

SPRING 2025

Arts & Sciences



Quantum Leaps

Advancing science, medicine and culture



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18

FEATURES

- Past Forward! 2
- ‘Never Take No for an Answer’ 8
- Empowering CareerReady Students 10
- Decoding Caribbean Imagery 12
- What Makes a Successful Entrepreneur? 14

IN EVERY ISSUE

- From the Dean 1
- Arts & Sciences Celebrates 16
- In the Headlines 18
- Dean’s Advisory Board 19

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ON THE COVER A&S researchers look to gecko feet and other examples from the natural world to improve the performance of adhesives. See page 5.



“Nothing is impossible when we put our minds to it. It is in looking back that we understand the significance of the quantum leaps we so fearlessly took.”

Dear Alumni and Friends—

Do you remember where you were on December 31, 1999? Whether you were celebrating out with friends or having a quiet night at home, the Y2K glitch was probably not far from your mind. Would ATMs stop working? Would the lights go out? Luckily for us all, human ingenuity prevented the glitch in time, and we rang in the New Year without a second thought.

In hindsight, it wasn't the Y2K bug that would change everything as we entered a new millennium. It was, in fact, human ingenuity in all its forms that shaped our lives. From technology to culture to medicine, the steady accumulation of advances transformed our lives and how we tackle the important questions facing us. You'll get a glimpse at some of those developments in our first article, "Past Forward: Faculty Perspectives from Y2K to 2050."

Ingenuity, vision and passion are on display throughout this issue. From the inaugural Kathy and Stan Walters Endowed Professor of Quantum Science to the alumna who helped transform medical care for half the population, to our leading-edge Office of Student Success, you'll be inspired by humanity's capacity to create positive change where it is needed most.

As A&S faculty and students work together with partners inside and outside academia to help solve issues related to climate change and the environment, health and well-being, social justice and belonging—while integrating powerful technological innovation into all these areas—it is instructive to remember that what seemed to be science fiction a handful of decades ago is now science fact. Nothing is impossible when we put our minds to it. It is in looking back that we understand the significance of the quantum leaps we so fearlessly took.

Sincerely,

Behzad Mortazavi
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Past Forward!

The evolution of science and society
from Y2K to 2025...and beyond.





It's been more than 25 years since people feared a global computer glitch (the Y2K bug) would paralyze the world at the stroke of midnight, December 31, 1999. While that world certainly didn't come to an end, the one that emerged brought revolutionary advances in technology, science, medicine and culture.

The College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) has contributed new answers to the many urgent questions facing us since then. A&S faculty reflect on the evolution of their fields since 2000 and into the future.



“Streaming has been promoted as a format that offers greater choice at one’s fingertips when, in fact, the catalogues on platforms like Netflix and Hulu are very present-focused.”

Will Scheibel



Movies

Will Scheibel, professor of film and screen studies in the Department of English, explores what’s new in how Americans consume film.



How has our movie consumption changed over the past 25 years?

Right now, movie theaters in the U.S. are dominated by franchise films like *Deadpool & Wolverine*, kids’ films based on pre-sold properties such as *Inside Out 2*, and the kind of old-fashioned Hollywood extravaganzas that have enjoyed a long history of popularity with mainstream audiences (the musical *Wicked*, the sword-and-sandal epic *Gladiator II*). Mid-budget comedies and dramas aimed at adults, the sort of fare that would have received theatrical releases in the not-too-distant past, are either going straight to streaming—the latest Lindsay Lohan rom-com *Our Little Secret* on Netflix—or given a limited theatrical distribution before they’re made available to watch on a particular streaming platform, for example, Clint Eastwood’s *Juror No. 2* on Max.

How do the choices available to us today compare to 25 years ago?

Streaming has been promoted as a format that offers greater choice at one’s fingertips when, in fact, the catalogues on platforms like Netflix and Hulu are very present-focused. A good independent video store in the ’80s and ’90s would have had a more historically comprehensive selection.

Music

Theo Cateforis, associate professor of music history and cultures in the Department of Art and Music Histories, discusses the transition from CDs to Spotify (and everything in between) and its effects on the music industry.



Since 2000, we’ve gone from FM radio to MP3 players to streaming. How did that fairly rapid progression change our relationship with music, if at all?

The biggest change, perhaps, is that we own many fewer physical copies of music than we used to and now access most of our listening through streaming databases. Being able to instantly stream music as individual tracks or selections means that most listeners no longer engage with albums as whole entities. Rather, most of us pluck tracks from albums to create our own personal playlists. We relish the flexibility that streaming has granted us.

Will that change the way artists distribute their music?

Given that the new mode of music consumption really is not based as much in listening to entire albums, an interesting question to consider is when and if artists might eventually abandon the album format altogether and simply return to releasing individual selections only (as musicians did prior to the invention of the Long-Playing format in the mid-20th century). I doubt this will happen anytime soon, but maybe somewhere down the road?

Social Media

Zahra Vahedi, assistant teaching professor of psychology, reflects on the impact of smartphones and social media on mental health.



From a psychological perspective, how have people changed or been affected by social media and all this ever-present technology?

We are now more aware of the associated effects of newer technologies. There's recently been a greater focus on the potential harmful effects of social media and smartphones. Parents, educators and policymakers have notably criticized their addictive and distracting nature.

True. Any favorable effects?

Social media played an integral role in keeping loved ones connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. This beckons the question of how do we as a society navigate the use of technology to ensure we're reaping the benefits and minimizing the harms?

What lies ahead in the next 25 years?

Looking into the future, all this complexity means that more thorough, and even individualized, forms of data collection and analysis will be necessary. While the future may seem intimidating (what new changes will it bring?), I remain hopeful that advances in psychological research will provide guidance on how to make the most out of technology.

Bioinspired Design

Austin Garner, assistant professor of biology, discusses how biology can inspire better adhesives.



How has technology enhanced our understanding and application of bioinspired attachment mechanisms?

With advances in both imaging and force sensing, we can now observe attachment phenomena at smaller scales and measure the tiny forces involved in attachment processes. Concurrently, improvements in manufacturing complex and smart materials have enhanced our ability to incorporate bioinspired design principles into human-made attachment devices.

Are there bioinspired attachment design principles that are currently being applied in the real world, or is this something we can expect to see more of by 2050?

One popular bioinspired attachment system probably in most of our houses at this very moment: Velcro. Velcro was actually inspired by the mechanism that burr plants use to attach their dried seeds—very well, I might add—to the fur of mammals to increase their dispersal.

There are a number of other bioinspired adhesives that have made their way to the market (e.g., based on gecko toe pads), but none are really commonplace. Many of these adhesives are still quite expensive, likely related to the high cost and difficulty in manufacturing them. I predict that we

will see more bioinspired adhesives on the market between now and 2050, especially if our manufacturing technology continues to advance at its current rate.

Climate Modeling

Tripti Bhattacharya, Thonis Family Professor of Paleoclimate Dynamics, talks about advancements in climate models and their vital role in addressing challenges posed by climate change.



How have technological advancements over the past 25 years improved scientists' ability to study ancient atmospheric conditions?

Humans have always been interested in the past, and throughout human history, fossils of plants and animals have given clues about ancient landscapes and climates. Over the last 25 years, improvements in instrumentation have enhanced our understanding of variables such as temperature, rainfall, ecosystem structure and fire.

How have these advancements enhanced climate modeling and future climate predictions?

Computers have gotten more efficient, allowing us to run longer simulations of more complex climate models at higher resolution. This allows us to use the past as a test bed for seeing how well our state-of-the-art climate models capture climate states that are unlike the present. When models successfully reproduce the past, we have more confidence in their ability to simulate the future.

What are your predictions for the future of climate models over the next 25 years?

The goal of the future will be reliable climate model simulations that serve human needs. Our models are overwhelmingly reliable at a global scale and agree about global trends in temperature and rainfall. However, the details of specific regional patterns of climate will benefit from innovations in modeling.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many of us probably already have a bioinspired product in at home: Velcro! Its attachment system was inspired by the very efficient way burr plants attach their dried seeds to animal fur—or human hair—to help spread those seeds far and wide.



Gravitational Waves

Stefan Ballmer, professor of physics who was involved in the first observation of gravitational waves from colliding black holes, highlights recent breakthroughs by Syracuse researchers and shares his predictions for the future.



What were the significant milestones in gravitational-wave detection over the last 25 years?

In the year 2000, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) team was held together by the desire to make this seemingly impossible dream—using lasers to measure fluctuations in space-time—a reality. The most notable milestone was the Nobel Prize-winning first observation of Gravitational-Waves in 2015, which we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of this year. That first detection was followed by five months of radio silence during which the entire LIGO team triple-checked that everything was OK, followed by the official announcement. LIGO was front-page news.

What do you predict for the future of gravitational-wave detection by 2050, and how will Syracuse play a role in that work?

The Syracuse Center for Gravitational Wave Astronomy and Astrophysics, together with a handful of groups at other universities, took the lead in defining what the next generation of gravitational-wave observatory in the U.S. (now named Cosmic Explorer) should look like. As the project grows, we intend to take hardware design tasks for Cosmic Explorer and ultimately help with its installation and commissioning.

Neutrinos

Mitchell Soderberg, professor and department chair of physics, delves into the evolution of research on neutrinos—the tiny, unseen particles that emerge from some of the universe’s most intense phenomena, such as the Big Bang.



How has neutrino detection evolved over the last 25 years?

The development of Liquid Argon Time Projection Chambers (LArTPC) in the past 25 years has been a significant step forward in neutrino detection. Now we are pursuing the Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE), which will feature multiple Physics Building-sized LArTPCs (each enclosing around 10,000 tons of liquid argon) one mile deep in an abandoned gold mine in South Dakota.

With more advanced neutrino detectors set to come online in the coming years, what type of groundbreaking discoveries about the universe might be on the horizon?

It’s very cliché to say this, but I think it’s always the unexpected discoveries that are the most exciting and potentially transformative. We definitely have scientific goals in mind with something as vast and complex as DUNE, like conclusively measuring whether neutrinos and antineutrinos behave in the same way or not (a thing we call “charge-parity symmetry”), and whether that might be part of the reason why our universe is dominated by matter and not antimatter. That would be an amazing, possibly Nobel-prize winning, discovery.

“It’s always the unexpected discoveries that are the most exciting and potentially transformative.”

Mitchell Soderberg



Illustration of neutrinos bombarding the Earth.



“The rapid explosion of telehealth as a viable treatment option in 2020 stands out as the most notable recent technological advancement in the practice of psychology.”

Afton Kapuscinski

Quantum Information Science

Alexander Maloney (AM), Kathy and Stan Walters Endowed Professor of Quantum Science and director of the Institute for Quantum and Information Science, and Simon Catterall (SC), professor and associate chair of physics, explain how quantum information science has grown.

What is quantum information science?

SC: Quantum information science combines quantum mechanics with information theory to process, analyze and transmit information. The field took off in the 1990s when Peter Shor, of IBM, showed that quantum computers could factor prime numbers much faster than classical computers. There are now algorithms capable of faster database searches than ever before.



What is the biggest breakthrough in quantum in recent years?

AM: A series of demonstrations has resulted in quantum computing devices with surprisingly small error rates. Every computing device, from your phone to a quantum computer, will make errors occasionally. Scientists have been able to reduce these error rates, turning the study of quantum computers from a pie-in-the-sky dream a few decades ago into a field of research of crucial scientific and societal importance.



Can we expect to see quantum computers become commonplace in the next 25 years?

AM: If I had to make a prediction, I would say that by 2050 we will have controlled systems that can be used to exploit the full computational power of quantum mechanics, but—because they are complex, delicate systems—you probably won’t have a quantum computer in your laptop. Instead, they will be used for the study of complicated systems, from physics and biology to machine learning and optimization.

Emergence of Telehealth

Afton Kapuscinski, assistant teaching professor of psychology, examines how technological advancements have transformed therapy and underscores the complex balance between innovation and the fundamental human elements of psychological healing.



How has the patient experience changed during your time as a psychologist?

The rapid explosion of telehealth as a viable treatment option in 2020 stands out as the most notable recent technological advancement in the practice of psychology. It eliminates geographic distance and travel as prohibitive factors for patients who may have otherwise faced long waitlists or logistical challenges to receiving treatment. Patients can now schedule therapy on their lunch breaks or while their baby naps.

So how can we ensure the quality and safety of online therapy while balancing the need for human connection in psychological treatment?

Although preliminary research suggests that virtual treatment with qualified providers is effective and often preferable to patients, we are also left to grapple with some legitimate risks and ethical questions about technology-mediated therapy. Chief among these questions are whether quality and safety of services can be maintained with big business online therapy platforms, as well as whether artificial intelligence can serve as a substitute for the healing relationship that psychology has long believed to be the most critical ingredient of successful outcomes. 🙌

Read the full Past Forward feature.



‘Never Take No for an Answer’

Phyllis E. Greenberger ’64 transformed the landscape of women’s health research.

As a Syracuse University student, Phyllis E. Greenberger ’64 (below) could never have imagined that nearly three decades later, she would be advocating for women’s health at the White House. After graduating, her career led her from social worker to federal lobbyist. Greenberger eventually became a leading voice for women’s health while serving as president and CEO of the Society for Women’s Health Research (SWHR).

Greenberger credits her time on the SU Hill for her success on Capitol Hill. Armed with her liberal arts education, which honed her critical thinking, adaptability and cultural awareness, she developed a “never take no for an answer” attitude that served her well leading SWHR and ultimately transforming the landscape of women’s health research.

We recently sat down with Greenberger to learn more about her Syracuse experience, being a champion of women’s health and the current state of women’s health.



Take us back to your time at Syracuse. Why did you choose SU and what do you remember most fondly from your time as a student?

I fell in love with the Central New York region while taking summer courses at Cornell University as a high school student. Those experiences motivated me to apply to Syracuse University.

I really enjoyed my time there. I was in a sorority, Sigma Delta Tau, and I still have many friends that I keep in touch with. One of my most memorable experiences, though, was my time abroad in Florence. Studying abroad was very unusual at that time, and it was very transformative.

Shifting to your career as a women’s health advocate, what inspired you to become involved in that field?

While interning with the American Psychiatric Association, I met several female psychiatrists who were concerned that women weren’t included in clinical trials, even though women suffered more from depression and anxiety than men.

Can you explain your role in advancing women’s health advocacy at the presidential level?

In the early 1990s, while I was with the APA, I began working with the staff of (former second lady) Tipper Gore, who was interested in mental health issues. Later, a friend asked me to organize a group of women for an event during President Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign, where Hillary Clinton was speaking. After the event,



Phyllis Greenberger (left of center) with President Bill Clinton at the White House after Clinton signed an appropriations bill in support of women’s health.

I suggested to Hillary, 'If you're going to be speaking to women across the country, you might want to talk about women's health.'

When I arrived at my office the following day, Hillary had left a message asking me to join their campaign as an advocate for women's health. During Bill's acceptance speech the following January, he made a reference to women's health. After the speech, Hillary came over to me and said, 'That was because of you,' so that was really nice. That was sort of where it all started.

Can you talk about some of the issues women faced from a health care standpoint when you started with the Society for Women's Health Research?

In the early 1990s, medical devices such as pacemakers, joint replacements and stents were designed based on male anatomy, ignoring the differences between men's and women's bodies. Now we know medications and devices work differently for each gender. However, issues like undiagnosed cardiovascular conditions persist because some physicians lack familiarity with the different symptoms, so the fight for women's health rights isn't over yet.

Your book, *Sex Cells*, outlines the historical context of women's health. What was your motivation to tell this story?

I think it's important for people to understand the history of women's health, not only because of the progress, but also because of the fact that we're not there yet. The beginning of the book focuses on the history, and the end is patient stories and quotes from researchers. The quotes from the researchers make it obvious that there's still a lot of ignorance, a lot of denial and a lot of research that is not being taken into consideration. The patient stories bring attention to women who have been turned away because their symptoms are different, or they're not taken seriously.

Can you provide an example?

Doctors often dismiss women's complaints about pain. There are numerous stories of women experiencing indigestion, stomach pains or chest pains, only to be ignored in hospitals and then later on discover that they were having a heart attack. The last part of the book is really a statement about how much ignorance and denial still exist.

Throughout your career, you consistently challenged the status quo to advocate for others. What's your secret to achieving success in this endeavor?

I've been asked so many times how I managed to do what I did. It really had to do with me having, as they say in Yiddish, chutzpah. I just never took no for an answer. When heads of major health organizations ignored what we were trying to do for women's health advocacy, I just kept on going. Don't take no for an answer. If you really feel strongly about something, then you need to really push it. 🙌

PHYLLIS GREENBERGER CAREER SNAPSHOT

1943-1960

Grew up in Brooklyn, NY

1964

Graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in liberal arts

MID-1970s

Interned with the American Psychiatric Association (APA), developing an interest in women's health advocacy

1980-1993

Worked at the APA as an assistant director of government relations and was director of the political action committee

1990

Served on the board for the Society for Women's Health Research

1992

Advocated for women's health during Bill Clinton's presidential campaign

1993-2016

Served as president and CEO of the Society for Women's Health Research

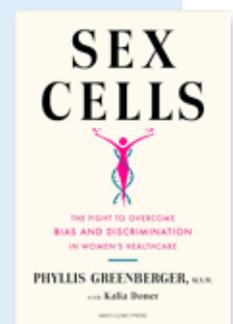
2016-PRESENT

Senior vice president of science and health policy for healthy women; consultant

MAKING HISTORY

Greenberger's book, *Sex Cells*, chronicles the fight to overcome bias and discrimination in women's health care. It emphasizes the ways in which biological sex significantly impacts both health and the quality of health care received. Although conditions like heart and autoimmune diseases, migraines and others manifest differently in individuals with XX chromosomes, Greenberger argues that many patients do not receive the appropriate attention or care due to sex bias present in clinics, laboratories and clinical studies.

Read the full interview with Phyllis Greenberger. 





Students listening to a presentation at Equitable's Syracuse office during the Stocks and Finance Immersion in fall 2024.

Empowering CareerReady Students

A common question for college students nearing graduation is, “What’s next?” According to a May 2024 Student Voice survey by Inside Higher Ed and Generation Lab, 68% of students feel at least “somewhat” apprehensive about life after college. To help ease that uncertainty at the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) | Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, the Office of Undergraduate Academic and Career Advising has launched CareerReady, a carefully crafted program that leads students through career preparedness objectives, from their first year to graduation.

Networking Locally

One important component of CareerReady is immersion trips, in which A&S | Maxwell students visit companies to gain insight into a wide variety of industries and work cultures.

Through these experiences, students both discover how their degree prepares them for success and forge valuable connections with industry leaders and Syracuse University alumni in a wide range of sectors.

Building on the success of New York City immersions, the advising office explored ways to involve more students and industries. They began offering a series of Syracuse-area immersions, where students spend a day visiting various companies within a specific field based in Central New York. These immersions, which are planned by Kristen Aust, director of career advising for A&S | Maxwell, and Matt Wheeler, director of employer-alumni relations for A&S | Maxwell, as well as many A&S | Maxwell advisors, provide students with greater confidence in making decisions about their future because they can hear from actual practitioners about their path to success.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

LEVEL 1 Students collaborate with advisors to build resumes and LinkedIn profiles, and plan their time at SU.

LEVEL 2 Students participate in career immersion trips and receive mentorship from alumni.

LEVEL 3 Students find internships and connect with alumni for job shadowing and informational interviews.

LEVEL 4 Students receive assistance with resume refinement, cover letter writing and business etiquette, and access on-campus job interviews facilitated by employer relationships.

The reception from students has been resoundingly positive. Of those who took part in the local immersions, over 90% of students surveyed said they gained valuable knowledge about career options through these experiences.

Helping Students Plan Their Future

Diana Bonilla-Prado '28, a first-generation college student majoring in political science in A&S | Maxwell and minoring in information management and technology in the School of Information Studies, took part in the pre-law immersion and found it both motivating and empowering.

"This trip gave me insight on what I'd like to do, what my liberal arts degree can be used for, and has helped me plan for my future," Bonilla-Prado says. "During one of our meetings, I met a woman of color who shared a similar ethnic background with me. Being able to make that connection was incredibly inspiring and resonated deeply with me."

Sylla Diallo '25, a double major in African American studies in A&S and international relations in A&S | Maxwell, also attended the pre-law immersion. He said hearing from legal professionals and learning about their educational and career paths gave him a better understanding of the commitment and dedication it takes to be successful in that field.

"Visiting each law office, getting to know experienced leaders in the field and being a part of the environment that I'd like to work in was extremely valuable," he says.

Connecting with Employers

Like the New York City-based immersion trips, the local immersions provide students with insight and access to employers and career opportunities. Local employers, in turn, benefit by connecting with talented SU students who may become future interns or employees. Alumni have also been eager to get involved, as it allows them to mentor current Orange students and stay connected with the University community and fellow alumni through networking events.

"Local immersions allow us to make this all happen in close proximity to the University," says Wheeler. "It strengthens Syracuse's connection with the local community and helps students find opportunities, such as internships, near campus."

Wheeler hopes that the connections made with local employers will also lead to more students pursuing full-time employment in Central New York. In a city like Syracuse—smaller than New York City, Washington or Boston—he says students are often able to have a different experience, working for local companies, personally and professionally.

"They can often have a greater impact at local companies or find a more suitable work-life integration," says Wheeler. "We want to show students that this is an option that may align better with their preferences and values. Some students overlook the benefits of working for smaller companies or living in smaller communities." 🍷



Diana Bonilla-Prado (left) and Sylla Diallo

“Visiting each law office, getting to know experienced leaders in the field and being a part of the environment that I'd like to work in was extremely valuable”

Sylla Diallo



WAYS TO GIVE BACK



Your support can launch students into their careers. **Make a contribution to CareerReady** to help more students connect with employers through the immersion program. You can also **sign up to be an alumni mentor.**

LEARN MORE

Read the full CareerReady article.



Container #3 (left) and Container #7 (right) by Joiri Minaya, pigment prints, courtesy of the artist and Praise Shadows Gallery.

Decoding Caribbean Imagery

Idyllic scenes hide a complicated past.

A 1950s travel brochure of a pristine Caribbean beach with palm trees and sunshine might make you dream about a tropical vacation. But if you analyze that image more deeply, it can reveal a much more complicated past, says Cristina E. Pardo Porto, assistant professor of Latinx literature and culture in the College of Arts and Sciences' Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics.

These stereotypical images of the Caribbean used to promote the travel industry are not just innocuous portrayals of paradise. Pardo Porto traces them back to the 15th and 16th centuries when Europeans began to colonize the Americas. Settlers described the Caribbean as an exotic and fertile land ripe for extraction, reinforcing ideas of ownership and domination.

“These narratives justified the exploitation of the land and its people, laying the groundwork for the contemporary tourism industry,” says Pardo Porto. “Tourism, in turn, relies on similar fantasies, using idyllic images of beaches, palm trees and smiling locals to market the region as an escape for wealthy foreigners. These visual constructs mask the inequalities and labor exploitation that sustain the industry.”

According to Pardo Porto, the subsequent growth and expansion of large hotels and resorts has led to environmental degradation and the displacement of local communities which are forced to relocate within their own country.



During the Spring 2025 semester, Pardo Porto curated an art exhibition in collaboration with the Syracuse University Art Museum. The exhibition showcased works by Joiiri Minaya, a Dominican American artist known for her critiques of stereotypical Caribbean representations. Minaya's art was displayed alongside historical photographs and artworks from the museum's collections, highlighting the effects of colonization, tourism and commercialization on the Caribbean.

How to Read Caribbean Art

On display at the exhibition were works from Minaya's *Containers* (2020) series, where she uses her own body wrapped in fabric with tropical patterns, in stereotypical and unnatural poses. Pardo Porto notes that this embodies the imagery imposed on both women (the pose) and landscape (tropical print, flowers, etc.).

"She draws attention to how tropicity is commercialized and consumed, inviting viewers to reflect on their complicity in perpetuating harmful representations," says Pardo Porto. "Minaya not only highlights the absurdity of tropical imagery but also prompts viewers to confront and rethink the ingrained stereotypes they might unconsciously accept and reproduce."

Pardo Porto hopes that visitors to the exhibition develop a deeper understanding of how stereotypical images are created and embedded in visual culture. "My hope is that students, faculty, staff and the local community will gain the tools to see and acknowledge the pervasive tropes of tropicality and then actively unsee them—dismantling these limiting frameworks and fostering new ways of seeing." 🙌

Read more about the art exhibition.



A&S Professor Cristina E. Pardo Porto curated the art exhibition titled Joiiri Minaya: Unseeing the Tropics at the Museum, at the Syracuse University Art Museum.

"My hope is that students, faculty, staff and the local community will gain the tools to see and acknowledge the pervasive tropes of tropicality and then actively unsee them—dismantling these limiting frameworks and fostering new ways of seeing."

Cristina E. Pardo Porto



For the installation titled *#dominicanwomengooglesearch* (2016), Minaya conducted a Google Image search for the term "Dominican women." Based on the results of that search, she digitally isolated individual body parts, enlarged and printed them on Sintra board, and then hand-cut them after covering the backs with tropical-patterned fabrics. This installation invites viewers to reflect on and challenge the recurring, sexualized poses associated with tropicalized identities.

What Makes a Successful Entrepreneur?

'CUSE50 ALUMNI ENTREPRENEUR AWARD



A liberal arts education from the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) creates entrepreneurs by blending interdisciplinary thinking, global perspective and data literacy to help graduates spot innovative opportunities and understand diverse markets. Through hands-on learning and real-world problem solving, students gain practical skills to explore bold ideas and craft creative solutions to complex challenges.

Meet six A&S graduates who were recently recognized for their entrepreneurial successes.

Bryan Rafanelli '84

A&S | MAXWELL MAJOR
Political Science

Rafanelli founded Rafanelli Events in 1996, a company that plans destination weddings, large corporate events, star-studded galas and fundraisers. The company has overseen the official holiday decorations in the White House during the Obama administration and, more recently, coordinated a state dinner under President Joseph R. Biden Jr. L'68, H'09.

"Syracuse didn't just give me a degree; it gave me the confidence and tools to forge my path as an entrepreneur," says Rafanelli.



Aaron Krause '92

A&S MAJOR Psychology

Krause founded Scrub Daddy Inc. in 2012. His company is best known for its polymer-based sponges in the shape of a smiley face. The product gained international fame after being on the hit show Shark Tank in 2013. The Scrub Daddy sponge is one of the most successful products ever featured on that show, as the company now has over \$900 million in cumulative sales.

"There are so many very relevant synergies between psychology and business that it should be taught as part of the business curriculum," says Krause about his Syracuse education. "My understanding of human behavior and desires have helped me understand customers' needs, wants and even how to deal with the stress of being an entrepreneur."



Read more about the 'CUSE50 awards. 



Scrub Daddy sponges.

Jason O’Leary ’96

A&S MAJOR Religion

O’Leary co-founded Surety Bonds Direct, a bonding agency that offers services such as bond rate quotes, bond applications and bond shopping. The company has been rated Best Overall Surety Bond Company and was recognized as one of the fastest-growing private companies in America.

“If I have one regret when I look back on my time at SU, it’s that I didn’t study abroad,” O’Leary says in reflection of his time at Syracuse. “My older self would advise anyone at Syracuse to take advantage of those opportunities to meet new people and see the world as the huge diverse place that it is.”



Ian Brady ’99

A&S MAJOR Art History

Brady co-founded SoFi (Social Finance) Technologies Inc. in 2011 with fellow students at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. SoFi refinanced federal and private student loans and later offered mortgages, personal loans and other services. After SoFi, Brady joined Kensho Technologies as an advisor; co-founded and led AVA, a personalized nutrition platform; and is the CEO of Hologram Sciences, a personalized biotech and health incubator.

“I met my wife, Sonia, at Syracuse University,” Brady says. “She’s supported my entrepreneurial goals and my professional career. Make sure you have the right person in your corner.”



Luis Cadavid ’12

A&S MAJOR Classical Civilization

A&S MINORS Medieval and Renaissance Studies; Russian Language and Literature

Cadavid is managing partner of global operations at Flower’s House Group, an international distributor of high-quality, fresh flowers. Outside of working for Flower’s House Group, Cadavid founded art gallery 1931.io, co-founded Zoey’s Choice LLC and also served as a business advisor and consultant for Grow Grandes.

“I was playing around with my second startup and ventured into the world of flowers while I was at Syracuse University,” Cadavid says. “I participated in many of the clubs and different activities, allowing me to try new things and learn about small businesses.”



Ron Balchandani ’16

A&S | MAXWELL MAJOR Economics

Balchandani founded AV Equity Partners in 2020, a global investment firm that manages multiple alternative asset classes, including private equity and real estate. Notable current and past assets include ORCA, The Ritz-Carlton, Hotel Shangri-La, and, most recently, American Logistics.

“Syracuse helped provide technical skills and a strong network,” Balchandani says. 🏡



’CUSE50 CELEBRATES TOP ENTREPRENEURS

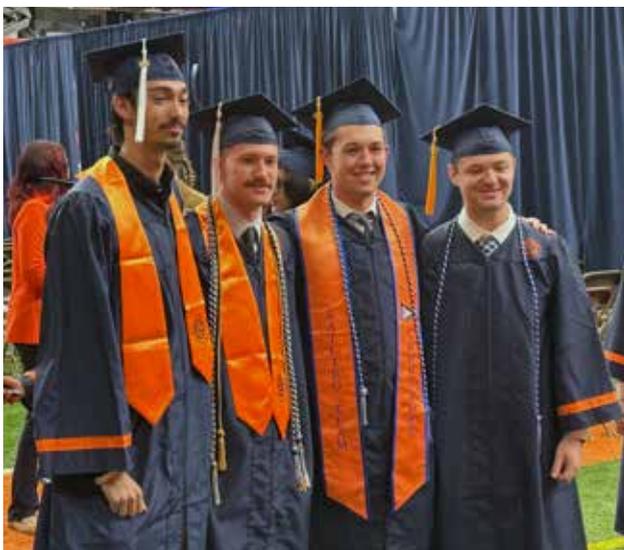
These A&S alumni were honored last fall at the ’CUSE50 Alumni Entrepreneur Awards—a two-day event highlighting the 50 fastest-growing alumni businesses of 2024. The celebration highlights the entrepreneurial spirit of graduates and their significant global impact, reinforcing Syracuse University’s commitment to fostering innovation among its alumni and proudly displaying A&S’s place atop these efforts.



Arts & Sciences Celebrates

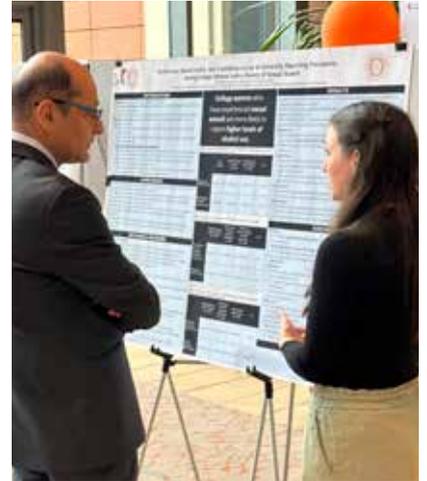
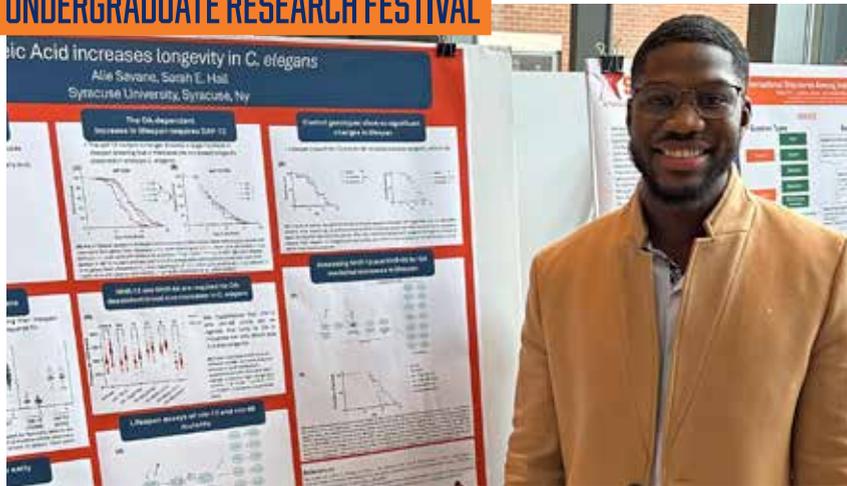
Whether we were sending off our latest graduates, meeting our newest students or welcoming back alumni, family and friends, A&S had plenty to celebrate in the 2024-25 school year.

CONVOCATION



(Clockwise, from top right) Alumni keynote speaker Bob Mankoff '66 shares his words of wisdom with graduates. A sea of graduates look on as student speaker Ellen Clark '25 delivers her address. The real treasure was the friends we made along the way, as they say. Smile, you're graduating!

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FESTIVAL



(Clockwise, from top left) Biology major Alie Savane '25 with his project, *How Oleic Acid Affects C.elegans' Lifespan*. Psychology student Kiley McGroder '25 explaining her research to A&S Dean Behzad Mortazavi. A&S students presenting their work at the 2025 Undergraduate Research Festival in the Life Sciences Complex's Milton Atrium.

WALTERS PROFESSOR INSTALLATION



(Clockwise, from top left) Chancellor Kent Syverud, Dr. Ruth Chen, Alexander Maloney, Interim Vice Chancellor and Provost Lois Agnew and A&S Dean Behzad Mortazavi pose for a group photo following Maloney's installation as Kathy and Stan Walters Endowed Professor of Quantum Science. Chancellor Syverud presenting Professor Maloney with a gift.

In the Headlines

Top news outlets turn to A&S faculty for insights on the latest discoveries and innovations.



Two gray whales swimming together in the ocean.

“Examining the surge of ADHD in the U.S. youth post-pandemic”

Academic Minute, WAMC radio (Albany, NY) | Dec. 5, 2024

“In 2022, researchers found that 7.1 million children and adolescents in the U.S. were diagnosed with ADHD, marking an increase of one million diagnoses since 2016. Why have we seen such a rapid increase? The pandemic has played a part. Youth, parents and teachers reported increased mental health concerns—particularly stress, anxiety and depression—which led more caregivers to seek diagnostic evaluations, subsequently increasing ADHD diagnoses.”

Kevin Antshel, professor of psychology

“What makes the Santa Ana winds so destructive?”

NBC News | Jan. 9, 2025

“In California, we used to think of fire as a late-summer occurrence, but now fire season is extending into January. So that fire season is more likely to coincide with Santa Ana winds in the future.”

Tripti Bhattacharya, Thonis Family Professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

“Is that really a best new artist? The long and complex tale of a controversial Grammy category”

Associated Press | Jan. 21, 2025

“I do think that they are constantly tweaking that category to make a bigger splash with it. They are kind of gaming the system to say, ‘Yes, we want artists nominated for this category who will draw eyeballs, who will have an audience, who will make for a better kind of media representation.’”

Theo Cateforis, associate professor in the Department of Art and Music Histories

“Researchers present Ozempic alternatives—without sickening GI side effects”

Newsweek | Jan. 31, 2025

“Patients want to lose weight, but they don’t want to feel sick doing it. Our approach since Day One has been to try and see if we can do this without making people feel sick in the process.”

Robert P. Doyle, Jack and Laura H. Milton Professor and Dean’s Professor of Chemistry

“What is a black moon? How and when you can watch the rare lunar event as it appears in the skies”

The Daily Mail | December 30, 2024

“There’s nothing to see when it comes to the moon itself [during the black moon], but the lack of moonlight creates ideal conditions for stargazing, making it easier to spot constellations such as Orion, Taurus and Leo.”

Walter Freeman, associate teaching professor of physics

“Drone video of gray whales offers new insight into how they eat” ↑

NBC News | Oct. 1, 2024

“As we try to do conservation efforts or conserve endangered species, it’s really important to understand that there could be a wide variation in behaviors. So we can’t just sort of stop at the single observation...Using drone footage to essentially spy on what the whales are doing [provides a] totally different perspective on the details of how they were making a living.”

Susan Parks, professor of biology and principal investigator of Syracuse University’s Bioacoustics and Behavioral Ecology Lab 📺

Read the latest A&S media hits.



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The College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Advisory Board is composed of accomplished alumni, parents and friends who are among our most generous supporters, staunchest stewards and fiercest advocates. With their diverse professional expertise and leadership experience, the members of the board are important advisors in enhancing student programs, scholarship, research and experiential learning.

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