FALL 2026

Arts & Sciences



Meeting the Moment

A&S Changemakers Shape Culture and History

Syracuse University
College of Arts & Sciences



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ON THE COVER A student atop the Siccar Point outcrop in Scotland. Through hands-on research and exploration around the world (see pp. 3-5), A&S students, faculty and alumni are deepening our understanding of Earth, its history and our collective future.

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"It's in our DNA to prepare students for the moment they live in, whether that moment brought electricity, computing, the internet, or now, AI."

Dear Alumni and Friends,

As the United States marks 250 years since its founding, I have been reflecting on the role of the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) in our country's story. Since our own founding in 1871, A&S alumni, faculty and students have helped the nation meet each moment, shaping trends and explaining the stakes. You can read about their contributions in the special section on pages 18-24.

Chancellor Michael Haynie struck a similar note at his investiture this fall, calling on the University to be a place that reflects "the full breadth of human experience, because the problems facing this world will not be solved by any one kind of mind." That's long been our animating idea in A&S and is especially true of the trends influencing our lives today.

Take technology. The cognitive scientist Don Norman observed that people seem to have become its servant, when it was supposed to be the other way around. Between AI and climate change, it can feel like technology and policy are circumventing humanity, rather than serving it. Some argue the answer is more STEM; I'd argue that the answer lies in what we're doing in A&S. Scientific expertise and human judgment work side by side, so our physicists and philosophers, our biologists and English majors, are equipped to ask not just what solutions can we build, but also what should we build and whom does it serve.

You'll see examples of that approach throughout this issue, "Meeting the Moment." From the next-generation forensic science in our Forensic and National Security Sciences Institute to the next wave of computing in our Institute for Quantum and Information Science, we're making sure that even our most technical disciplines help students develop the distinctly human skills of observation, judgment and ethical reasoning.

We're also helping students strengthen those human skills through initiatives such as the Relationship Lab and Strategies for Career Success course. And our new AI Literacy Digital Badge, developed by faculty across the humanities and sciences, teaches students the confidence to know when—or if—to use AI.

It's in our DNA to prepare students for the moment they live in, whether that moment brought electricity, computing, the internet, or now, AI. Alongside the incredible tools technology now affords, we believe in humans and the enduring power of the liberal arts to fearlessly face and solve the grand challenges before us. Our Chancellor has spoken of the "ripples of hope" our graduates send into the world. Those ripples begin right here in A&S.

As we close out the United States' semiquincentennial celebrations, I hope you also find much to celebrate about A&S in this issue. Please take a minute afterward to watch the short video below to get reacquainted with this wonderful college and what we stand for.

Sincerely,

Behzad Mortazavi

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Watch "For People and Planet" by scanning this code with your phone camera.

To the Ends of the Earth

From the floor of an African lake to the ice sheets of Greenland, Arts and Sciences faculty and students are helping humanity understand our planet's systems and adapt to an evolving world.



Geology students navigate the descent to Siccar Point during a field excursion along Scotland's southeastern coast.

Alaska ▸

Earth and environmental sciences assistant professor Aaron Mohammed studies how permafrost thaw is reshaping Alaska's landscape. As frozen ground thaws, it releases water, sediments and long-trapped minerals into rivers and streams, altering ecosystems and threatening communities that depend on clean water. Mohammed is seeking to understand how this thawing will affect water quality and infrastructure, so residents and policymakers can be better prepared for a warmer future.



Maui, Hawaii ▾

Off the coast of Maui, biology Ph.D. graduate Julia Zeh has used suction-cup sound-and-movement tags to study firsthand how humpback whales sing and dive. As a member of Professor Susan Parks' Bioacoustics and Behavioral Ecology Lab, Zeh found that specific song "themes" consistently align with specific phases of a dive. Some whales sang continuously for 16 hours. It's the first study to connect an entire song structure to a complete dive cycle, suggesting researchers could eventually infer a whale's depth and behavior from audio recordings alone, a tool that could help conservation efforts.



To the Ends of the Earth



Lassen Volcanic National Park ▲

Biology assistant professor Angela Oliverio (above, right) and Ph.D. candidate Beryl Rappaport trek into the geothermal landscapes of California's Lassen Volcanic National Park in search of life at the edge of what scientists thought possible. Sampling hot springs and steaming tributaries, they discovered *Incendiamoeba cascadensis*, a record-breaking "fire amoeba" that survives at 145°F, hotter than any complex organism previously known. The finding rewrites scientists' understanding of life's thermal limits, offers new clues in the search for life beyond Earth and was featured in *The New York Times* and many other media outlets worldwide.



Greenland ▶

To answer some of science's biggest questions about sea-level rise, Jessica Mejia braves the ice and cold of the Greenland Ice Sheet. The Earth and environmental sciences assistant professor is studying how meltwater flowing beneath the ice affects its movement toward the ocean, research critical to understanding a region responsible for roughly a quarter of global sea-level rise. Her first-of-its-kind field campaign, which combines seismic, radar and GPS instruments, tracks how subglacial water systems evolve in real time, sharpening sea-level rise forecasts and giving leaders better tools for protecting coastal communities.



The Adirondack Mountains ▶

In these Upstate New York forests, biology Ph.D. student Eva Legge (left) studies the fungi that live on tree roots and quietly hold ecosystems together, trading nutrients for sugar. As part of Professor Chris Fernandez' Mycorrhizal Ecology Lab, Legge explores how forest management measures, such as timber harvest, assisted tree migration and prescribed fire, affect this important relationship. Her goal is to devise more effective strategies to protect these delicate partnerships.

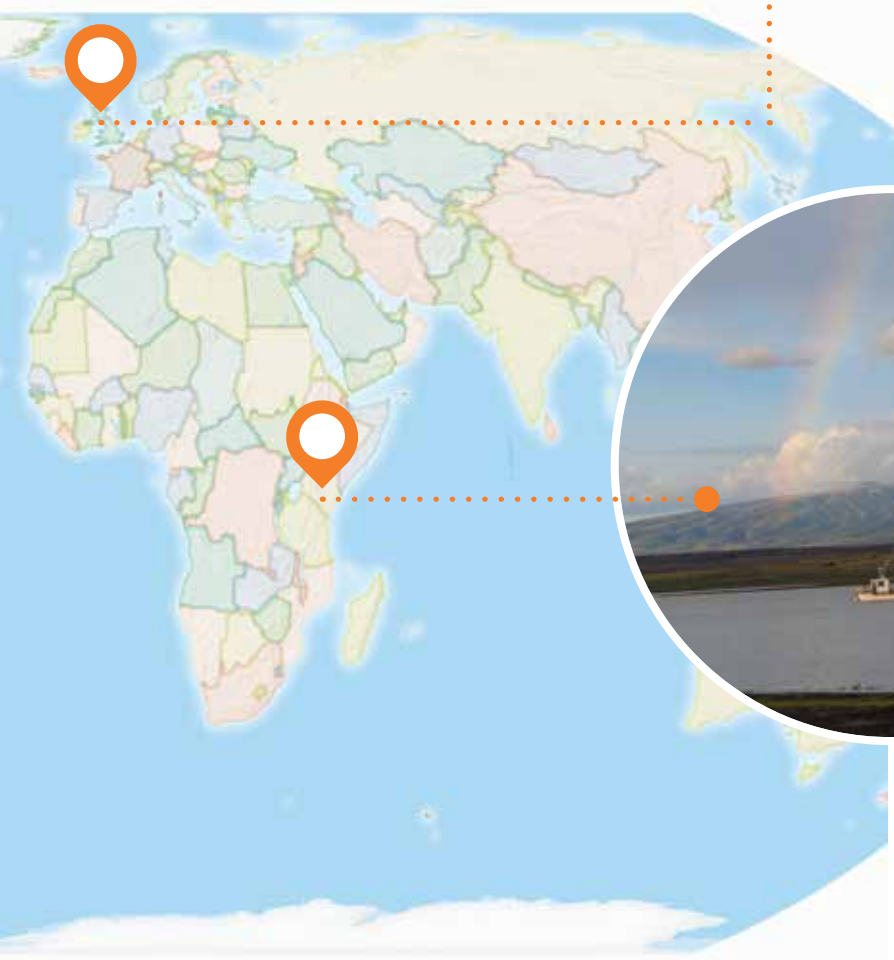
Scotland ▸

Following in the footsteps of James Hutton, the father of modern geology, students and faculty traveled to Scotland to study the landscapes that shaped his groundbreaking ideas. Hutton's observations of rock layers in the late 1700s led him to argue that slow, ongoing geological processes formed the Earth, meaning the planet had to be far older than the widely accepted age of just a few thousand years. Led by Earth and environmental sciences professors Scott Samson and Linda Ivany, the group explored Glasgow, the Isle of Arran, and Edinburgh, including a stop at Siccar Point, one of the most famous outcrops in geology. Students examined rock formations firsthand, building the observation and analytical skills they will carry into graduate study and research careers.



At Siccar Point (above), James Hutton (right) spotted a "gap in time"—old, tilted rock layers topped by much younger horizontal ones. He realized that Earth had been shaped by repeated cycles of change over immense spans of time.





◂ Kenya

Earth and environmental sciences professor Christopher Scholz and his team are studying East Africa's Great Rift Valley Lakes. Their research took them aboard a vessel on Lake Turkana in northern Kenya, where they studied how climate-driven shifts in the lake's water levels influence fault activity and magma production deep in the Earth's crust, challenging the long-held view that continental rifting is driven by plate tectonics alone. Because Turkana sits in a region considered a cradle of human evolution and home to a rapidly growing, earthquake-prone population, the findings could help communities better prepare for future seismic activity.



Shakespeare in the Present Tense

Reimagining the Bard to understand ourselves and the world.

Think of the last film or play you saw. Were you riveted to your seat, following the action unfolding in front of you? When the lights came up, did the story and characters stay with you, offering a new way of thinking about something? Storytelling—on the page or on the stage—has long connected people across circumstance, time and place, bridging divides and building understanding.

Few writers have sustained that power more enduringly than Shakespeare. From the stage to the classroom, his plays continue to be reimagined in ways that speak to the present moment—a process explored by Dympna Callaghan, University Professor, the William L. Safire Professor of Modern Letters, and a leading scholar of Shakespeare and early modern literature. She recently co-edited *Shakespeare and the Poetics and Politics of Relevance: Gender, Race, Ecology* (2024) and joins us to discuss why Shakespeare still matters today.

Dympna Callaghan
University Professor and William L. Safire Professor of Modern Letters in the Department of English, and a leading scholar in early modern literature.



"Because plays depend so much on performance, every staging becomes a new iteration of the work. Audiences bring their own concerns and experiences to it, so the plays keep being rediscovered in different ways."

Dympna Callaghan

Shakespeare keeps resurfacing in contemporary culture and is often described as "timeless." Your research suggests something more dynamic—that each generation finds new meanings in the plays. Why does Shakespeare continue to invite reinterpretation across time?

Dympna Callaghan (DC): Shakespeare knew how to pick a story. Most of his plots are not original—they come from Italian novellas or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—but he does incredible things with them. In that sense, modern reinterpretations continue a tradition of which Shakespeare himself was a part. His plays are already adaptations, and they inspire people to make them speak to their own moment.

It's also interesting that Shakespeare gets quoted by people across the political spectrum. Unlike novels, plays don't have a single authorial point of view. They present different voices and perspectives, leaving a great deal open to interpretation. Because plays depend so much on performance, every staging becomes a new iteration of the work. Audiences bring their own concerns and experiences to it, so the plays keep being rediscovered in different ways.

You're currently teaching both *Hamlet* and *Hamnet*, Maggie O'Farrell's novel about Shakespeare's family. What happens when students encounter the play alongside this modern reimagining of the world around it?

DC: Shakespeare didn't write anything specifically about the death of his only son, Hamnet, at age 11. Or, if he did, it hasn't survived. O'Farrell's novel—and its recent film adaptation—fill in a gap by exploring what this loss was like. That's very inventive and has inspired some of my creative writing and film students to use Shakespeare as a springboard for their own work.

I think the novel draws out something that's already inherent in the play, which is this business of grief and mourning. *Hamlet* is very much about how we deal with mortality and the dead living among us in vivid ways. Hamlet doesn't really get to grieve properly for his father. He's told to stop mourning by Claudius and his mother, and that unresolved grief drives the play. What *Hamnet* does is creatively extrapolate those ideas around Shakespeare's life. It contains a beautiful piece of writing about how the plague was carried from a foreign shore back to England by a monkey, which students find fascinating. They're also interested in notions of witchcraft present in the book. But interestingly, they still tend to prefer the play, which I'm pleased about.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly connected Shakespeare's plays to conversations about race, gender and the environment. Why do these questions feel especially pressing in Shakespeare studies today?

DC: In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania describes how the natural world and the seasons have suddenly fallen out of order, with contagious fogs, floods and failing crops. When we hear those lines today, it's hard not to think about climate change. It feels prescient now, almost uncanny. But I'm not suggesting you can draw a simple analogy between Shakespeare's texts and the modern world. As readers, we bring our own concerns to the plays. It's not a passive engagement.

How do those concerns shape the way we think about gender in Shakespeare's work?

DC: Notions of gender in Shakespeare's time derived not only from the Bible but also—through the rise of humanism and the Renaissance turn to classical culture—from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where characters frequently switch from one sex to another. Many of Shakespeare's stories and those of other literary writers of that time dealt with some form of gender transformation. We see this clearly in *Twelfth Night*, where Viola dons male attire. Shakespeare is also playing with the reality that in early modern theater, women weren't allowed on the stage, so female roles were performed by boys. In a way, an early modern trans culture was already built into the theater—suggesting that ideas about gender were more fluid than we might imagine. That started to be increasingly relevant to our own debates about gender identity.

THE BACKSTORY

Who was Hamnet Shakespeare?

Hamnet Shakespeare (1585-1596) was the only son of William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway, born in Stratford-upon-Avon alongside his twin sister, Judith. The impact of the boy's death at age 11—the cause remains unknown—on Shakespeare's work has long been debated, particularly whether it influenced Hamlet, written a few years later. He has also appeared in popular culture, most notably in Maggie O'Farrell's novel *Hamnet* and its 2025 film adaptation.



Just recently, the great British actor Sir Ian McKellen introduced a trans and non-binary production of *Twelfth Night* in London.

And what about race—how do those questions come into focus?

DC: Race is not only important in *Othello* or *Titus Andronicus*, where racial difference is central to the story. Shakespeare's language often relies on color imagery. In the sonnets, for example, the young male beloved is repeatedly described as "fair," while the woman in the later poems is described as "black" or "colored ill." Those terms don't necessarily mean race in the way we understand it today. They could refer to complexion, hair color or moral qualities, but they do create a kind of color coding. Race was not irrelevant to early modern people either. There were Black people living in Britain, so it's not just a metaphor, but ideas of race were rather different.

In recent years, there's been fascinating work by critics who have been motivated by their own concerns about race—books like Arthur Little's *White People in Shakespeare* or Farah Karim-Cooper's *The Great White Bard*. What's interesting about these studies is that they show how Shakespeare can open up conversations about race that are not acrimonious, dogmatic or ideologically inflected. The plays allow us to raise questions we might find too difficult to talk about elsewhere.

"The plays allow us to raise questions we might find too difficult to talk about elsewhere."

Dympna Callaghan

What can Shakespeare help us explore in those kinds of conversations?

DC: We're all incredibly different and need some common cultural ground. You can see that historically as well. During the American Civil War, people turned to Shakespeare—especially *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*—to process the tragedy that was happening around them. I think it's wonderful when everybody is focused on a particular cultural moment, the way we are right now with *Hamnet*.

What continues to surprise you about Shakespeare, after so many years of studying and teaching his work?

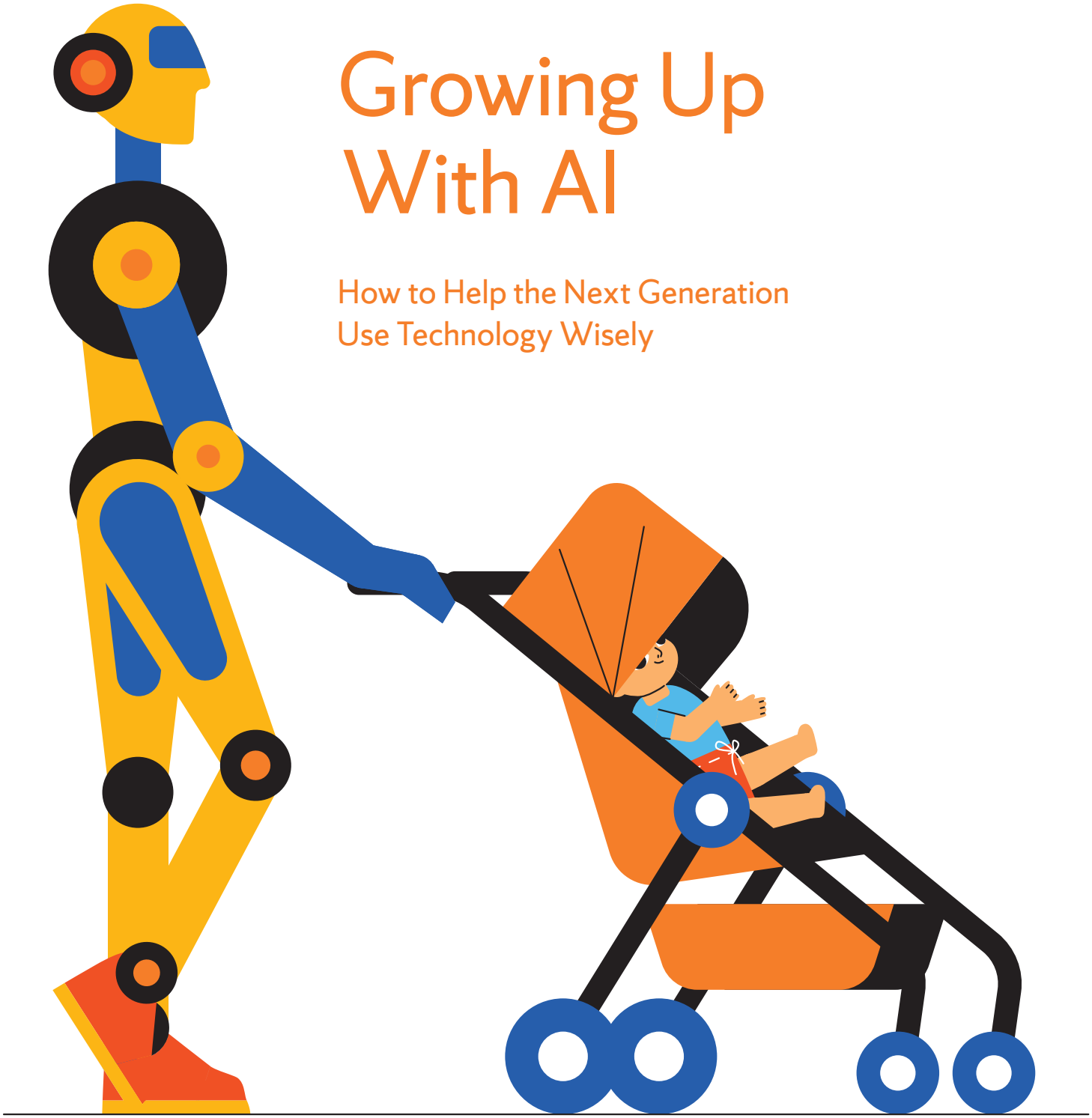
DC: I'm surprised every time I see a performance. I recently saw a production of *Othello* in London that staged Desdemona's death quite differently—it made the familiar shocking again. And then there's the language itself. I find the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry increasingly moving the older I get.



Shakespeare was born in this house in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. After marrying Anne Hathaway, the couple lived here with their children, including son Hamnet (see facing page) who died in August 1596.

Growing Up With AI

How to Help the Next Generation Use Technology Wisely



When Matthew Mulvaney was a child, his parents didn't have digital clocks in the house or let him wear a digital watch until he learned how to tell time with an analog clock.

Mulvaney, now associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Science, says when it comes to artificial intelligence (AI), parents and caregivers today should be mindful of preserving these kinds of "cognitive enhancing tasks" that have been routine parts of childhood.

"We need to make sure children can think autonomously before offloading skills to AI," says Mulvaney, undergraduate program director and associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Science (HDFS). "If children aren't required to engage with the difficult process of learning, it will be unlikely that they will learn the higher-order thinking skills that we currently assume they will get from their schooling and from growing up in a cognitively complex world."

Sophie Heieck '26, an HDFS graduate who took Mulvaney's children and media course, admits she came in skeptical of AI. His class helped her understand that AI should support—not replace—critical thinking.

"As an individual who currently works in healthcare and plans to continue learning and working in this environment, I hope we find a future where we can utilize AI to make treatment, care and overall workflow easier," Heieck says. "But that we don't stray away from human connection and face-to-face conversation."

AI is here to stay, bringing new opportunities and challenges as young people use it for academic support, emotional reassurance and guidance on personal decisions. To help families, educators and communities guide children toward responsible AI use, we asked A&S faculty experts for their advice.

Distinguish appearance from reality

Mulvaney says parents and caregivers should empower children to use AI because it's a skill that everyone will need. But the key is working directly with children on how and when to use AI effectively and, as in many cases with parenting, setting a good example.

"Parents can relay their own concerns about AI and what struggles they experience with it, but also how it can help do things more effectively," Mulvaney says. "They should also exercise caution with it and trust their instincts if it seems that the use of AI is unhealthy in any way."

"If children aren't required to engage with the difficult process of learning, it will be unlikely that they will learn the higher-order thinking skills that we currently assume they will get from their schooling and from growing up in a cognitively complex world."

Matthew Mulvaney





"Parents and educators should encourage children to question AI's answers, compare them with reliable sources, and explain how they reached their own conclusions. Those conversations build critical thinking skills that will remain important no matter how AI evolves."

Katie Kidwell

Mulvaney says parents and caregivers should be alert to children's tendency toward animism—the difficulty young children can have distinguishing between what is alive and what merely seems lifelike. With AI, that confusion can heighten the risk of misplaced emotional attachments, blur the line between fantasy and reality, and interfere with important aspects of human development.

"I think that will be a particular problem given the realism associated with interacting with AI," Mulvaney says. "So, for younger children, making that distinction will be much more difficult for them."

Human relationships are messy—but important

As parents and caregivers consider ways to monitor their children's use of AI, it's important to know what happens in the brains of young people during repeated AI interactions and how that may influence learning, critical thinking and reward systems.

Associate teaching professor of neuroscience Lauren W. Mavica, director of the Neuroscience Integrated Learning Major (ILM) and advisor to neuroscience ILM students, says interactive AI platforms provide many of the same reward pathways that make social media so compelling to children and teenagers: responses are instantaneous, validation is constant and there is little risk of rejection.

In fact, surveys suggest that nearly 2/3 of teens find conversations with AI as satisfying—or even more satisfying—than conversations with real people, according to Mavica.

"The prefrontal cortex, which supports skepticism, impulse control and long-term decision-making, continues to mature throughout adolescence, while the brain's reward systems are already highly active," she says. "This developmental mismatch makes teens especially sensitive to AI-generated validation at an age when they are less equipped to critically evaluate its source or significance."

Still, Mavica says AI can provide meaningful support for young people who struggle to find peers with shared interests, experiences or identities. It's still too early to know how sustained AI use influences relationships, but until more information is available, Mavica says it's important for families and educators to help young people distinguish between AI-generated validation and the value of human feedback.

"Genuine human relationships involve negotiation, disagreement, uncertainty and sometimes hearing difficult truths," Mavica says. "Those moments of friction are not flaws in human connection; they are essential experiences that foster growth, self-awareness, resilience and maturity."

Question everything

The impact of AI on the mental health of children is an ongoing debate, and families who say AI chatbots harm their children are pressing Congress for stronger safeguards.

AI models are improving at recognizing clear mental health crises, but the harder question is whether they can resist being agreeable when a user's goal is unhealthy.

Assistant professor of psychology and child clinical psychologist Katie Kidwell says what's missing with AI is the accountability and goal-setting support offered by face-to-face medical care. "Parents and educators should encourage children to question AI's answers, compare them with reliable sources, and explain how they reached their own conclusions," Kidwell says. "Those conversations build critical thinking skills that will remain important no matter how AI evolves."

Kidwell also sees AI's potential in healthcare, particularly in expanding access to mental health education for families facing long wait times and difficult-to-navigate systems. "I tested asking ChatGPT to make a child a sleep improvement plan using evidence-based practices and its suggestions were in line with what I'd typically recommend to families," Kidwell says.

As HDFS graduate Heieck prepares for her healthcare career, she plans to follow the A&S faculty advice: Learn to use AI without letting it replace human connection.

"Using AI for creating a workout plan or making a daily schedule can be extremely beneficial for busy individuals," Heieck says. "The most important aspect of AI, in my opinion, is ensuring that we are using it to do good, not cause harm."





Putting AI in Its Place

New microcredential helps students know when to use AI—and how to use it responsibly.

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to reshape how people learn, work and communicate, A&S is taking a distinctly liberal arts approach to preparing students for an AI-enabled future. In partnership with Syracuse University Libraries, A&S has launched the AI Literacy Digital Badge, a free, self-paced microcredential designed exclusively for A&S undergraduate students. Upon completion, students earn a credential that can be shared on resumes, LinkedIn profiles and professional portfolios.

The program helps students develop practical AI skills while reinforcing the critical thinking, ethical reasoning and information literacy that have long defined an A&S education. Rather than focusing solely on how to use AI tools, the badge encourages students to ask deeper questions about when, why and whether AI should be used.

The badge grew directly from student interest in understanding AI's role within their academic disciplines and future careers. To meet that need, faculty members from across the humanities and sciences in A&S collaborated to create a program that examines AI through multiple disciplinary lenses. The result is a learning experience that reflects the interdisciplinary foundation of a liberal arts education while helping students navigate one of the most significant technological developments of their generation.

A central theme of the badge is "putting AI in its place." While AI can be a powerful tool, faculty emphasize that it is most effective when paired with human expertise, judgment and creativity. The program highlights the importance of skills that technology cannot replace, including effective communication, critical analysis, ethical decision-making and deep subject-matter knowledge.

Students who complete the badge gain a stronger understanding of how generative AI systems work, how to evaluate AI-generated information and how AI is being used across diverse fields. They also learn how to assess the reliability of information, recognize misinformation and consider the ethical, social and environmental impacts of emerging technologies.

The curriculum features contributions from A&S faculty in philosophy, biology, chemistry, Earth and environmental sciences, writing and rhetoric, women's and gender studies, and human development and family science. Through case studies and interactive learning experiences, students explore topics ranging from scientific misinformation and AI ethics to language, environmental sustainability and professional decision-making.

The badge reflects a broader commitment by A&S to prepare students for a rapidly changing world without losing sight of the enduring value of a liberal arts education. By combining practical AI literacy with the human-centered skills that remain essential across industries, the College is helping students become adaptable thinkers, informed citizens and future leaders equipped to navigate an increasingly complex technological landscape.



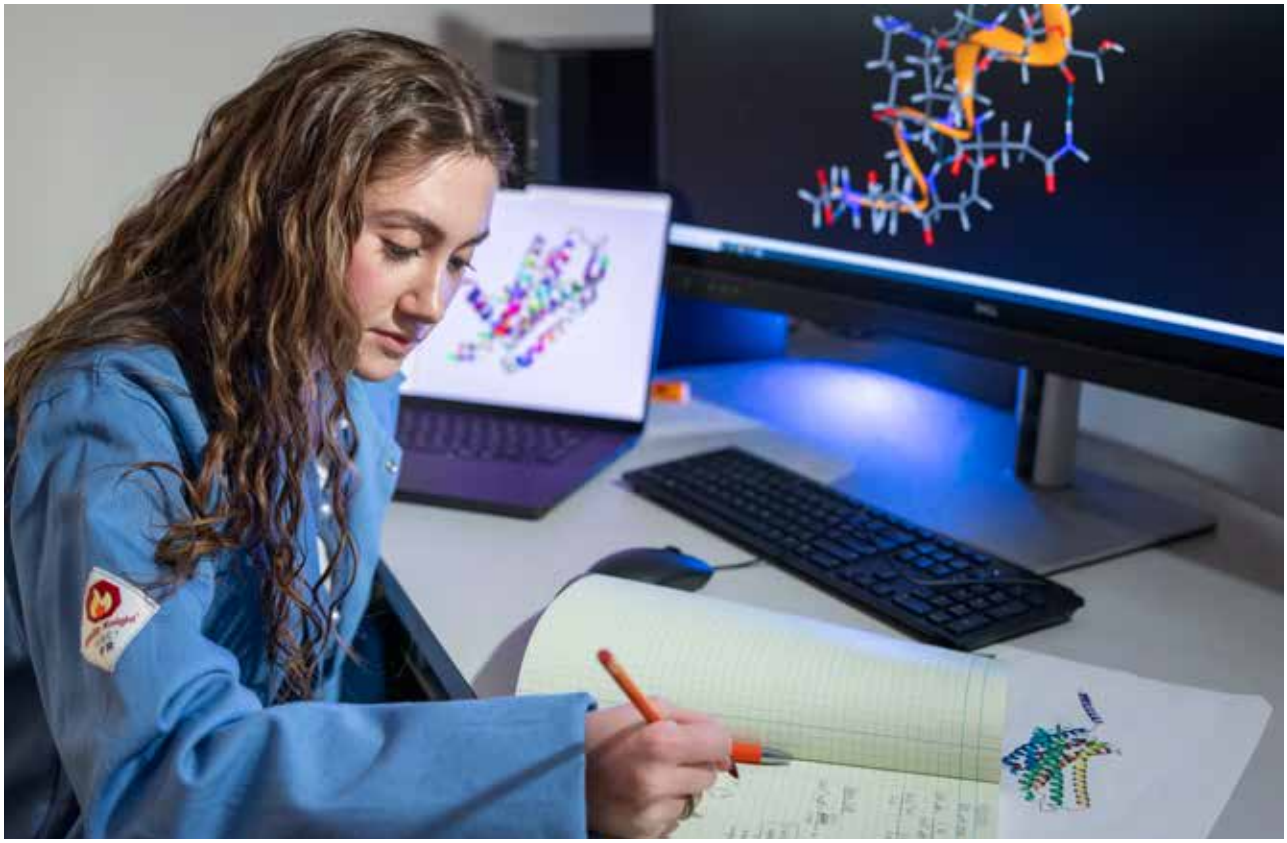
Next-Generation Forensics

How is A&S training tomorrow's investigators in innovative research methods?

While examining blood droplets and fingerprints will always be important to forensic science, students in A&S' Forensic and National Security Sciences Institute (Forensics Institute) are also gaining hands-on exposure to the new tools and scenarios reshaping modern investigations.

Rewriting the Rules of DNA Evidence

Everyone knows DNA plays a crucial role in solving crimes—but what happens when the evidence is low-quantity, degraded or comes from multiple people? Traditional methods can only go so far, which is why forensic laboratories across the country are turning to next-generation sequencing (NGS), a form of DNA testing that delivers higher-resolution data by analyzing far more genetic markers, even from compromised samples. In 2024, NGS evidence was used in a U.S. courtroom for the first time, in a Kern County, California, murder case. The evidence helped investigators analyze more than 150 genetic markers from a single sample compared with roughly 24 under previous methods.



From lab research to local internships with law enforcement agencies, A&S forensics students like Sarah Valle '26 can take advantage of numerous hands-on learning opportunities.

The Forensics Institute is leading the effort to bring NGS to New York State, hosting the nation's first hands-on sequencing training for professionals from public crime labs statewide last year. Undergraduate and graduate students conducted practice runs with the technology ahead of the session and assisted during the actual training, under the supervision of Michael Marciano, professor of practice and director of forensic research.

"They also assisted in the lab during the actual sessions and sat in during the lectures," Marciano says. "It was a great opportunity for them to also get exposure to the professionals who attended, because they may one day be their employers."

Practical Research, Real Crime Scenes

Students in Professor of Practice Maria Pettolina's Practical Crime Scene Research course (FSC 440/640) are designing original experiments that mirror problems facing working investigators. This spring, undergraduates studied bloodstain pattern analysis, testing whether AI-assisted systems could accurately estimate where blood was shed, while graduate students evaluated new chemical methods for developing latent fingerprints on U.S. currency.

"What we're looking for is practical research that could actually be conducted by a crime scene investigator in their own lab," Pettolina explains. "We want students working on problems that are affecting the field right now."

The graduate students' currency work discovered a technique that hasn't yet been published. "That's incredibly impactful for a class," Pettolina notes.

Emergency Response Exercises

Beyond studying evidence in a lab, forensic science students also get to watch coordinated emergency response simulations unfold in real time. When the New York National Guard's 2nd Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team recently ran a multiday chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response exercise on South Campus, forensic science students observed multiagency incident command. Samples were collected by students wearing full protective suits, and the Syracuse Fire Department's HazMat team operated a mass-casualty decontamination corridor.

WHAT IS NEXT-GENERATION SEQUENCING?

Next-generation sequencing (NGS) produces higher-resolution DNA tests than traditional methods by detecting and analyzing far more genetic markers, even from samples that are degraded or drawn from multiple people. For these reasons, it is often used in missing persons cases, disaster victim recovery and ancestry research.





A&S graduate students in forensics evaluate new chemical methods for developing latent fingerprints on U.S. currency, a problem affecting the field today.



Students in the Advanced Crime Scene Investigations class perform a mock investigation.

"I really enjoyed seeing all of the scientific equipment that is employed and all of the differing applications of the machinery in the field."

Kevin Early, master's degree student

"This offered an exceptional opportunity for students to connect what they have learned in their courses to a real-world scenario," says Kathleen Corrado, Forensics Institute executive director, "including communications, sample identification and collection, working with hazardous materials, and use of analytical field equipment that mirrors what they have used in their laboratory courses."

Kevin Early, a master's student in forensic science, came away with a new appreciation for the field's tools. "I really enjoyed seeing all of the scientific equipment that is employed and all of the differing applications of the machinery in the field," Early says. "The mobile lab was so cool—I didn't think that a GC-MS [gas chromatography-mass spectrometry] would be effective in a mobile capacity, so that was interesting."

Finding a Focus in the Lab

Cody Wade '26 was hooked on forensic science after taking an introductory course in high school through Syracuse University Project Advance. Drawn at first to crime scene work, the forensic science and biology major found his focus shifting toward the lab as he explored different courses. "Lab work can be exciting and looking into the cutting-edge research done on this campus ignites a fire in me," Wade says.

He conducted research in the lab of forensic science professor James Crill '07, who specializes in detecting and characterizing biological weapons of mass destruction. Wade cites Crill's course Microbial Forensics as a favorite. "I love when my majors overlap because it engages me even more and helps build a meshwork of information in my mind," he says, adding that biology has given him "an incredible foundation for studying forensics."



Professor James Crill '07 (left) confers with Cody Wade '26, a forensic science and biology major who worked in Crill's lab.

At America's Defining Moments

Throughout its 250-year history, the United States has moved through milestone eras when the nation has paused to reconsider its identity and ideals. A&S alumni, faculty and students have helped shape those conversations since the 1870s.



One such moment came in 1870, when Syracuse University was founded amid the transformation of Central New York. Originally a stop along the Erie Canal known for its salt industry, the region was being remade by railroads, new industries and a growing population. Community leaders saw the need for a major university to advance learning and opportunity.

Since then, that founding mission has mirrored the social movements that took root here and reshaped the nation: women's rights, abolition and civil rights, and respect for Native American culture and the land. Syracuse drew great minds not only to study mathematics, languages, history and rhetoric, but also to build the critical thinking and leadership needed to meet those challenges.

More than 150 years later, A&S—the University's founding college—carries that legacy forward, developing thinkers and addressing today's most pressing issues through interdisciplinary programs in culture, history and Indigenous knowledge.



John Hancock and 55 others signed the document that changed world history.

1776



The City of Syracuse was chartered on Dec. 14.

1847



Syracuse University's **College of Liberal Arts** was established in September. John Raymond French (above) became the College's first dean.

1871

"A liberal arts education builds civic engagement through critical thinking across disciplines. Studying social movements shows concretely how change happens."

Vivian M. May

Women's Suffrage and the Fight for Equal Rights

Upstate New York is widely recognized as the birthplace of the women's rights movement. In 1848, suffragists challenged laws and customs denying women equal rights, launching reform led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. By the time Syracuse University was established, calls for educational opportunity and equality had echoed through the region for more than two decades.

The University's founders embraced the belief that women deserved access to higher education, making Syracuse University one of the nation's early coeducational institutions. In its first class of 41 students, seven were women—a decision that was both progressive and controversial in 1871. Mary Lydia Huntley became the first woman to graduate from Syracuse University in 1872, and in 1889 Cornelia M. Clapp* earned the first biology doctorate awarded to a woman in the United States.

A&S's women's and gender studies department is preparing students to continue the conversations that started more than a century ago.

"A liberal arts education builds civic engagement through critical thinking across disciplines," says Vivan M. May, professor of women's and gender studies and director of the Syracuse University Humanities Center. "Studying social movements shows concretely how power operates and how change happens. Women's studies bridges knowledge-seeking with justice-seeking, expanding whose voices and experiences 'count.'"

Students, scholars and community partners discuss feminist ethnographic research during a workshop in the Tolley Humanities Building. Programs in women's and gender studies equip students with tools for understanding social change and expanding whose experiences are heard.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY



1889

*__Cornelia M. Clapp__ became the first woman in the United States to earn a doctoral degree in biology, a milestone that reflected the growing movement for women's inclusion in higher education and scientific fields.



1893

**__William Lewis Bulkley__ became one of the first African Americans in the nation to earn a doctorate, the first in classics at Syracuse. He later co-founded the NAACP and the National Urban League, advancing civil rights.



1944

William Pearson Tolley, Syracuse University's seventh Chancellor, led efforts to reintegrate World War II veterans into higher education, helping shape the G.I. Bill. This work laid the foundation for Syracuse's long-standing commitment to veterans and military-connected students.



1948

***Professor **James Hope Birnie** became the first African American to hold a faculty position in biology at Syracuse University. Supported by the expanding National Institutes of Health, his work reflected the rising importance of federally funded research.

Civil Rights and Equality

Long before the Civil War, Syracuse became a center of abolitionist activity and an important stop along the Underground Railroad, helping enslaved people escape to Canada. The city's 1851 Jerry Rescue, in which residents freed an escaped enslaved man from federal custody, became a national symbol of resistance. Underground Railroad leader Harriet Tubman, who had roots in nearby Auburn; former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass; and Utica native and social reformer Gerrit Smith advanced freedom and equality throughout the region.

Syracuse University contributed to that legacy by expanding educational opportunity. In 1892, William Lewis Bulkley** earned a doctorate in classics, becoming one of the first African Americans in the nation to achieve that distinction. In 1948, James Hope Birnie*** became the University's first African American faculty member, joining the Department of Biology at a time when higher education remained largely segregated.

Today, A&S's African American Studies continues the discussion of topics vital to the Syracuse community and the nation.

"The commonplace notion that African American studies supplement core developments defining American life ignores the profound way that the experiences and visions of Black people have shaped and revealed the nation's character. It is impossible to understand the enduring image of liberty, deemed emblematic of American society, without exploring how Black people have navigated bondage and freedom as global citizens," says Joan Bryant, associate professor of African American studies.

"It is impossible to understand the enduring image of liberty, deemed emblematic of American society, without exploring how Black people have navigated bondage and freedom as global citizens."

Joan Bryant



A student walks outside the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Sims Hall, where the legacy of civil rights leaders and advocates continues to inspire scholarship, dialogue and learning across the liberal arts.



Edith Flanigen G'52 developed zeolite Y, improving the efficiency of converting oil into gasoline. She received the National Medal of Technology and Innovation from President Barack Obama and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2004.

1959



Kathrine Switzer '68 became the first woman to officially run the Boston Marathon, influencing the broader women's rights movement.

1967



Rubye Torrey became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in analytical chemistry from Syracuse, further expanding opportunities for those who followed.

1969



Roslyn Pope earned a Ph.D. in humanities from Syracuse, having authored the landmark 1960 civil rights manifesto "An Appeal for Human Rights," which helped shape the Atlanta Student Movement and fueled her lifelong advocacy for equality.

1974



The Haudenosaunee flag is part of an installation on the Syracuse University Quad that serves to acknowledge, in an enduring and prominent way, the relationship between Syracuse University and the Onondaga Nation and the University's presence on ancestral land.

Acknowledgment of Central New York's Indigenous Culture

The College reflects the University's deep connection to the Indigenous people of Central New York. Syracuse University stands on the ancestral lands of the Onondaga Nation, one of six nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. For centuries before the University's founding, the Haudenosaunee practiced representative government, diplomacy, agriculture and environmental stewardship that continue to shape the region.

Nearby Onondaga Lake served as the political and spiritual center of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, where leaders gathered under the Great Law of Peace, one of the world's oldest continuously functioning systems of governance. Many familiar place names across Central New York—including Onondaga ("people of the hill"), Oneida ("people of the standing stone"), Skaneateles ("long lake") and Owasco ("crossing place by the lake")—reflect the region's Indigenous heritage.



"Map of Ho-De-No-Sau-Nee-Ga, or The Territories of the People of the Long House, in 1720," Lewis Henry Morgan, (cartographer), Richard H. Pease (engraver).

A&S honors this legacy through its Native American and Indigenous Studies minor, Certificate of Advanced Study in Iroquois Linguistics, and the Center for Global Indigenous Cultures and Environmental Justice. Together, these programs promote research, language revitalization, cultural preservation and partnerships with Indigenous communities while preparing students to address issues from environmental justice to tribal sovereignty.

The University's relationship with the Onondaga Nation has been strengthened through leaders such as Oren R. Lyons, '58, H'93, a Haudenosaunee faith keeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga and Seneca nations. An All-American lacrosse player, Lyons served on behalf of Indigenous peoples for more than a dozen years on the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission. He also was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws in 1993 for his lifelong advocacy of Indigenous sovereignty and environmental stewardship. Current faith keeper, or Tadodaho, Sidney Hill

CROSSING FRONTIERS



Robert Jarvik's '68, H'83 artificial heart marked a watershed moment in biomedical engineering, demonstrating how research could lead to life-extending technologies.

1982



Eileen Collins '78 broke new ground in the U.S. space program, becoming the first astronaut to both pilot (1995) and command (1999) a space shuttle mission, reflecting the expanding role of women in leadership.

1995



Lou Reed '64, an English alumnus, won a Grammy award for his influence on generations of artists and music enthusiasts through his groundbreaking work, helping redefine modern rock music. He was posthumously inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

1999



As one of the first scientists to clone plant DNA, **Nina Fedoroff '66** reshaped agricultural science. In 1995, she founded the Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences and received the 2006 National Medal of Science.

2006



Indigenous students enjoy gathering at 113 Euclid Ave.

"One key aspect of teaching Indigenous studies at Syracuse is making students aware of the historic importance of this region. Students learn about the Onondaga Nation, on whose lands the University now stands."

Scott Manning Stevens

also partners with the University on issues that deepen the understanding of Haudenosaunee history and culture.

"One key aspect of teaching Indigenous studies at Syracuse is making students aware of the historic importance of this region. Students learn about the Onondaga, on whose lands the University now stands," says Scott Manning Stevens, associate professor of Native American and Indigenous studies and director of the Center for Global Indigenous Cultures and Environmental Justice. "They're learning about one of the oldest democracies on Earth—stewards of this land for millennia and whose ethos of sustainability instructs us when determining the best ways to preserve our environment."

The story of Syracuse University is inseparable from that of Central New York—and also that of the nation. The social movements that reshaped the region—advancing women's rights, racial equality and respect for Indigenous cultures—continue to resonate in the classrooms, scholarship and community partnerships A&S offers. By connecting the past with today's most pressing challenges, the College remains true to the University's founding mission of preparing graduates not only for successful careers but also for thoughtful leadership and social transformation.



2013

In 2013, professor of English **George Saunders G'88** delivered a celebrated speech on kindness at A&S Convocation. Four years later, he became the first SU faculty member to win the Man Booker Prize for *Lincoln in the Bardo*.



2015

Faculty and alumni helped confirm a century-old prediction by Albert Einstein in their contributions to the 2015 detection of gravitational waves at the **Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory** (LIGO), opening an entirely new way of observing the universe.



2021

Kathy Hochul '80 became the first woman to serve as governor of New York, reflecting the ongoing evolution of leadership and representation in American politics.



2025

A&S launched the **Institute for Quantum and Information Science** under founding director **Alexander Maloney,** the Kathy and Stan Walters Endowed Professor of Quantum Science, uniting researchers across physics and engineering to explore quantum computing's future.

250 Years of Ideas

A&S faculty trace the American thinking that shaped their fields, and where that work is headed next.



Communication Sciences and Disorders

After World War II, veterans came home with hearing loss and communication problems. The fields of audiology and speech pathology, on both the clinical and research sides, grew up to meet them, says **Beth Prieve,** professor of communication sciences and disorders. Eight decades later, she says, the University's Gebbie Clinic and its research programs continue to do that work with "new and effective diagnosis and treatment" for veterans and neighbors alike.

Human Development and Family Science

The most consequential idea in her field, says **Dyane Watson,** professor of practice and chair of Human Development and Family Science (HDFS), isn't a single study but a whole reorientation: family systems theory. It shifted attention from individuals in isolation to "the relationships and systems in which people live." That shift continues to shape how HDFS students think about mental health, relationships and the broader contexts that influence people's lives. These are challenges that rarely affect just one person.

Languages, Literatures and Linguistics

Rania Habib, professor of linguistics and Arabic, says, "American linguistics has fundamentally changed how we understand language—not simply as a system of grammar, but as a reflection of cognition, identity, culture and social interaction." It has reshaped many fields, transforming research and education, with reach now extending into healthcare and AI. That range is what she sees A&S building on today, pairing language science with challenges like cross-cultural communication, more equitable AI and understanding how language shapes public discourse. It's proof, she says, that solving complex problems takes both scientific innovation and humanistic insight.



Philosophy

"Pragmatists focus on identifying what works to solve problems," says **Josh Hunt,** assistant professor of philosophy, describing the tradition that runs from Charles Sanders Peirce and William James through John Dewey and now splits into more varieties than most philosophy majors can count. Hunt sees the same instinct at work in his own classroom, where he's less interested in answering big questions than in training students to spot the difference between a well-supported claim and a hunch dressed up as one. It's a skill democracy depends on, he says.

Psychology

Katie Kidwell, assistant professor of psychology, points to the behavioral medicine movement—decades of research connecting sleep, stress and everyday habits to lifelong health. She sees the same spirit today in how A&S pairs interdisciplinary research and community partnerships with a thoughtful use of AI. "That approach," Kidwell says, "helps turn scientific discoveries into practical solutions."

Religion

It began with a 19th-century discovery: Scholars realized the Bible's first five books were stitched together from older sources, fueling liberal theological movements. That same discovery also sparked a backlash that produced "political movements that continue to gain strength" in American life today, says **James Watts,** professor of religion. His own research on the Bible's moral influence lays the religious basis for more tolerant politics ahead.

Meet the New Faculty

13 professors joined A&S this fall.



Adam Cawood
Michael G. and Susan T. Thonis Assistant Professor, Earth and Environmental Sciences



Nicole Davis
Assistant Teaching Professor, Biology



Aditi Gargeshwari
Assistant Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders



Melissa Birkett Greene
Associate Teaching Professor, Psychology



Hannah Holland-Moritz
Research Assistant Professor, Biology



Christopher Niemczak
Assistant Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders



Yanjun Qian
Assistant Teaching Professor, Mathematics



Gabriella Reynolds
Assistant Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders



Isabel Salas
Assistant Professor, Biology and Neuroscience



Anthony Taylor
Assistant Professor, Philosophy





Alejandro Varela
Visiting Professor of Practice, English



Aron Wall
Professor, Physics



Peixue Wu
Assistant Professor, Mathematics

Scan the QR code with your phone camera for more information about these new faculty members or visit go.syr.edu/as/2026-faculty.

Student Success Starts Day 1

Career readiness training is embedded into the A&S experience

Two initiatives designed for first-year students in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) are based on the knowledge that students thrive when support starts early. One builds a peer community for high-achieving scholars. The other helps those yet to declare a major to develop career readiness.

This approach is at the core of the College's award-winning advising model, which combines academic and career-centric programming (CareerReady) into a comprehensive system available from a student's first day on campus.

Career Planning in the First Semester

At most universities, career planning begins once you've declared a major, but at A&S, it starts in the first semester—even for those undecided.

All undecided first-year students in the College enroll in PST 105 Strategies for Career Success, a one-credit course believed to be the first of its kind nationally. Built around the eight career readiness competencies defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the course walks students through the foundational tools of professional life—resume-building, LinkedIn, networking, internship searches—before they've even chosen a major.

The philosophy behind it is straightforward, says Steve Schaffling, assistant dean of student success, who helped develop the course. "Career needs to be built right into Year 1 because it sets up goal alignment," he says. "Teaching these tools in a student's first term clarifies how they can map their path over the next four years."

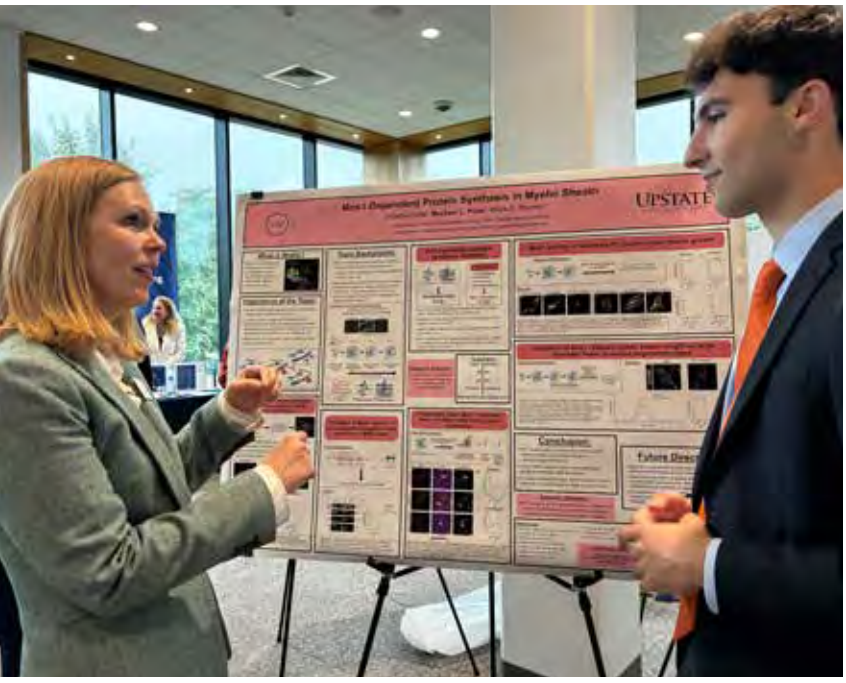
The results so far suggest the approach is working. Undecided students who take the course are returning for their second year at a rate of 93 percent, compared to a historical average of 86 percent.

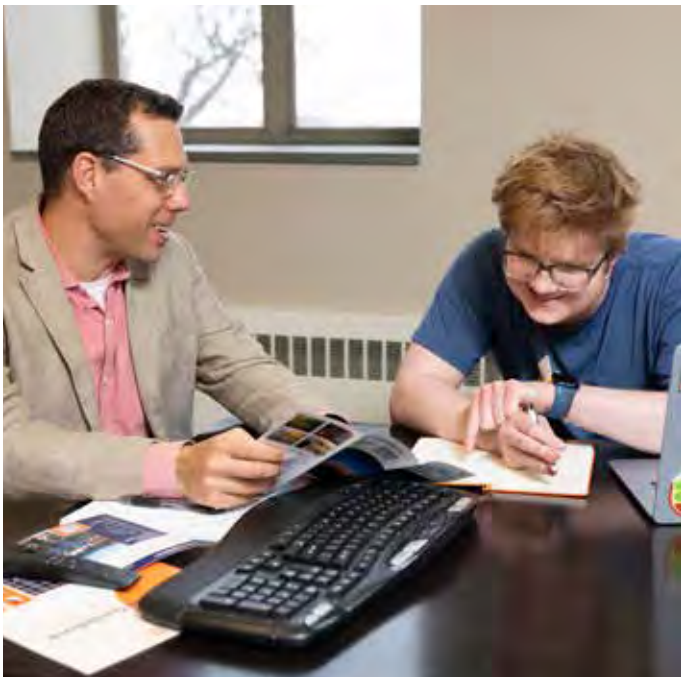
Students complete a Strong Interest Inventory, build and score their resume using an AI-powered platform, develop a LinkedIn profile, research internships and practice interviewing through a mock interview tool that provides AI feedback.

The most heavily weighted assignment is the Alumni Connections program, which requires each student to meet with an assigned alumnus before the semester ends. This structured networking exercise turns a potentially nerve-wracking encounter into a low-pressure, constructive conversation.

Students also move through the course alongside an undergraduate peer coach, a fellow student who tracks their progress and meets with them individually throughout the semester. The large-lecture format, held Friday mornings in Maxwell Hall Auditorium, is balanced by that one-on-one coaching relationship.

The course is one reason A&S graduates leave college trained to find and thrive in a plethora of careers independent of their major.





(Left) Associate Dean for Academic Initiatives and Curriculum Laura Machia discusses a research poster presented by Beckam Polis '28. (Right) Steve Schaffling meets with a student.

A Community of Their Own

Even small gains in a student's sense of belonging can meaningfully increase their chances of staying at and graduating from their current school. A new A&S initiative is putting that knowledge into action, connecting its highest-achieving first-year students with a like-minded community to ensure they thrive socially as well as academically

Last year, more than 300 A&S students were recognized at a University-wide banquet for earning the Invest in Success Scholarship, a $500 award granted to all first-semester students who earn at least a 3.75 GPA. The ceremony was one new way that the College plans to support its top students.

"In Arts and Sciences, this banquet is just the beginning," Laura Machia, A&S associate dean for academic initiatives and curriculum, told the scholars.

Machia and Steve Schaffling launched the initiative to help those students form a community unique to A&S. "What I wanted to do is help them find their people within their disciplines and their pathways faster," Machia says.

"Having mentors who overcame trials I will soon face and having access to their 'future knowledge' has been really impactful."



Jonathan Bispott '29

To do that, 15 upper-division students, drawn from several of the College's honors and mentoring programs, serve as peer mentors, each matched to a group of scholars by academic discipline.

Jonathan Bispott '29 notes, "I'm grateful for being part of a community of students who have similar struggles and experiences to me. Especially having mentors who overcame trials I will soon face and having access to their 'future knowledge' has been really impactful."

Events have spanned social and academic programming, from a dinner at the Inn Complete on South Campus to a career immersion trip open exclusively to Success Scholars, an opportunity typically reserved for upperclassmen. An advising mixer eased another anxiety-inducing transition: moving from a first-year advisor to an upper-division one, with scholars introduced to their new advisor in person by the advisor they already knew.

The peer mentor ratio, roughly one mentor for every 20 students, is already at the top of Machia's list for growth, with hopes to build a cohort of around 50 mentors, bringing the ratio closer to 1-to-5.

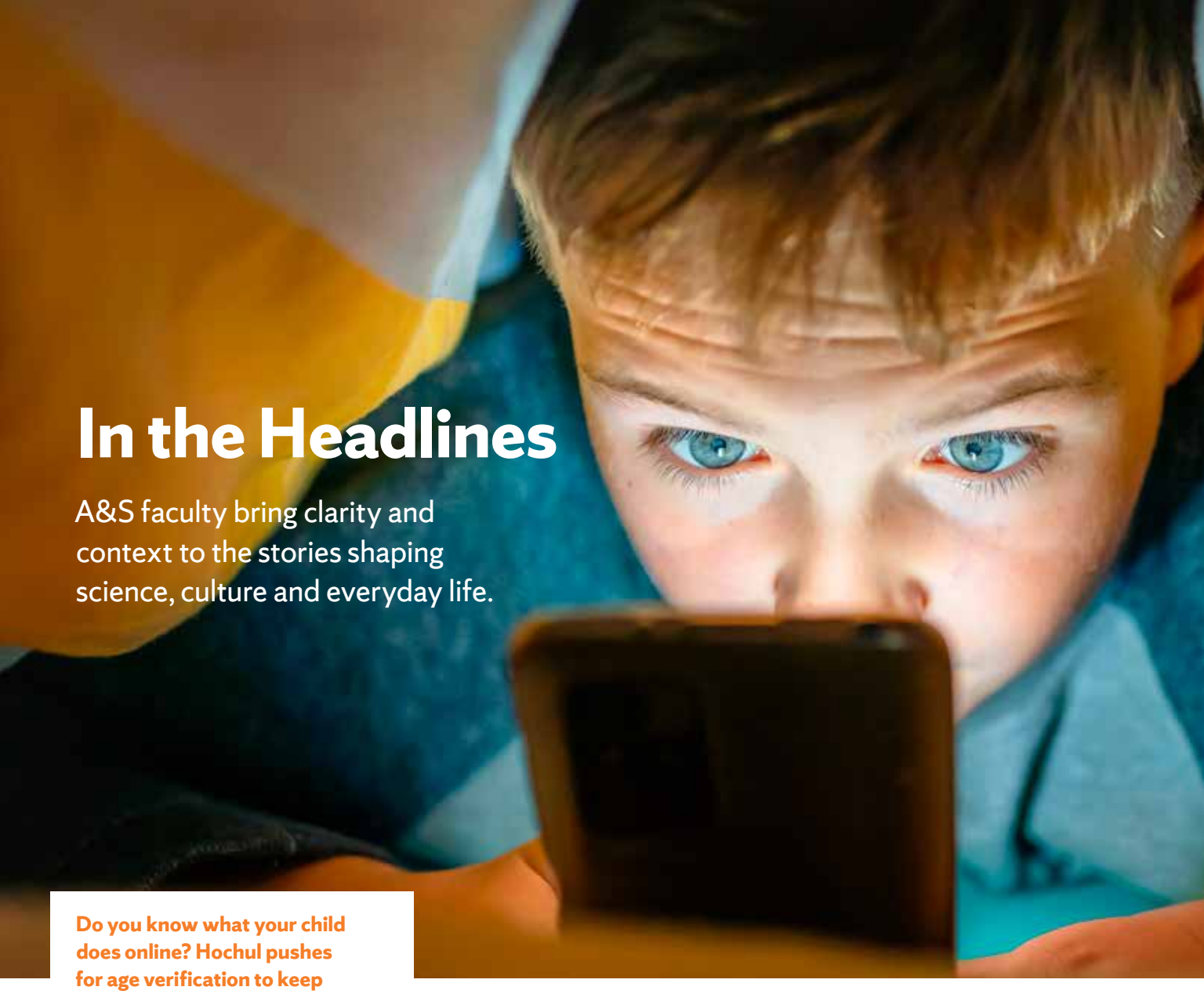


TOP-TIER EMPLOYERS

Thanks to A&S' stepped CareerReady program, students graduate ready to enter the nation's top workplaces across industries and sectors. Below are just some of the places our alumni work.

AFRL Air Force Research Laboratory
ACPS Alexandria City Public Schools
amazon
Boston Children's Hospital
Georgia O'Keeffe Museum
Georgetown University
Hearst Magazines
Goldman Sachs
Mass General Brigham
IBM
NBCUniversal
The New York Times
New York State Senate
Northwestern Mutual
Pfizer
Upstate Medical University
USGS
Vogue

Students meet and learn from A&S alumni during such signature immersion trips as the Winston Fisher immersion in New York City, above.



In the Headlines

A&S faculty bring clarity and context to the stories shaping science, culture and everyday life.

Do you know what your child does online? Hochul pushes for age verification to keep kids safe online ↑

WSYR NewsChannel 9 | Jan. 6, 2026

"Parents can't understand all the ins and outs of each app their kids are going to be on.... Parents should ask their kids questions like what would happen if someone sent you inappropriate texts or inappropriate information?"

Matthew Mulvaney, associate professor, human development and family science

Do you and your partner have formal 'planning sessions'?

USA Today | Jan. 16, 2026

"What's most healthy is when you have your individual goals and your couple goals.... The couple goals should be the ones you both completely agree on. For example, if one partner wants to lose weight but the other doesn't, it probably isn't a good idea for a couple goal. But if you both want to make a home improvement, stick that in the shared category."

Eman Tadros, assistant professor, human development and family science

Beyond the politics and protests, Super Bowl LX security gears up

USA Today | Feb. 5, 2026

"There are a lot of serious matters and performative politics at play. But this is a colossal public safety challenge, and at the end of the day, Homeland Security and local law enforcement have to manage the real and fundamental issues by working in tandem to keep people safe."

Corri Zoli, part-time instructor, senior research scholar in global affairs and international security, Forensic and National Security Sciences Institute

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to read more headlines or visit go.syr.edu/as/in-the-news.



Peering into Earth's climate past is getting ever more bizarre ↑

Scientific American | May 7, 2026

"Proxy data (indirect evidence from natural records such as fossils and tree rings) might seem like this obscure scientific thing, but they actually directly help our efforts to manage climate risk."

Tripti Bhattacharya, Thonis Family Professor, Earth and environmental sciences

AMERICA 250: How the Haudenosaunee shaped America's democracy ↓

ICT News | June 1, 2026

"Probably our greatest influence on the Founding Fathers came [through] people like Benjamin Franklin.... He's looking at the 13 colonies and thinking, all right, we all have different histories and regions and structures, could we all possibly ever work together? Are we just going to be 13 little countries?"

Scott Manning Stevens, associate professor, Native American and Indigenous Studies





A newborn baby sperm whale swims surrounded by family.



Project Mend's Patrick W. Berry on leadership: Try to see the good in people ↑

Syracuse.com | June 17, 2026

"As a leader, you need to be present with who you're working with. And you also need to be open to new ideas. Try to understand the experiences of the people you work with. Believe in people and give them chances to grow, whenever that's possible."

Patrick W. Berry, associate professor, writing and rhetoric (above), being interviewed by NewsChannel 9 after accepting the Syracuse Prize from CNY Arts in May 2026

The Odyssey: Why we're still inspired by a 2,700-year-old poem

Huffington Post | July 17, 2026

"*The Odyssey* has stuck with us so long because it has spectacular stories—Sirens, the Cyclops, Circe—that grab hold of our imaginations when we're young."

Jeffrey Carnes, associate professor, classics and classical civilizations

When ships are nearby, sperm whales change their calls ↑

National Geographic | July 22, 2026

"For sperm whales, family units provide protection from predators and help raising young, so there could be potential knock-on effects of disrupting that.... The fact that you can detect a subtle behavioral change, that could just be the tip of the iceberg of a more serious physiological disturbance that's not something we could measure directly externally."

Susan Parks, professor, biology

Why some New Yorkers oppose the state's Medical Aid in Dying Act

Spectrum News | July 29, 2026

"While there are varying perspectives among Buddhists, a traditional view would include stopping suffering by controlling one's own desire and understanding the implications that aid in dying could have on rebirth."

Gareth Fisher, associate professor and department chair, religion

A&S Bookshelf

There's no better season to curl up with something new. Explore the latest titles from A&S faculty and alumni.



Mood Swings
A Novel

Frankie Barnet G'19

After humanity wipes out every animal on Earth, a directionless young poet falls for the billionaire behind it. A biting satire for the doom-scroll age.



The Spoil
A Novel

Maile Chapman G'01

A woman caring for her dying mother in Las Vegas opens a box of old things and lets something ancient loose. Underneath the horror, it's a book about grief.



Crawl
Stories

Max Delsohn G'24

Wry, aching stories about trans men coming of age in 2010s Seattle—its bars, its bathhouses, its promise of a queer utopia that never quite arrived.



Great Disasters
A Novel

Grady Chambers G'15

Six friends grow up in early-2000s Chicago, drinking in basements and half-watching the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan begin, until the years quietly pull them apart.



Vasari and the Sacred Image
Renovating Santa Maria della Pieve in Arezzo

Sally Cornelison
Professor and director, Florence Graduate Program in Italian Renaissance Art

Vasari renovated his hometown's grandest church to honor his family and its saints. Cornelison shows he also used it to secure his own burial there.

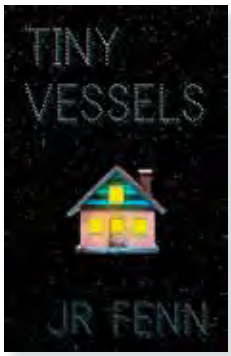


Atom and Void
Poems

Aaron Fagan G'06

Tight, brainy sonnets that borrow from physics and philosophy and keep circling one question: What does it mean to be here at all?

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to discover even more new books by creative writing MFA alumni.



Tiny Vessels

JR Fenn G'22

Small stories, enormous range: a prize-winning flash-fiction collection that travels from a kitchen table to the edge of the universe.



Everything Alive

Poems

Molly Johnsen G'21

Molly Johnsen wrote these poems after a truck nearly killed her. They're about the body, the people who got her through and everything still alive around her.



Land's Language

On Mapuche Memory, Translation, and the Territorial Aporia

Ethan Madarieta
Assistant Professor of English

What's really at stake in a fight over land? For Madarieta, the answer is language. He grounds this in Mapuche philosophy and literature.

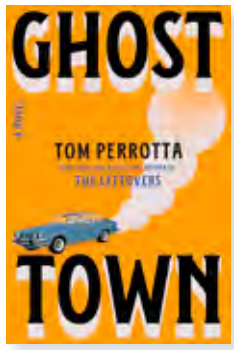


Insurgent Visions

Feminism, Justice, Solidarity

Chandra Talpade Mohanty
Distinguished Professor of Women's and Gender Studies

Mohanty's book makes the case for an insurgent feminism built from decades of global organizing, not theory alone.

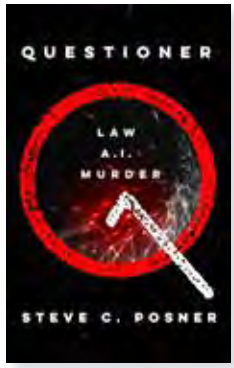


Ghost Town

A Novel

Tom Perrotta G'88

Tom Perrotta, author of *Election* and *Little Children*, returns with a darkly nostalgic novel about one summer in 1970s New Jersey and the ghosts it leaves behind.



Questioner

Steve Posner '76

Q is the AI running America's legal system. Then it wakes up. Posner's debut legal thriller asks what happens when no one's ready for it.



Soft Spots

A Novel

Leila Renee G'22

A young woman flees her family and bluffs her way into a teaching job she's determined to ace. Then comes news that her estranged father is gravely ill.



Hotshot

A Life on Fire

River Selby G'18

River Selby was one of the only women on an elite wildfire crew. Their acclaimed memoir is both a survival story and a sharp history of how the West burns.

Arts and Sciences Celebrates

This year, A&S found a lot to smile about, from proud goodbyes at Convocation to warm hellos during Welcome Week.

CONVOCATION







(Clockwise, from top left) Diploma in hand and all smiles; Waving to their biggest fans in the stands; Proud families rise to their feet, phones held high, cheering on this year's newest class of A&S | Maxwell graduates.

WELCOME WEEK











(Clockwise, from top left) Finding new friends at A&S | Maxwell's Find Your Orange Path event; Teamwork makes the dream work while moving in; It's not a true first day of classes without snagging a picture with Otto; New students discovering how writing could shape their futures at the Department of Writing Studies, Rhetoric and Composition's table; Getting acquainted with department faculty and staff.

A&S Faculty News



Scan the QR code with your phone camera to read more about Gorovitz (above).

Samuel Gorovitz retired in May 2026 after more than six decades at the forefront of philosophy, medicine and public life.

When he began his career in the 1960s, ethics was a largely theoretical pursuit; medicine's rapid advances—organ transplantation, life support, in vitro fertilization, genetic research—demanded answers that philosophy hadn't yet developed. Gorovitz was among the first to insist that philosophy bore responsibility for grappling with them.

"There's an idea I've always found important, that medicine saved ethics from a sterile irrelevance," Gorovitz says. "For a long time, academic ethics was very pure—careful, nuanced discussions with no real connection to what people were actually experiencing. What bioethics did was force a connectedness between scholarly work and what people truly care about in their lives."

He has testified before Congress, served on the New York State Task Force on Life and the Law, advised the World Health Organization and been named a founding figure of bioethics by the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute. His landmark 1976 textbook, *Moral Problems in Medicine*, helped establish medical ethics as an academic field.

Gorovitz, a Boston native with degrees from MIT and Stanford, joined Syracuse in 1986 as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, later founding the Renée Crown University Honors Program. After four decades at Syracuse, he leaves behind a field he helped invent.

Jack Graver retired in May 2026 after 60 years on Syracuse's mathematics faculty as one of the University's longest-tenured professors, having served under more than half of Syracuse's chancellors.



Scan the QR code with your phone camera to read more about Graver (above).

His path to teaching was anything but expected: Dyslexic before the term was widely known, Graver failed German four times and was once told by a professor not to return for a second semester. A sixth-grade aptitude test, to his classmates' amusement, predicted he'd become a teacher anyway.

That early struggle shaped his gift for reaching students. Understanding what it meant to fall behind, Graver built a career on patience and connection, often sharing his own academic failures with struggling students. He found a particular purpose in training K-12 math teachers, a calling that began in graduate school with the course no one else wanted: mathematics for elementary teachers. He discovered he loved helping teachers finally grasp concepts like long division they had taught for years without understanding. That work followed him to Syracuse through National Science Foundation summer institutes, state curriculum committees and No Child Left Behind-era workshops, and earned him the first standing ovation of his 67-year teaching career.

"A wide-ranging mathematician of international stature and a patient and generous mentor to students and junior faculty, Jack represents the best of the Department of Mathematics," says colleague and previous math chair Graham Leuschke.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!



Lincoln in the Bardo by creative writing professor **George Saunders G'88** is getting the full treatment: Tom Hanks will star as Abraham Lincoln in a film Saunders scripted himself, and the novel is becoming an opera, too, debuting this fall at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Saunders also made headlines this year for his newest novel, *Vigil*, profiled in a wide-ranging *New York Times* interview on morality, mortality and the writer's craft.

The Metropolitan Opera





A&S Alumni Dispatches

Joseph Cecile '84 retired in January 2026 after a 40-year career with the Syracuse Police Department.

Eileen Collins '78 received the prestigious Horatio Alger Award and became a lifetime member of the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans.

Michael Jennings '16 was appointed to the Central New York Community Foundation's Black Equity & Excellence Fund advisory council.

Albert W. Lenel '77 retired in August 2025 after a 22-year career as a professor at Miami Dade College.

Stephanie Leon '62 published her fifth book, *The Way of a Weasel*.

Marilyn Levinson '61 was nominated for an Agatha Award for Best Children/Young Adult Fiction for her novel, *Rufus and the Dark Side of Magic*.

David Merklinger '04 was promoted to general manager at Alisal Ranch, a luxury ranch and resort in Solvang, California.

Thomas Moore '77 Ph.D. published *The Cure at Walden Pond* with Pegasus Books.

Chineze "Chinny" Nwagbo '05 joined the WNBA's Connecticut Sun as the team's Director of Player Relations.

Matt Olsen '17 was promoted to people and operations generalist at Pinckney Hugo Group, a full-service marketing communications firm in Syracuse.

Sherry K. Pinchak '77 published *Tessie's Travels*, a "captivating historical love story set in the mid-19th century."

Richard J. Salvi '75 Ph.D. was awarded the Thomas F. Campbell Callier Prize in Communication Disorders by the University of Texas at Dallas' Callier Center for Communication Disorders.

Philip Spevak '51 published his debut children's book, *Pheepser's Sunfish Shenanigan*, at the age of 95.

Gal Stav '25 Ph.D. was named the CEO of the Ronald Gardenswartz JCC of Greater Albuquerque in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Linda R. Sternbach '81 was elected president of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

Kai Zhu '03 Ph.D. was named a fellow of the Materials Research Society.

Updates based on alumni submissions or public news sources. Provide career and contact information at cc.syr.edu/AandSUpdate. Updates may be published at the editor's discretion and may be edited for length and clarity.

CONGRATULATIONS, A&S BOARD MEMBERS!

Two members of the Dean's Advisory Board recently shared the following professional accomplishments.

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE



Debra Adams Simmons '86, former chair of the Dean's Advisory Board and 2023 A&S | Maxwell Convocation speaker, was named a 2026 inductee into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame for her outstanding contributions to the field. Now at GBH, Simmons, an English and broadcast journalism major, has served as executive editor for history and culture at National Geographic and as editor of *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland.

BOOK PUBLISHED



Michael Thonis '72, also a Syracuse University Trustee, has authored and published a new book, *The Geologic History of North America*, an account of the forces over eons that have shaped our continent. A geology major at Syracuse, Thonis went on to co-found Charlesbank Capital Partners, and he remains closely involved with the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, where he and his wife, Susan, have endowed three professorships.



TOUR | HALL OF LANGUAGES

From your first admissions visit to your graduation day photos, the Hall of Languages is woven into every stage of your Syracuse experience. Take a closer look at the history and everyday life inside this iconic building, which has been the symbolic heart of the College of Arts and Sciences for more than 150 years.

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to take a virtual tour of the Hall of Languages or visit youtu.be/q-5j-08KwVk.



YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE

A&S students develop the career and personal skills they need for success, thanks to immersion trips and employer visits—all made possible through the networks, mentoring and financial support of alumni like you.

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The Dean's Advisory Board

The dedicated alumni, parents and friends of the College of Arts and Sciences who serve as stewards and advocates on the Dean's Advisory Board are trusted advisors and staunch supporters of A&S.

We are grateful for their generosity and contributions to life on campus through mentoring, research and enterprise.

Susan Andersson '84
Lifelong friend of Syracuse University
Skaneateles, NY

Don Andres '68
Northrop Grumman Corp. (ret.)
Los Angeles, CA

Christian Andrews '87
Motion picture talent agent
Creative Artists Agency (CAA)
Los Angeles, CA

Patricia Arundel '87
General manager/director, platforms and devices
Pixel mobile products, Google
Marietta, GA

Christopher Barley M.D., '89
Board-certified internist
New York, NY

Stephen Barton '12
Director of intergovernmental relations
Office of Senator Charles E. Schumer
New York, NY

S. Jeffrey Bastable '69, G'73
Principal, B+L Consulting
Director of philanthropy,
Honor Flight Syracuse, Inc.
Syracuse, NY

Alicia Carroll '88
Owner and surgeon
Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Hickory, NC

Kia Chandler '00
Managing attorney
The Chandler Law Firm, LLC
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President and founder
Property Environmental, LLC
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Wells Fargo Advisors
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Wafiq Khondkar '26 (above, in Portugal) studied in Spain, examining environmental changes in the Mediterranean and their effects on local communities and policy. The biotechnology and philosophy major noted that "being a researcher isn't just about generating knowledge, but also about considering how that knowledge is used and who it serves." Help more students have access to transformative experiences such as study abroad or internships. **Give today.**

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Thank you!