab, designing a comprehensive family of web apps for undercover field agents and analysts to analyze their cases. Our apps have been crucial in HSI's efforts fighting child exploitation and trafficking, as well as drug trafficking. Government web app design was not the future I saw for myself when I attended PhilaU. I had plans to work in professional sports, and I did for a few years (I even won a ring with the Washington Capitals), but as a recent mom of two under two, I couldn't be happier with the work I'm doing and the direct effect it has on so many.

2019
RITU JADWANI, MS
Global Fashion Enterprise



I am very happy to share that I recently had the chance to showcase the ethical, sustainable, fair trade social initiative I founded, the Namaste NYC collection, at Omaha Fashion Week in Omaha, Nebraska.

2020
ANGELA POTE, MS
 Trauma and Community
 Counseling



I have started a private practice, Willow and Oak Wellness Services (wowservices.org). I'm also in the second year of my PhD program in international psychology at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

ALYSSA WALKER
 Medical Imaging and
 Radiation Sciences

I've accepted a role with GE Healthcare as an MRI sales specialist covering the Ohio Valley territory.

2023
KEILA LOPEZ
 Marriage and Family Therapy

I am now the mental health outpatient (MHOP) therapist at Northeast Treatment (NET) Centers. It's been challenging and rewarding work, but I am so happy to work toward licensure in such a diversity of modalities and life experiences.



SHARE YOUR STORY

Let fellow alumni know what you've been up to by sharing your news in Class Notes! Send your news to editor@jefferson.edu.





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Join the Thomas Jefferson University Alumni Book Club, an online group for reading, learning, relaxing, and connecting with your fellow Textile, PhilaU, and Jefferson graduates.

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In Memory of

LAWRENCE ABRAMS, EDD

Lawrence Abrams, EdD, retired dean and vice president of Thomas Jefferson University, professor, and health career advocate, passed away on July 13 at the age of 83.

Abrams joined the Jefferson Department of Rehabilitation Medicine in 1965, and was instrumental in establishing the College of Allied Health Sciences, which later became the College of Health Professions. He helped Jefferson transform into a university in 1969, became associate dean of the College of Allied Health Sciences in 1972, and was elected dean of the college in 1979. He retired in 2001.

Dedicated to health profession education, Abrams founded Jefferson's Health Careers Guidance Clinic, created

a national health career counseling telephone hotline, and published popular manuals about selecting a health career. In addition, he consulted for government and school officials in the United States and across the world, and served on the boards of a number of local and regional healthcare organizations.

Abrams was known for his warmth, generosity, and ability to inspire those around him to work to their highest potential.

During his career, he won many awards, including the Jefferson Presidential Citation for Distinguished Service, the Pennsylvania State University Distinguished Alumni Award, and the Legacy of Excellence Award from the Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions, a not-for-profit national professional association

for administrators, educators, and others concerned with critical issues affecting allied health education.

A resident of Bala Cynwyd, Abrams earned a bachelor's degree in business administration at Penn State, a master's degree in counseling psychology from Temple University, and a doctorate in higher education from Nova University (now Nova Southeastern University).

In addition to his wife, Nancy, Abrams is survived by two daughters, grandsons, a brother, and other relatives. [J](#)



1947

Judith Hess

1948

Neta Glennan
Creighton Lytle, MD
Doris Stevens

1950

Robert Bair, MD
John Lychak, MD

1951

Ruth Roth

1952

Phyllis Heim

1953

Edward West, MD

1954

Rudolph Camishion, MD

1955

Audrey Priga
John D. Turco, Sr., MD

1956

Joanne O'Donnell
Mary Port

1958

William McMicken, MD
Susanna Sagi

1959

Thelma S. Malecek
Lawrence J. Mellon, Jr., MD
Carol Wenzel

1960

William Mancoll, MD
Harvey Silver, MD

1961

Harvey S. Brodovsky, MD
Marvin Grossman, MD

1962

Paul Kornblith, MD

1963

Mary McGinn
Henry Smith, Sr., MD

1964

Arnold Bernstein
Charles Silberstein, MD, MSc

1965

Elizabeth Slamon

1967

George Hallenbeck

1968

Leonard Frank, MD

1970

Richard Nemiroff, MD

1972

Marc Klebanoff, CPA

1974

Patricia Lynn
Charles Schupack, DDS

1976

Betsy Machalette

1977

Norman Mercurio

1978

Marc Surkin, MD
Joseph Windish, Jr.

1985

Karen Brady

1988

Gail Candiano

1993

Windy Lourng

1994

Cort Vignola

2001

Sandeep Deshmukh, MD

2018

Eric Davalos, MD

2022

Tucker Schimelfenig

JEFFERSON INNOVATOR Magazine

TRIVIA

Give our open-book quiz a shot!
HINT: All of the answers are in this issue!

1. How much (by degrees F) have summer night temperatures increased in Philadelphia since 1970?

- A. 2 degrees
- B. 6 degrees
- C. 4 degrees
- D. 7 degrees

2. What percentage of JCN graduates begin their careers with Jefferson Health?

- A. 45 percent
- B. 60 percent
- C. 70 percent
- D. 38 percent

3. What year did former Jefferson student Jordan DeCicco present his company, Super Coffee, to the Sharks of ABC's "Shark Tank"?

- A. 2017
- B. 2018
- C. 2020
- D. 2019



Submit your answers at Jefferson.edu/InnovatorTrivia or scan the QR code with your smartphone camera by December 15, 2023. A perfect score will enter you in a drawing to win a Jefferson T-shirt.

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Wall Street Journal Ranks Thomas Jefferson University Among Top in Nation



The University ranked No. 48 in the WSJ/ College Pulse 2024 Best Colleges in the U.S. list — a rating of the nation's top 400 universities. Jefferson is the No. 1 school in Pennsylvania for social mobility, and No. 42 for salary impact.