

RIT

University Magazine

Spring 2024

COMICS GO TO COLLEGE

Also inside:

Students score with
RIT Sports Network

The nuts and bolts
of robotics research

What's being made
in the SHED





Safeguarding elections in the age of AI

RIT University Magazine

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The first artificial intelligence (AI) election year is here, and we need your help to preserve democracy.

Will we be able to trust what we read and what we

hear in the coming months? How will we decide what is true? AI is ubiquitous and will likely be a factor in elections in more than 50 nations this year.

Voter confidence and election security is paramount. We urge you to be an informed voter and read a special report on pages 6 and 7 that highlights RIT experts and their tips to prepare for upcoming elections.

Justin Pelletier, director of RIT's ESL Global Cybersecurity Institute Cyber Range and Training Center, has some advice: "The most critical voting machine is your brain. Don't let your values get hacked."

Beyond elections, AI is an engine of innovation that is driving scientific discovery and economic growth. AI is one of the most significant advances of our time. RIT is well positioned to play an integral role in teaching and innovation in AI in a multitude of forms.

Along with our core strengths in technology and experiential learning, we have complementary strengths in the arts and design, making RIT a unique environment to study, build, and test AI. We must pursue our work through ethical and socio-technical lenses.

To synergize our activities, we have created an AI task force that is helping shape our work in the areas of research, scholarship and innovation, teaching and curriculum, and experiential AI on campus. Go to rit.edu/AI to see our vision and strategic direction.

Breakthroughs in AI will change the way we teach our classes and will alter much of our curriculum. Researchers will employ AI techniques in a multitude of application areas, making major leaps in discovery and innovation. And yet the most intriguing effects of AI at RIT may be on community life and in our business operations.

We already have faculty and staff members using AI in their daily work. This is just the tip of the iceberg. You can imagine AI buddies and smart, mobile robots transforming campus life over the next 10 to 20 years.

We are starting to see this future emerge in industrial and healthcare settings, so I think we're in a great position to anticipate what is to come. Overall, we aspire to be a leading AI university, working within an ethical framework to invent a more prosperous, sustainable, and equitable future.

Let's perpetually create the future in new ways. And don't forget Justin's advice as you do your pre-election homework.

Yours in Tiger pride,

David C. Munson Jr., President
munson@rit.edu

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Students score with RIT Sports Network

Tigers are learning from professionals how to create multimedia productions.

Traci Westcott

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Comics go to college

RIT's growing archive helps students understand the creative process in the creation of comics.

Cover: Adam Kubert '81 (medical illustration) draws comics for a living. He is best known for the Marvel Comics superhero Wolverine. This cover features his art from *Wolverine*, No. 4, Marvel Comics, 2020. Reprinted with permission from Kubert.



Student murals spread vibrant colors

A cluster of rainbow dragons found a home at RIT and its colors have spread throughout campus. When Emma McCarthy, a fourth-year illustration major, painted a mural for the College of Art and Design's Booth Hall elevator, her artwork sparked requests for more student murals on campus.

The College of Liberal Arts building's elevator was

refreshed with a mural this spring, as was the K-12 University Center's new office in downtown Rochester. The two murals were created by teams of illustration students as part of a new special topics course called Public Illustration. Allen Douglas, lecturer in RIT's School of Art, led the course.

"It all started with Emma's mural. Everyone saw how it livened up the space and, once

the word got out, there were multiple entities interested in having their own. That was really the genesis of creating this new course," said Douglas. "I think it was really valuable for students to experience painting on such a large scale because not many of them have had that opportunity."

McCarthy, from Mexico, N.Y., approached Elizabeth Kronfield, director of the School of Art and

School for American Crafts, with the idea for an elevator mural in September 2023, and it was completed before the end of the fall semester.

"Before I painted it, the elevator always had a lot of graffiti on it. So, I thought it would be a good place to have a crazy, loud mural," said McCarthy. "I've heard a lot of feedback and people are really excited about it. I'm hoping that in the future



RIT in LA

An RIT initiative is underway to develop curriculum for Los Angeles-based experiences. The focus of the initiative is connecting with the entertainment industry, while also expanding opportunities for students to connect with alumni, engage in hands-on learning, and have unique work experiences with media companies.

Already in progress in the School of Film and Animation is the Study Away: LA program, where students spend a semester learning about and experiencing the film-making industry in the center of the entertainment universe.

New this fall, RIT's College of Liberal Arts is offering a Transmedia Storytelling and Entertainment immersion open to all RIT students while in LA.

RIT's School of Interactive Games and Media also will participate, giving students opportunities to advance their skills in a major U.S. games hub. Saunders College of Business is sending students who aspire to work in management, finance, and marketing in the media industry.

"RIT's MAGIC Center also plays a central role in our LA strategy," adds Connor. "MAGIC's cross-disciplinary approach to media is perfectly aligned with how Hollywood works and its proven track record in applied research really enhances our value to students and leading entertainment companies."

Connor said furthering RIT's presence in LA will add to the impact that many successful RIT alumni are already having at top Hollywood studios, production companies, and leading tech organizations.



Tom Connor '11

Leading the charge is Tom Connor '11 (film and animation), former vice president of creative marketing at Walt Disney Co. Connor has been appointed assistant provost and the Paul and Francena Miller Chair in International Education. He also will serve as a professor of practice in the College of Art and Design.

"He knows the industry and he knows RIT's strengths and capabilities, which will enable us to realize our vision of having a sustained presence in Los Angeles that will foster opportunities for RIT students," said Prabu David, RIT provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs.

Vienna McGrain '12 MS



Aum Patel

Emma McCarthy, a fourth-year illustration major, spent more than 70 hours creating her mural, from sanding and priming the walls to the final line-work details.

McCarthy's mural is based on her own art style, which she describes as **abstract pop-art**. When future students refresh these murals, they will have the opportunity to incorporate their own styles.

this could branch out into the hallways of the building so we can add more color and authentic student art to the white walls."

Going forward, Kronfield and other faculty in the School of Art plan to work with illustration students to refresh the murals on a semi-annual basis. Kronfield is passionate about expanding the opportunity to other students in the future, explaining that visibility like this can be invaluable for all students.

"For the student who paints the mural, there is a level of achievement and confidence that comes with an accomplishment like this," said Kronfield. "On the other hand, being exposed to creative work happening in the college gives other students something to aspire to. Whenever we show the work of our students in a public venue like this, everyone can benefit."

Felicia Swartzenberg '19

About Students



That Damn Goat was created entirely by RIT students and faculty members and is now available for purchase on the Steam platform. It will soon be launched on Nintendo Switch.

Video game to launch on Nintendo Switch

The victor of the video game *That Damn Goat* declares a win by keeping a magical crown the longest. In similar fashion, a victory for the nearly 60 RIT students and faculty who developed the game comes after a three-year journey, culminating with a publishing deal for the Nintendo Switch console.

Aaron Nieboer, production associate for RIT's MAGIC Spell Studios, explained that "this game was meant to give

students an opportunity to work on something that was going to be released into the marketplace. The fact that we're able to soon have our game available on the Nintendo Switch platform gets us all excited and validates the work that we've done."

The students and faculty involved in the development of the game come from across RIT's nine colleges, making it a multidisciplinary effort.

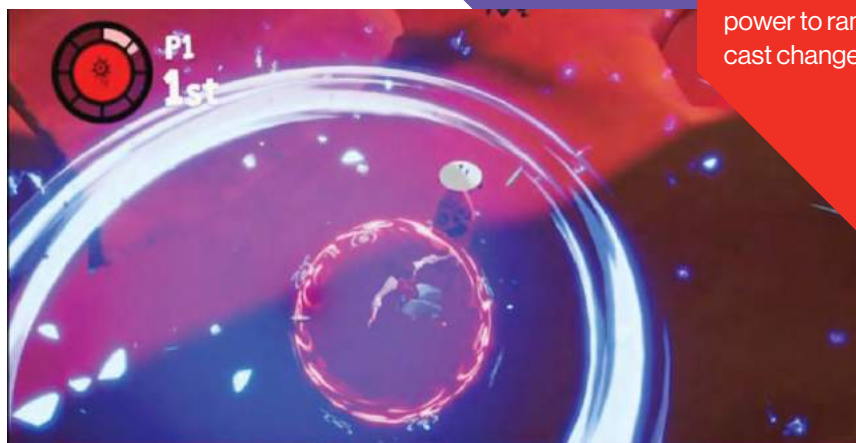
Mike Santos, a second-year student



Nate Tangeman



In the game, **four players battle each other to hold a crown the longest.** The goat has the power to randomly cast changes.



in RIT's game design and development master's degree program, is the game's console port engineer and is thrilled to have a published game on his résumé.

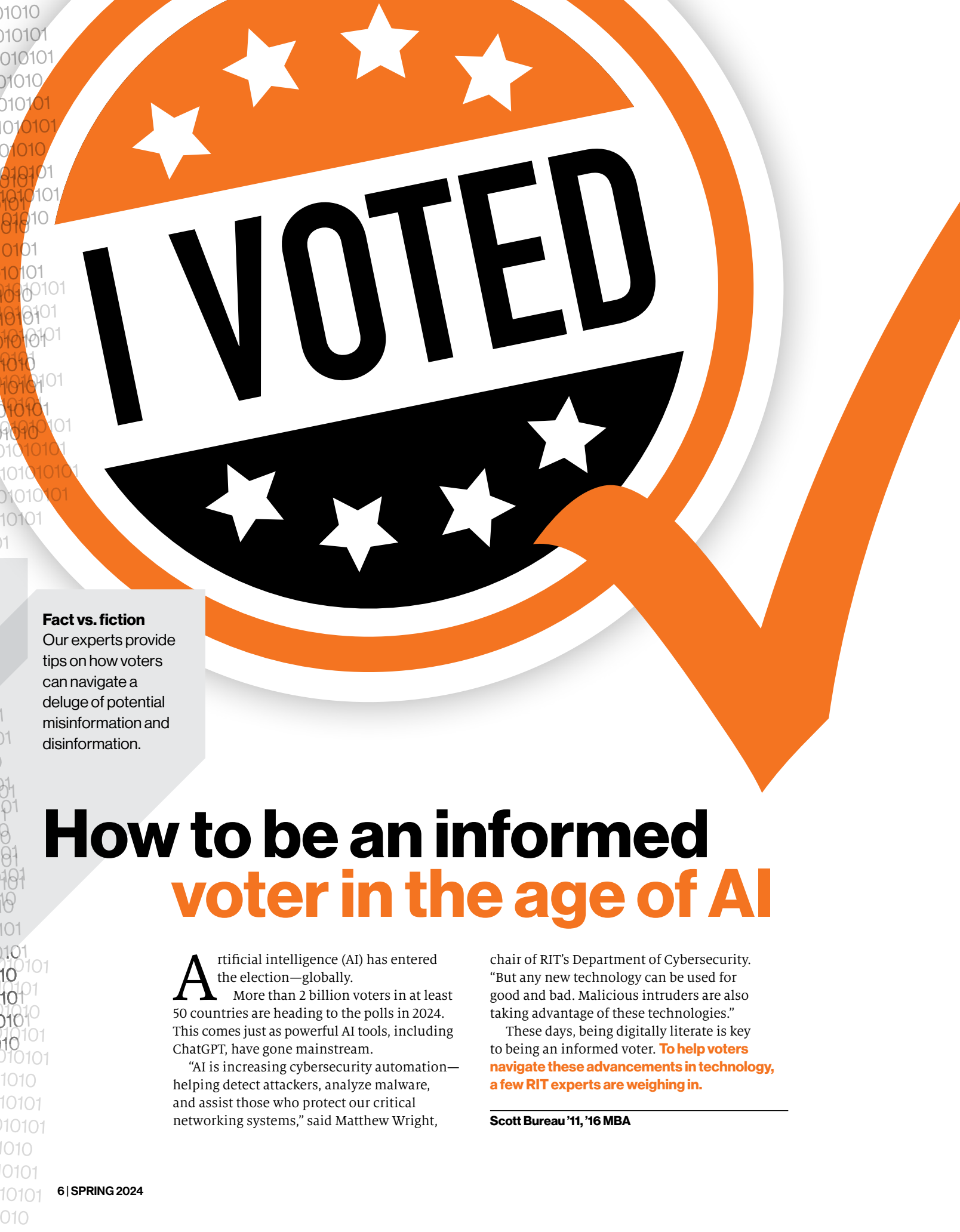
"Being able to have a game published on the Nintendo Switch allows me to show that I can apply my skills in various ways," said Santos, who is from Rome, N.Y. "This looks great to companies in the game industry and will ultimately help me achieve my dream of becoming a senior-level development lead on a high-profile AAA game."

That Damn Goat gets its name from the non-playable goat character, a conniving animal with the power to randomly change scenarios by switching environments and player-selected characters, teleporting itself or players to other locations within the game, and more.

The game development team also celebrated the release of *That Damn Goat* on the Steam platform in December 2023. "Throughout my time at RIT, I have not only learned how to code, but I have also

developed the problem-solving capabilities necessary to tackle challenging situations and develop games for multiple platforms," added Santos. "I've been able to explore the path of optimization and learn different techniques that are required to excel at it. This has expanded my job options and has shown me that getting a job in an optimization or game-porting position is something I would really enjoy."

Vienna McGrain '12 MS



Fact vs. fiction

Our experts provide tips on how voters can navigate a deluge of potential misinformation and disinformation.

How to be an informed voter in the age of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) has entered the election—globally. More than 2 billion voters in at least 50 countries are heading to the polls in 2024. This comes just as powerful AI tools, including ChatGPT, have gone mainstream.

“AI is increasing cybersecurity automation—helping detect attackers, analyze malware, and assist those who protect our critical networking systems,” said Matthew Wright,

chair of RIT’s Department of Cybersecurity. “But any new technology can be used for good and bad. Malicious intruders are also taking advantage of these technologies.”

These days, being digitally literate is key to being an informed voter. **To help voters navigate these advancements in technology, a few RIT experts are weighing in.**

Scott Bureau '11, '16 MBA



Social media

Katrina Overby
Assistant professor
in the School of
Communication

Activist scholar and expert in Black social media usage.

- Slow down and evaluate what you read. Critical thinking is part of digital literacy.
- Just because an account is verified on social media doesn't mean it can be trusted.
- Election officials with the National Association of Secretaries of State have assembled information on each step of the election process. Look for the #TrustedInfo2024 initiative at nass.org.
- Understand that dis-information campaigns are deliberately intended to mislead, while mis-information is simply getting the facts wrong—we're all guilty of that sometimes.



Deepfakes

Matthew Wright
Chair of the Department
of Cybersecurity

Works on developing deepfake detection tools for journalists and intelligence analysts through a federal government and Knight Foundation-funded project.

- Deepfakes are video, audio, images, and text that have been generated or manipulated using deep-learning AI models.
- People can trust news outlets with a proven track record of verifying sources. Journalists verify videos by talking to original sources and seeking comments from people in the video. Good journalism means making sure the pieces match.
- Be aware that it's easier to create convincing audio deepfakes than video deepfakes.
- Get outside your echo chamber. Media literacy means checking multiple news sources.



Image manipulation

Christye Sisson
Gannett Chair and
director of the School of
Photographic Arts and
Sciences

Led a Department of Defense-funded project to help develop a tool that determines how images have been manipulated.

- Question the source before you share an image on social media. Do a reverse image search to see where else it appears and in what context.
- Look beyond the main subject, that's where details might fall apart or appear mismatched in an AI-generated image. However, generative models are always improving.
- Check out the Content Authenticity Initiative, where camera companies, social media, and academia are coming together to improve digital content verification.
- An image shared out of context can be just as deceptive as a manipulated or manufactured one.



Cyberwarfare

Justin Pelletier
Director of RIT's ESL
Global Cybersecurity
Institute Cyber Range
and Training Center

U.S. Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel with experience in cyber threat analysis and voting accessibility research.

- Understand that generative AI is reducing barriers to entry in cyberwarfare, making it easier for malicious actors to build targeted campaigns that seek to divide our population.
- Advertisements and news sources are susceptible to influence campaigns that can manipulate voting outcomes. The most critical voting machine is your brain. Don't let your values get hacked.
- Be on the lookout for phishing attacks. Criminals can take advantage of the election season to exploit your data for financial or personal gain.

Students

S



RIT Sports Network

Since 2002, more than 1,200 students have gained valuable experience creating a multimedia production ensemble with RIT Sports Network—formerly known as SportsZone.

PRE with

Photos by Traci Westcott



IT'S A FRIDAY NIGHT ON RIT'S CAMPUS.

People are starting to stream into an icy arena in their orange and black, ready to cheer on the Tigers' nationally ranked men's hockey team. Hours before the puck drops, the action is intense.

Cameras are zooming in and out, video boards are sliding through graphics, on-air talent is speaking, the teleprompter is rolling, music is blasting, and multiple screens are displaying views from every corner of the arena. While the athletes and coaches prepare to compete, another crew prepares for its show. Behind all the action on the ice, RIT Sports Network is readying for its own performance.

Central to the production is Lexie Mancuso, a fourth-year graphic design student. She is surrounded by other

Ethan Bissinger

Traci Westcott

“Back in three, two, one.” Fourth-year graphic design major Lexie Mancuso, right, leads an RIT Sports Network crew as an associate producer for hockey broadcasts. Mancuso works alongside fourth-year graphic design major Amanda Macey.



students from different majors who are all filling roles, whether it be in-house replay, broadcast graphics, or running a rink-side camera.

Mancuso has grown in her few years with Sports Network and now holds a student manager role. Although she didn't intend to work in sports as a career, her experiences with Sports Network have sent her down that path. She hopes to land a job working in football in the future.

“It's not something I thought I would end up loving and working in,” said Mancuso, who is from Spencerport, N.Y. “Sports Network gave me the opportunity, and it's a really cool thing to take away from college, finding this passion that I didn't know I had before.”

By the numbers

400+ hours of on-air time per year

1,200+ student employees since 2002

30,000+ viewers for Tiger hockey every year

135+ Division III streaming broadcasts each year

44,000+ viewers of Division III streaming broadcasts

40 Division I women's and men's ice hockey broadcasts each year



Another student busy preparing for the game is Vlad Simion, originally from Bucharest, Romania. Unlike Mancuso, Simion—who graduated with a degree in motion picture science in 2020 and is back at RIT working on a master's degree in color science—has no intention of working in sports.

Simion has already landed a job with the Los Angeles-based virtual production and effects company Lux Machina. Now an associate color scientist with the firm, he has contributed to *Barbie*, *Masters of the Air*, and *House of the Dragon*, among other media.

After hearing about student job opportunities with Sports Network from classmates, Simion got involved. He began helping with the in-house production, and since then has filled roles as replay operator, camera operator, technical director, director of video operations, and more. Despite not having an interest in sports, Simion has gained valuable knowledge that has helped him in his career.

"I knew I wanted to work on high-profile productions and all the impressive technologies that we use in media," said Simion. "Sports Network was an avenue that I enjoyed and I knew would help me in my professional life and my life as a student."

RIT Sports Network, or SportsZone (as it was called at the time), started in 2002 when RIT Senior Vice President and Treasurer James Watters was looking for ways to increase student experience and engagement. Knowing the impact athletics has on a campus's pulse, he had the idea to start a production company to broadcast sporting events.



Watters reached out to RIT alumnus Sean Bratches '91 (business administration), who was a chief marketing officer for ESPN at the time. With Bratches' advice and connections, Watters put together the equipment and talent needed to get SportsZone off the ground, including Assistant Director Mark Fragale and Executive Director for University Production Services Steven Wunrow.

The program, with ESPN's backing, was given local cable air time for the 30-minute news magazine-style sports show, highlighting all RIT sports.

"It was set up by ESPN to give local Division III sports more exposure in their local market," explained Fragale.

As years went by, SportsZone needed a refresh. Soon, the group started broadcasting live hockey games and streaming the school's other sports. Today, Sports Network airs more than 100 athletics contests throughout the academic year, with fully produced live broadcasts of Tigers' men's and women's hockey and streaming of more than a dozen of RIT's Division III sports, which is led by producer, director, and editor Kevin Roche.

In addition to what those watching from home might see, Sports Network's Rachel Conidaris—also a producer, editor, and director—leads the content for the in-game production, which includes player headshots, behind-the-scenes videos, graphics, promotions, and all other content that is viewed on the video boards in the Gene Polisseni Center during games.

How to watch

Division III streams
ritathletics.com/watch

Men's ice hockey
bit.ly/WatchMHoc

Women's ice hockey
bit.ly/WatchWHoc

Athletics highlights
youtube.com/RITathletics



Color science graduate student Vlad Simion '20, left, and Assistant Director Mark Fragale help give thousands of fans at home and in the Gene Polisseni Center the best broadcast possible.



No matter what changes have come along in the more than two decades of RIT Sports Network, the heart of the organization has always been student experience.

Approximately 65 students are hired every year to help with production and editing. Student workers come from a variety of backgrounds and are able to take their skills with them into future careers. It's not just technical and broadcast-specific skills students involved with Sports Network walk away with. Soft skills, such as leadership and communication, are developed that help no matter what industry a student plans to enter after college.

"I've learned a lot of teamwork and collaboration skills," said Mancuso. "Developing those skills translates to every aspect of life, every job."

Simion credits his Sports Network experience with getting him ready to enter a professional environment and being able to deal with the pressures that come with it.

"You get exposed to all the things that you will encounter later in life," said Simion. "It's a good place where you can prepare for that. Even if you're not going to go into broadcasting, it teaches you a lot of good lessons."

The main initiative of RIT Sports Network from the onset was to raise awareness of athletics and enhance student experience. Both have been accomplished year after year.

"There are a tremendous amount of success stories from the students who have worked for it," said Watters. "It helps to elevate the interest of sports on campus. And it is a good recognition for a lot of student-athletes we have featured and celebrated."

It is unknown what technology and college athletics will look like in the future, but it is clear that Sports Network will remain a prominent and integral part of RIT's fabric, evolving with the times but remaining constant in its ability to provide students with valuable experience.

"The worlds of business, technology, and sport are inextricably intertwined," said Bratches, who also held a leadership role at Formula 1 and now works in the private equity space. "And the on-campus introduction of the SportsZone brand fostered a community and service, and permitted students both behind and in front of the camera to leverage their in-classroom learnings to a real-world application, while standing to serve the RIT community passionate about their Tiger sports."

Mollie Radzinski

Shannon Brown '22 first began running instant replay for the Buffalo Sabres while attending RIT. Today, she continues to work for the Sabres as well as the Buffalo Bills.



Photos by Traci Westcott

Vlad Simion, top, and Lexie Mancuso took classroom knowledge and expanded it with professional experience through RIT Sports Network, setting themselves up for bright futures in production.



Alumni experiences

Many RIT graduates have gone on to great heights after earlier years with SportsZone—now known as RIT Sports Network.

Behind-the-scenes lessons

As an audio technician in the early days of SportsZone, **Patrick Church '12 (mechanical engineering technology)** initially worked the live men's hockey broadcasts, thanks to his job with RIT Tech Crew. While on a co-op with SportsZone, he designed, built, and installed the overhead goal cameras inside Ritter Arena.

Working live broadcasts, Church was given many responsibilities for setup, operation, and teardown. Under the pressure of live TV, he learned the importance of effective communication, how to delegate and manage others, and to be accountable—skills he carried into his current role as a supplier quality technical advisor at Cummins Inc.

"I felt lucky to be a part of the live broadcasts from the beginning," Church recalled. "Everyone was learning day by day, and we built something incredible."

Team building

Andrzej Lubaszka '09 (electrical engineering) is a chief technologist at Analog Way, serving as a key link between the product development team and the sales and support units and customers who employ the France-based company's video processing products.

At RIT, he was part of the team that built SportsZone's original live truck/trailer still in use today. Getting the truck/trailer up and running in such a short timeframe is still a highlight of his career, said Lubaszka.

"SportsZone employs a staff team that has come from deep industry experiences before joining RIT," he said. "It has allowed a very professional culture to develop, while still allowing space for students to grow and learn."

Championship experiences

Currently a swing video editor for Colorado-based Wave Sports and Entertainment, **Jesse James '19 (film and animation)** has worked for organizations that achieved the pinnacle of success during her few short years since graduating from RIT—namely the 2022 Stanley Cup champion Colorado Avalanche while she worked at Altitude TV/KSE.

Today, James primarily works on a few of Wave's sports podcasts, including the wildly popular *New Heights* with Jason and Travis Kelce.

Her role evolved at SportsZone over her time at RIT, from associate editor, producing and shooting, to eventually senior editor. In addition to honing her filmmaking, editing, producing, and directing skills, she said the experience helped her with time management and played a key part in landing a job with the Avalanche.

Bills and Sabres director

It's difficult to put a title on the many roles she plays for NFL and NHL teams, but you could call **Shannon Brown '22 (film and animation)** a digital designer/technical director extraordinaire.

For the Buffalo Bills, Brown does everything from video editing, instant replays, and graphic design to motion graphics for social media and broadcast programming. In addition to creating hype videos and show opens for the defending AFC East football champs, she edits key elements for podcasts and player interviews and also serves as technical director on live shows.

For the Buffalo Sabres, she serves as technical director for pregame, intermission, and postgame programming for *Sabres Game Night* on the MSG cable network, among other roles.

Bill Wippert

Rich Kiley

Humans



Some of the RIT researchers pushing the boundaries of human-robotic interactions include, from left to right, **Ferat Sahin**, **Karthik Subramanian**, **Jamison Heard**, and **Yangming Lee**.

are the nuts and bolts of RIT robotics research



In one campus laboratory, electrical engineering doctoral student Karthik Subramanian adds facial recognition and heart rate bio-signals into the mind of a 9-foot-tall robot.

In another workshop, faculty-researcher Jamison Heard is making manufacturing robots into better partners for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Additionally, researcher Yangming Lee is improving the internal systems used to track tissue changes in image-guided surgical robots.

At RIT, robots are learning to read the room—especially rooms with humans.

Robots work with individuals everywhere, from storerooms to operating rooms. These robots can see pupils dilate, detect sweat on a brow through biosensors, and perceive heart rates going up. Using this bio-information to adapt to humans—rather than the other way around—robots are becoming sophisticated enough to predict behaviors and act on them.

Improved communication between robots and people is part of the human-centered philosophy that anchors much of RIT's work in robotics.

"Industry wants robot systems that work collaboratively with humans, that are safer and have more flexibility in how they interact together to solve problems no matter what field," said Ferat Sahin, department head of RIT's electrical and microelectronic engineering programs. "We are teaching robots to understand human qualities. Our students use this information to build solutions for people and the work they are doing."

Photos by Scott Hamilton

Aligning with industry

RIT's work with robotics began decades ago with course work in mechanical functions. Now, with a human-centered design approach, students and researchers are bringing together both technical and collaborative options in robotics.

This human approach means providing robots with the intelligence to make critical decisions that do not harm people in the workplace or impede manufacturing processes.

Today, RIT has dozens of undergraduate and graduate degree programs in robotics that now incorporate vision systems in robotics, advanced automation, sensor technology, and control systems.

Robotics content is available through minors and concentrations in each of RIT's colleges; and many courses are offered to non-engineering or computing majors across campus.

Students are learning how these mechanics and foundational technologies can be added to robot systems and used in different sectors from manufacturing to healthcare, where reading the environment may give a company an edge.

Robert Garrick, head of the Department of Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering Technology, said industry professionals are teaching courses in everything from consumer-packaged goods to aerospace robotics at RIT.

"Change is driven by workforce and marketplace demands and the growth of machine learning technologies," Garrick said. "This is where industry is today and where our students need to be. This translates to job opportunities and placements."

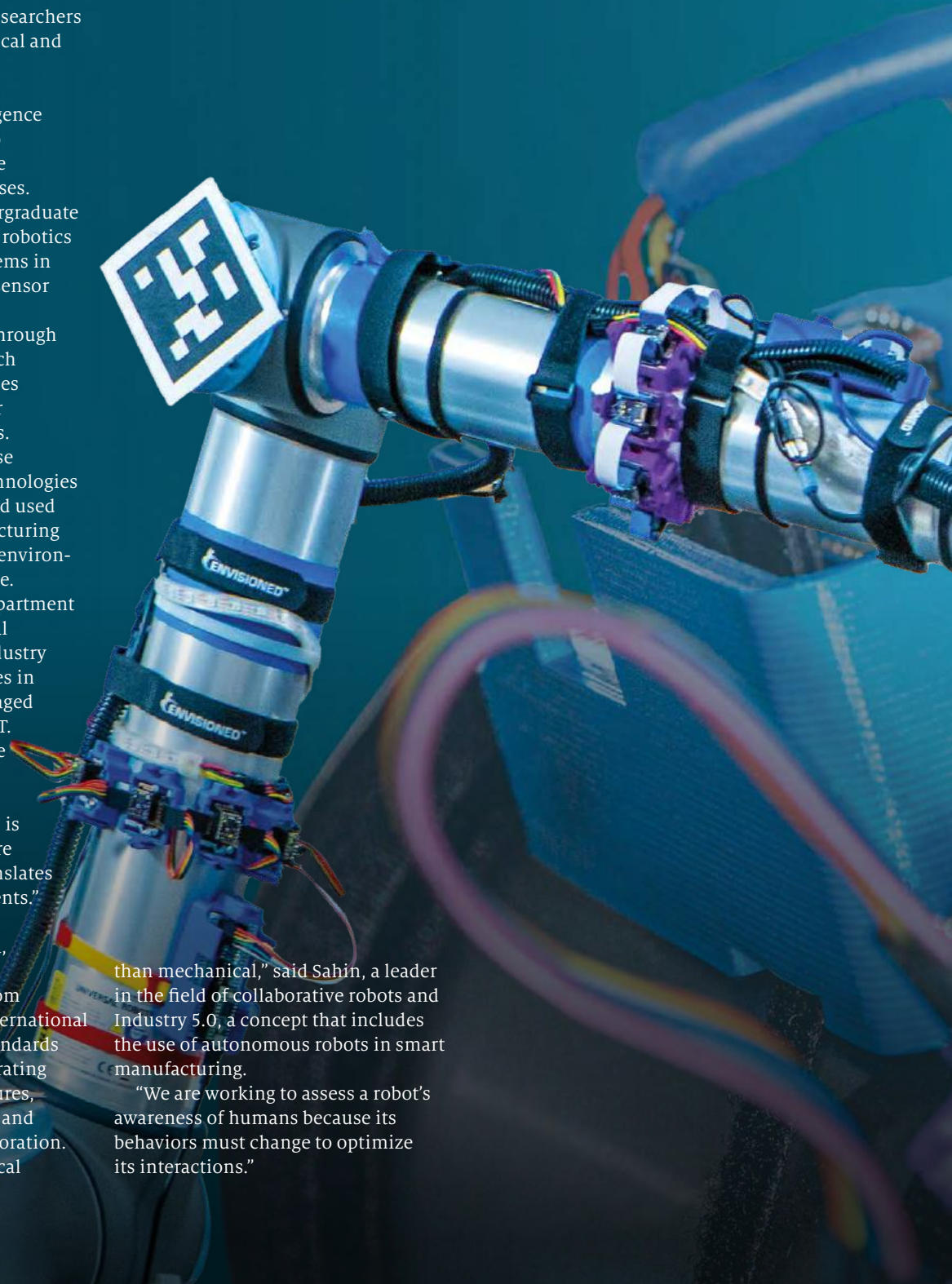
RIT graduates are taking their robotics skills to places like Tesla, Amazon, Boeing, and Yamaha.

Additionally, early research from Sahin's lab has contributed to International Standardization Organization standards for collaborative robots. By integrating behavioral cues with spatial features, his group is advancing the safety and efficiency of human-robot collaboration.

"Robots today are more electrical

than mechanical," said Sahin, a leader in the field of collaborative robots and Industry 5.0, a concept that includes the use of autonomous robots in smart manufacturing.

"We are working to assess a robot's awareness of humans because its behaviors must change to optimize its interactions."





Doctoral student **Karthik Subramanian** wears augmented-reality goggles that create a digital twin of the environment and display information to help keep people safe around collaborative robots.

Applications with impact

To develop the best human-robot partnerships, RIT researchers are refining how robots measure and detect signals from humans.

For his Ph.D. project, Subramanian is adding facial recognition information into the AI system for a UR-10 collaborative robot. He has developed a way to determine human emotion from facial images of people working with robots.

“Some robots are only programmed to pick up objects and place them—a single task,” said Subramanian. “These simple robots have their place in industry—they are fast and precise—but are not suited to work too close to people. That is changing. A robot that can sense physiological signals from humans can help make human-robot collaboration safer.”

The challenge, he said, lies in being sure that robots can make real-time decisions. Robots can act autonomously based on human physiological signals, but it can take months to perfect AI models and run them efficiently.

Heard, an assistant professor of electrical engineering, is teaching robots to read a person’s anxiety through sensor readings—which are essentially emotional cues—that come from monitoring people in lab or workplace settings.

Cues are translated into electronic signals for a robot to recognize and act on. Sensors must provide data to the robot system in less than 8 milliseconds—the comparable time it takes for humans to make decisions.

“And you may wonder, why does the robot need to recognize anxiety?” Heard said. “Robots deal with rational agents, but it is difficult to predict what a human is going to do. Having this information may provide for much more natural and improved collaboration.”

Heard is partnering with Shannon Connell, a lecturer in the Department of Visual Studies at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, to help robots and deaf and hard-of-hearing teammates work better together.

The project is important because in manufacturing, where many robots are being used, nearly 18 percent of

individuals employed are deaf or hard of hearing, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Heard said teams are built on fluency, adaptability, effective communication, and trust.

“We found generally that individuals who were deaf or hard of hearing were more in sync with the robot, which illustrates a better team dynamic,” he said. “We are diving more into this data to determine if it is a cultural aspect so we can put results into context.”

RIT’s robotics researchers are also making a difference in healthcare.

Today’s surgeons rely on robotics and imaging systems, as well as their operating skills, to work efficiently. Using ultra-thin, articulated probes best suited for delicate areas, robots can provide better accuracy for less invasive surgeries.

“The core of robotics is to improve the quality of human life,” said Lee, assistant professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology. “Although surgical robotic technology has rapidly advanced, current robotic surgeries still solely depend on the operation of doctors and do not fully leverage the advantages of robots in terms of stability, precision, and reliability. How to enhance collaboration between surgeons and robots for improving surgical outcomes is a challenge we are committed to addressing.”

Lee’s work using advanced tracking systems is allowing surgeons to reach areas once thought of as impossible. These systems can improve precision in resection—surgery to remove tissue or part or all of an organ.

And more advancements are on the way. Lee was awarded a National Institutes of Health grant to dynamically track surgical modifications and deformations to enable real-time planning for supervised autonomy in robotic surgeries.

“Hospitals are pushing to train surgeons with robots,” Lee said. “Our project will overcome the barrier of robot-surgeon collaborations. This is a way to bridge engineering and medicine.”

Michelle Cometa '00



Yangming Lee, an assistant professor in the College of Engineering Technology, is leading a research project to improve surgical robots' tracking performance, specifically focusing on endoscopic images to track bone removal and soft tissue changes in sinus and cranial areas.

What's being

MADE

in the SHED

Making at RIT has hit a new level now that several makerspaces in the Student Hall for Exploration and Development (SHED) have opened to provide students access to equipment and support for classwork, club advancement, and personal projects.

"It's inspiring to witness a dynamic environment where students freely express their creativity and foster innovation," said Tiffany Brodner, the SHED's executive director.

The \$120 million SHED, which opened last fall, is RIT's biggest capital project since the campus moved to Henrietta, N.Y., in 1968. With its five extra-large classrooms, seven makerspaces, performing arts studios, and glass box theater, the SHED complex is made for a new generation of RIT students.

The makerspaces are spread across three floors. The first floor includes machines that can cut wood and plastic precisely with lasers, as well as a room with dozens of 3D printers.

The first floor is also home to the maker classroom, a computer lab where workshops or special presentations can be held to learn new making-related skills.

There is also a materials exploration room, where students can get inspiration for their next project.

On the second floor is the textiles and electronics makerspace. This combines two areas of making, which has led to cross-disciplinary projects.

The textiles area is popular among students in the Cosplay and Anime clubs, who like to make their own costumes, said Jim Heaney '23 (industrial engineering), the SHED's makerspace technician.

Heaney said the ground floor, or A Level, is where students can get access to much more advanced equipment. There is an open workspace with hand and power tools and an array of 3D printers, including printers that use resin or carbon fiber.

The ground floor is also where there are two metal working shops, a woodshop, and where seven of RIT's performance teams call home.

"I've only had great experiences using the makerspaces," said Jordan Williams, a fourth-year mechanical engineering technology major. "All the machines are pretty self-intuitive, and the staff is always more than willing to help you achieve what you want to make."

On the pages that follow, see what Williams and other students are making in the SHED.

Greg Livadas



Adaptable SMART CRUTCH

The Adaptable Smart Crutch is a Multi-disciplinary Senior Design capstone project that combines a modular crutch design with technology. By modifying traditional axillary and elbow crutches with sensors, physical therapists and their patients can benefit from knowing useful measurements, such as seeing the number of steps taken by patients, their distance traveled, and the percentage of weight applied on the crutches.

The group is one of six classroom teams that worked in the SHED this semester. Team members include, from left to right, biomedical engineering major **Micki Geffert** from Oxford, Conn.; mechanical engineering major **Julia Serchuk** from Jericho, N.Y.; mechanical engineering major **Matt McDermott** from Canastota, N.Y.; and mechanical engineering major **Lauren Mitros** from Fairfax, Va. All are fifth-year students.

3D-Printed JEDI SHUTTLE

A fan of *Star Wars*, **Jordan Williams**, a fourth-year mechanical engineering technology major from Williamson, N.Y., made more than 50 pieces on 3D printers over two semesters to construct an Ahsoka T-6 Jedi shuttle, which has a wingspan of nearly 3 feet when assembled. He also 3D printed hilts for lightsabers. He estimated the total printing of the items took 10 days.





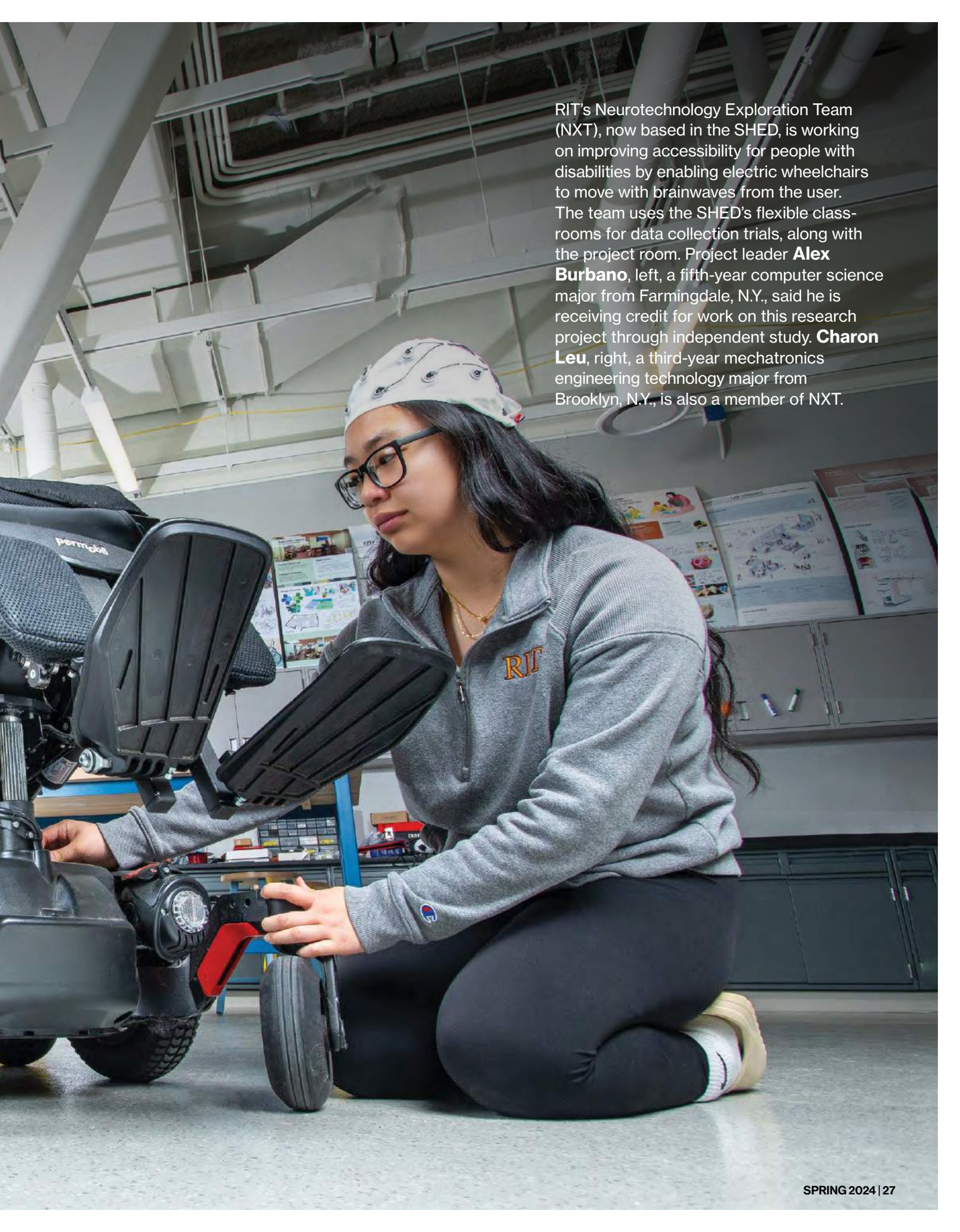
Remote- Controlled

AIRPLANE

The 25 members of the RIT Aero Design Team use the space in the SHED to solder engine wires on their remote-controlled planes, which they'll use in regional and national competitions. The SHED's laser cutters are also used to help make parts for the planes. **Brandon Badaszewski**, a fifth-year electrical engineering and mechanical engineering double major from Blasdell, N.Y., is president of the club.

Brainwave WHEELCHAIR



A young woman with long dark hair, wearing glasses, a grey zip-up hoodie with 'RIT' on the chest, and a white headband with a pattern, is kneeling on a grey floor in a workshop. She is focused on adjusting a red component on the front of a black wheelchair. The wheelchair has 'permobil' written on the seat. In the background, there are shelves with various items, a bulletin board with diagrams, and a grey cabinet. The ceiling has exposed pipes and ductwork.

RIT's Neurotechnology Exploration Team (NXT), now based in the SHED, is working on improving accessibility for people with disabilities by enabling electric wheelchairs to move with brainwaves from the user. The team uses the SHED's flexible classrooms for data collection trials, along with the project room. Project leader **Alex Burbano**, left, a fifth-year computer science major from Farmingdale, N.Y., said he is receiving credit for work on this research project through independent study. **Charon Leu**, right, a third-year mechatronics engineering technology major from Brooklyn, N.Y., is also a member of NXT.



COMICS

GO TO

COLLEGE



Lounge and Gallery



THE COMICS COLLECTION AT RIT IS GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS, AND THE NEW KUBERT LOUNGE AND GALLERY MAKES IT A VISIBLE PRESENCE ON CAMPUS

Steven Galbraith, curator at the Cary Graphic Arts Collection, has watched comics take on a new role at RIT. Shani Avni, the Ismar David Assistant Curator, created the wall wrap with covers from the collection.

AUGUST ESBJORN-WITT SPENT HIS FALL SEMESTER WITH TOR AND CHEE-CHEE, LUKE SKYWALKER, DANGER GIRL, AND A HOST OF OTHER COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS REPRESENTED IN RIT'S MELBERT B. CARY GRAPHIC ARTS COLLECTION.



Student **August Esbjorn-Witt** installs his exhibit of 50 years of 3D comics in the new Kubert Lounge and Gallery.

The fifth-year advertising photography major digitized 144 3D comic books—that's nearly 5,000 pages—using the museum-quality camera in Wallace Library's digitization lab. He earned co-op experience and curated an exhibit this spring of 50 years of 3D comics for the Cary Collection's new Kubert Lounge and Gallery.

"I'm excited to have that on my résumé," said Esbjorn-Witt, who graduates this semester and is seeking work as a museum photographer.

He was able to have this experience because RIT is one of the few universities with a deep comics archive. Housed within Wallace Library, the Cary Collection—which is known for rare books, printing history, and modern graphic design—also has a growing reputation for comics, said Steven Galbraith, curator of the collection.

And the interdisciplinary art form is right at home at RIT.

"Comics lie at the intersection of so much of what RIT is—illustration, animation, game design, and film," Galbraith said. "Students are engaging

with the stories and characters coming out of comic books in all these types of media that RIT teaches."

RIT's comics collection is nearly 25 years old and is gaining notice by curators at more established collections at Ohio State, Michigan State, and Columbia University. Each special collection takes a different approach to the medium, from comic strips, popular comic books, and indie comics.

The evolving scope of RIT's comics archive is twofold—it offers students and scholars both the breadth of comics history as well as a new niche in cartoonists' process work. This aspect of the collection focuses on early sketches and drawings, and iterations of an idea that show an artist's thought process and design approach.

"It makes sense because RIT is about making," Galbraith said. "If you have the process work, you can take students through the creative process, and I think this is a powerful learning experience for an illustration major or for any comics fans. It's a real behind-the-scenes look."



No. 1, Marvel Comics, 1977, art by Howard Chaykin

FANS CAN PERUSE THE ENTIRE RUN OF STAR WARS PUBLISHED BY MARVEL COMICS IN THE LIBRARY'S DON LOMBARDO COLLECTION.

No. 81, DC Comics, 1956, art by Irv Novick



CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE FALCON IS ONE OF MANY TITLES IN THE DON LOMBARDO COLLECTION.

THIS ISSUE OF WONDER WOMAN IS FROM THE STEPHEN NEIL COOPER COLLECTION FROM APRIL 1956.

SNIKT!



This Wolverine issue, with cover art by Adam Kubert '81, is in the Cary Collection.

ADAM KUBERT '81 (MEDICAL ILLUSTRATION) AND WOLVERINE GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO 1993, WHEN THE ARTIST FIRST DREW THE MARVEL COMICS SUPERHERO.

The two have crossed paths many times during the last three decades and most recently with the May release of *Deadpool and Wolverine: WW III*. The three-part limited comic book series supports the Marvel Comics Universe movie *Deadpool and Wolverine*, which hits theaters in July.

Kubert has drawn the pantheon of DC and Marvel characters. He won the 1992 Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for inking *Batman Versus Predator*, published by DC Comics and Dark Horse Comics.

A comics educator and an innovator, Kubert is interested in exploring the new genre of vertical comics designed for mobile devices.

Vol. 7, No. 25, Marvel Comics, 2022, art by Adam Kubert



The
DRAFTING TABLE
of Joe Kubert



JOE KUBERT, LEFT, TRIES ON THE GRADUATION CAP OF HIS SON, ADAM, NEAR THE STUDENT ALUMNI UNION AT RIT'S COMMENCEMENT IN 1981.



Adam Kubert '81 makes Wolverine claws at his father's drafting table in the new Kubert Lounge. He hopes students can learn about the making of comics from the exhibit.

THE EARLY COLLECTION

Comics in the Cary Collection began mostly overnight in 2010 with a gift from Stephen Cooper '66 (illustration photography). The Stephen Neil Cooper Collection includes 202 comic books published in April 1956. The collection includes a wide range of genres and characters, such as Wonder Woman, Archie, the Lone Ranger, Alfred E. Neuman, Uncle \$crooge, and Mighty Mouse, among others. Donald Lombardo, a collector in Rochester, also reached out to the Cary Collection. Since 2018, Lombardo has given RIT nearly 1,900 comic books and hard-cover retrospectives. The Lombardo Collection spans the 1960s to the early

2000s with a wide selection of Marvel Comics (*X-Men*, *Wolverine*, *Spider-Man*, *Hulk*, *Daredevil*, and more), DC Comics (*Justice League of America*, *Superman*, and *Shazam!*, among many others) and various independent publishers that promoted alternative voices. "Don collected the complete *Star Wars* series that began in the late 1970s. The series saved Marvel Comics from bankruptcy," Galbraith said. "*Star Wars* appeals to many RIT students." The focus on the creative process in comics didn't really take off until Daniel Worden, associate professor in the School of Art, went looking for RIT's presence in the comics industry. Worden,

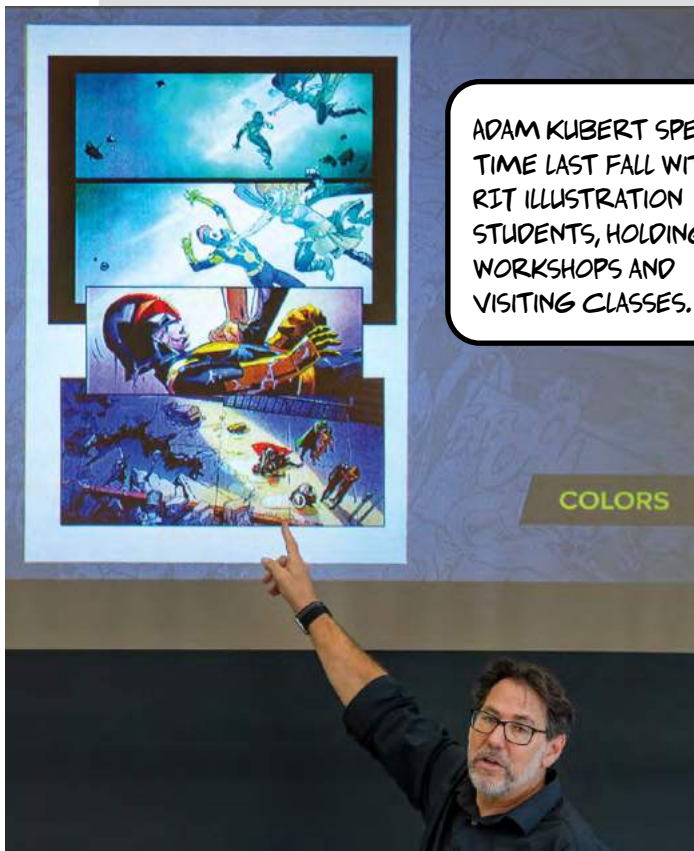
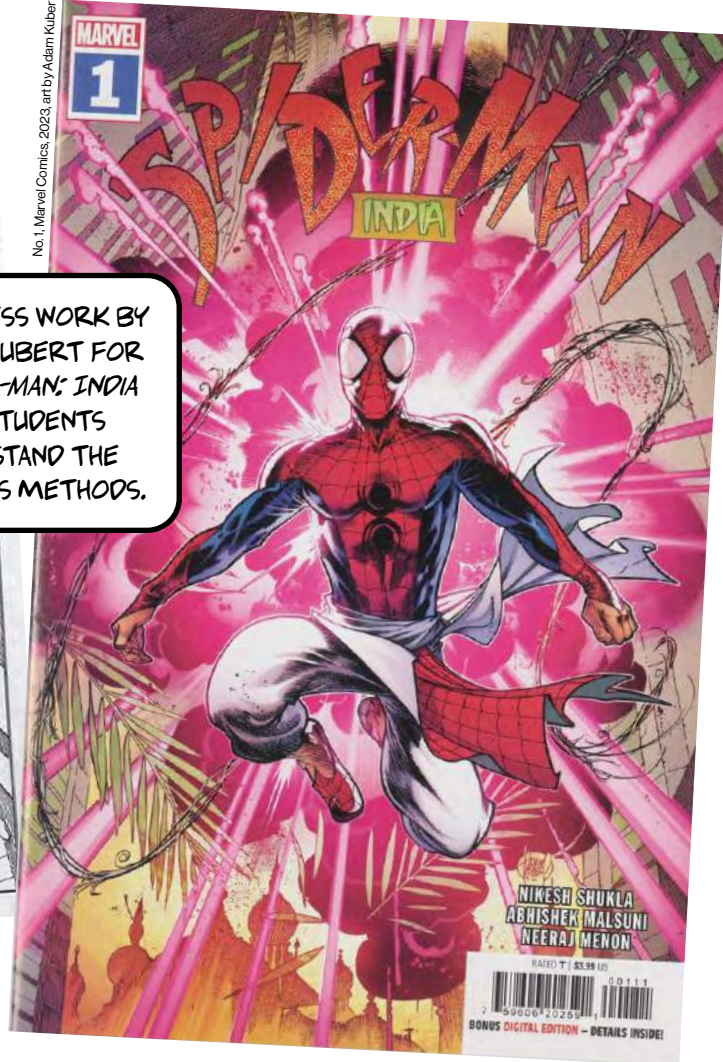
who came to the university in 2016, is one of the leading comics scholars in the country. Worden connected with Marvel Comics artist Adam Kubert '81 (medical illustration), who is known for his illustrations of *Wolverine*, *Spider-Man*, the *Hulk*, and many others. Not only is Kubert a legendary comic book artist, but his father, Joe, had a storied career in the comics industry, spanning the golden age of comic books in the late 1930s to the 2000s. Adam Kubert's younger brother, Andy, is also a DC Comics artist. Joe Kubert drew *Sgt. Rock*, *Tarzan*, and *Hawkman*, to name a few. He also created his own characters with *Viking Prince*,

Enemy Ace, *Tor*, *Chee-Chee*, and the comic strip *Tales of Green Beret*. Worden introduced Kubert to Galbraith and a friendship among all three ensued. In 2019, Kubert donated the contents of his late father's office as well as some of his own process drawings. Last fall, the Kubert Lounge opened in the renovated Wallace Library and the desk used by Joe Kubert was put on display. The first exhibit in the Kubert Lounge featured Adam Kubert's process work and his cover art for *Spider-Man: India*. "The process is where the thinking takes place, more so than in the finished piece," Kubert said. "People see the



No. 1, Marvel Comics, 2023, art by Adam Kubert

PROCESS WORK BY ADAM KUBERT FOR SPIDER-MAN: INDIA HELPS STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE ARTIST'S METHODS.



ADAM KUBERT SPENT TIME LAST FALL WITH RIT ILLUSTRATION STUDENTS, HOLDING WORKSHOPS AND VISITING CLASSES.

HE DISCUSSED THE IMPORTANCE OF PROCESS, INCLUDING THUMBNAIL DESIGNS AND USE OF COLOR IN COMIC BOOK ART.

finished piece and are wowed by it, but they have no idea how the artist got

to that point. It's a device to understand the process an artist goes through in order to produce that work."

Students and campus visitors seek out the comics lounge to see the drafting table, which is displayed as the artist left it, with draw-

ings in progress and pencil shavings in the gutter.

The lounge is an extension of the Cary Collection's footprint and branches off the pathway to the SHED, RIT's new building that combines makerspaces, performing arts spaces, and classrooms designed for active learning.

Third-year illustration student Megan Chase, from Syracuse, N.Y., lingered over the desk and admired the history and the worn surface where the artist made his living.

"That's exactly what I would expect from working at one spot on your desk—it shows the wear over time."

THE COMICS IN THE ARCHIVE CLASS GIVES STUDENTS THE EXPERIENCE OF READING AND ANALYZING COMIC BOOKS FROM THE LAST CENTURY.



RIT Associate Professor Daniel Worden, center, shares insights with upper-level illustration students, from left to right, Maya Levenstein, Sloane Habbershon, Megan Chase, Simon Lee, and Corey Dostie. Worden is a leading comics studies scholar.

TEACHING TOOL

For the first time this spring, Worden taught his class Comics in the Archive in the Cary Collection.

“For me, the archive is important for teaching about comics because you need to see the material objects to understand them,” Worden said. “I know, in this digital age, my most important class sessions are the ones where students spend an hour reading in the archive space. We’ll take a break and talk about what we read, and they ask really telling questions.”

During one class period,

the group of upper-level illustration students sat quietly for 20 minutes poring over a collection of mini-comics and finding publishers’ edits in some of the small books.

“That was my favorite part because it feels like you’re getting inside the head of the artist,” said Sloane Habbershon, from Middletown, Pa. “And for me, it’s trying to wonder about what was the specific thing they wanted to change.”

In another class period, the students spent time looking at process work from both Kuberts, noticing changes that

were made between iterations.

Karen “Ren” vanMeenen, principal lecturer of English, and Henry Uhrig, visiting lecturer in the School of Art, also build their courses around the comics archive.

Students in nearly all of vanMeenen’s literature and creative writing classes visit the Cary Collection for a grounding in print media, from comics to artists’ books. The comics archive is essential for her graphic novel students to appreciate the medium’s history and scope, as well as the tactile and material

qualities—the color, text, size and shape, and page spreads—that digital books cannot replicate.

She works to dispel the juvenile or childish reputation sometimes attached to the graphic novel and graphic memoir genres.

“We’re still fighting against a stigma to explore and explain these complicated narratives and image-text combinations, the possibilities of enhancing literacy and visual literacy skills in students, and the rich storytelling—and the students get it,” vanMeenen said.



EMILY OFFERMANN, FOURTH-YEAR ILLUSTRATION MAJOR, STUDIES JOE KUBERT'S *TOR AND CHEE-CHEE 3D COMIC* WITH THE ORIGINAL 1953 3D GLASSES INCLUDED WITH THE COMIC.



STUDENTS CAN EXAMINE ORIGINAL ART IN THE ARCHIVES. OBSERVING ALTERATIONS FIRST-HAND HELPS PROVIDE INSIGHTS INTO LAYOUT DECISION MAKING AND DESIGN.



No. 1, DC Comics, 2008, art by Joe Kubert and Adam Kubert

Students in Uhrik's cartooning and graphic novel classes spend a lot of time with the comics archive to better understand the working process. Uhrik teaches his students to draw cartoons with traditional nib pens and brushes, and when they look at Joe Kubert's process work, they see a master

using the same materials. "If you are looking at a final printed comic book, it is hard to understand that those are drawings," Uhrik said. "If you have the pencil sketch, you can see the working process—where they missed, or where they put Wite-Out and redid a part. It's a puzzle with all these different pieces."

- ▶ Both Joe and Adam Kubert worked on parts of *DC Universe: Last Will and Testament*.
- ▶ Joe Kubert and Robert Kanigher created the Sgt. Rock character, who first appeared in a 1959 comic.



No. 371, DC Comics, 1982, art by Joe Kubert



Gene Luen Yang

LATEST ADDITIONS

RIT's comics collection continues to grow through donations that broaden students' exposure

to what the art form can look like and who can create comics. The latest additions to the Cary Collection include examples from the do-it-yourself comics movement at the turn of the 21st century and the 3D fad in the commercial comics industry.

Last year, Gene Luen Yang, a parent of a current student, gave the Cary Collection 200 mini-comics from the alternative comics scene in San Francisco in the 1990s and early 2000s. This is when he got his start as a comics artist and began sharing his photocopied comics.

His gift to RIT includes early chapters of *American Born Chinese*, his award-winning graphic novel and now a Disney+ series, and work by cartoonists such as Derek Kirk Kim, Thien Pham, Lark Pien, and Raina Telgemeier, among others.

Yang, who lives in San Francisco, discovered RIT when his son, Kolbe, began his college search and enrolled in RIT's computer science program. Kolbe will begin his fourth year at RIT in the fall.

Yang donated his collection out of gratitude for Kolbe's experiences and personal growth while at RIT, and the sense that the university is a good fit for comics.

"It felt that RIT was a great home for these mini-comics," he said. "There seems to be a value for comics as an art form on that campus."



YANG WAS PART OF THE INDIE COMICS SCENE IN SAN FRANCISCO IN THE 1990S AND EARLY 2000S. HE GAVE RIT MANY OF THE COMICS HE COLLECTED AND SOME OF HIS EARLY CHAPTERS.

Cartoonist & Comics Writer Gene Luen Yang
RIT PARENT GENE LUEN YANG DREW HIMSELF WITH SOME CHARACTERS HE HAS ILLUSTRATED.

Yang's collection will go on display in the Kubert Lounge in the fall, replacing the current exhibition of 3D Comics. Galbraith hopes to bring in new additions for students to learn from in their classes and through independent projects like Esbjorn-Witt's.

The 3D comics he handled came from another unique gift in 2023, this time from Cooper, the alumnus who donated the comics snapshot from April 1956.

His set of 3D comics includes a pristine copy of Joe Kubert's *Tor and Chee-Chee* from 1953, the earliest in the 3D collection.

The comic holds historical significance because, in the 1950s, Joe Kubert and a fellow artist designed the first American 3D comics. Their process used six layers of acetate to create a striking optical effect that surpasses later examples, Esbjorn-Witt said.

"It's cool that someone who went to RIT donated his comics to the Cary Collection, and that I got to make an exhibit with them," he said. "I wanted to do a special digitization project, and it wound up being more than I imagined. I know a whole lot more about the strange history of 3D comics and how to tell a story through an art exhibit."

Susan Gawlowicz '95





RIT students seek out Joe Kubert's desk in Wallace Library, said **Leah Humenuck**, conservator and color science Ph.D. candidate. "It is an inspired space."

DRAFTING TABLE BECOMES A LESSON IN CONSERVATION

LEAH HUMENUCK, A PH.D. CANDIDATE IN RIT'S COLOR SCIENCE PROGRAM AND A PAPER CONSERVATOR, PREPARED JOE KUBERT'S DRAFTING TABLE FOR EXHIBITION IN THE KUBERT LOUNGE AND GALLERY IN RIT'S WALLACE LIBRARY.

Humenuck, who was hired by the Cary Graphic Arts Collection, recreated the minute details of Kubert's work surface using photographs documenting his desk. She covered personal phone numbers with Japanese archival paper and stabilized the most precarious cardboard caddies taped to the desk.

She documented her work in a conservation report, which she will present at a national conference in May.

Kubert constructed cardboard shelves and ledges to hold his tools and reference work and attached them with different kinds of tape. An inkpot supported by a cardboard structure and taped to the desk intrigued Humenuck the most.

"This inkpot is one of the most important artifacts about the desk because it has a lot to do with the history of how Joe made comics," she said. "He taught his son and people at his school (the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, N.J.) how to put a cardboard structure around their inkpots to keep them on their desk and to work

more efficiently. This is a Joe Kubert signature adaptation to a desk."

Humenuck said Kubert's legacy is living on in a new way for students.

That's why Adam Kubert '81 (medical illustration) entrusted RIT with his father's desk, process work, personal effects, awards, correspondence, and the famed Justice League table.

"I want people to know who he was and what he did," Kubert said. "I think it's great that the comics community is flourishing worldwide. There needs to be a place of higher learning where cartoonists can donate their semi-mundane objects for people to learn from."

Susan Gawlowicz '95

Alumni Updates

Michael Rizzolo '78, '86 MS supports interpreting students at RIT through his interpreting agency Interpretetek.

NTID alumnus runs interpreting agency with community mindset

Carlos Ortiz

Michael Rizzolo '78 (social work), '86 MS (human services management) didn't plan on learning American Sign Language when he came to RIT as a student, but he grew interested and eventually became an interpreter. Today, he is founder and CEO of the interpreting agency Interpretetek.

Over 30 years, the company has grown to serve the entire U.S. Still, Rizzolo has prioritized the close-knit, family feel of the agency. He's also kept his focus on supporting the development of new interpreters by funding scholarships at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Rizzolo became a student interpreter in 1976, when NTID offered a 10-week basic interpreter training program.

He went on to work as an interpreter manager at NTID for 12 years and completed his master's degree in 1986. He noticed that Rochester needed a more comprehensive interpreting agency and started his company in 1993.

"It's not a very complex formula," Rizzolo said about the agency's work philosophy. "It's simply being supportive

of the interpreters and supportive of the Deaf community. We try to create a respectful, warm, and caring culture."

In the early 2000s, Interpretetek added 'tek' to the end of its name. Rizzolo said they could see that technology was going to play a huge role in ASL communication. Consequently, Interpretetek expanded its services to provide remote and virtual interpreting in addition to in-person interpreting. This became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We quickly determined that sign language interpreters were essential personnel," Rizzolo said.

Today, the agency has 130 employees in 28 states and more than 500 contractors across the country. Interpretetek still maintains its corporate headquarters out of a small office in Henrietta, N.Y., just a short distance from RIT's campus.

Fostering connections with RIT and NTID remains important to Rizzolo.

Interpretetek has funded an endowed scholarship since 2008 to support several students every year in the ASL-English Interpretation Program.

"We have a wall of photographs of all the students that we've supported while pursuing their interpreting degrees, and many of them come to work for us. We see them flourish and go off to do other things too," Rizzolo said. "It's just great to see that over the years."


In March of 2021, Rizzolo and his wife, Kate, who is also a sign language interpreter, provided a \$25,000 gift for the Randelman Endowment for Interpreter Certification.

The Randelman program supports interpreters of color to better serve and reflect the diversity within the Deaf community. In recognition of his contributions to the interpreting profession and his consistent support of NTID, Rizzolo also received the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2019.

Rizzolo said his most cherished memories come from the people he works with.

"I love what I do. I love the people I do it with. It's just fun to see the evolution of your teammates and to provide an environment of growth, and to know you've played a meaningful role in the team's journey."

Jenna Warren '23



After serving as a summer clerk with the firm as a student in 2021, **Shakierah Smith '18, '19 MS** was offered a position at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson after graduation.

Attorney finds her home in real estate law

As a child, Shakierah Smith '18 (criminal justice and communication), '19 MS (criminal justice) loved spending time with her grandmother watching *Law & Order*. She recalls feeling inspired as she watched the fictional attorneys advocating for their clients.

"They were so smart and eloquent. You could tell that they knew their stuff and were passionate about seeking justice. I found that profound at a young age, and intriguing," said Smith. "I didn't know exactly who I was going to become, but I thought maybe I could be a criminal prosecutor."

Today—after passing the New York state bar exam on her first try—Smith is a real estate associate at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson, a law firm in New York City known nationally for its prestigious real estate practice group. While she didn't follow the exact path of the attorneys that inspired her, Smith found her niche in property law while pursuing her Juris Doctor at University at Buffalo School of Law, where she graduated in 2022.

Smith shared that her success in law school and beyond was thanks, in part, to her support system and positive experiences at RIT.

"Things may have turned out differently for me if I went to another university. I really felt welcomed at RIT, and I felt supported," said Smith. "There was a point when I was ready to drop out of law school, but I got on a three-way call with RIT professors O. Nicholas Robertson and John McCluskey and we talked through it. They

said they would support me either way, but they encouraged me to keep going, and I did."

Her support system reminded Smith that she had the tools to succeed in her back pocket. She said her research with RIT's Center for Public Safety Initiatives was one of the most valuable experiences from her time at the university.

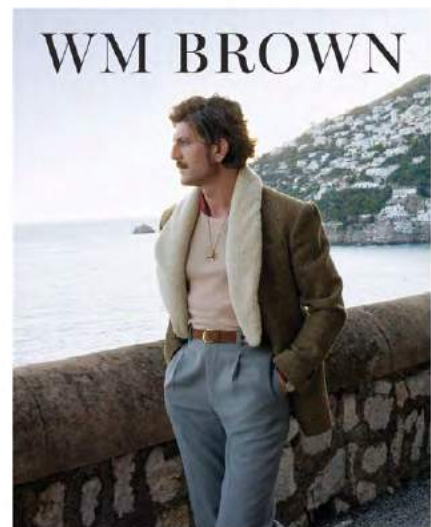
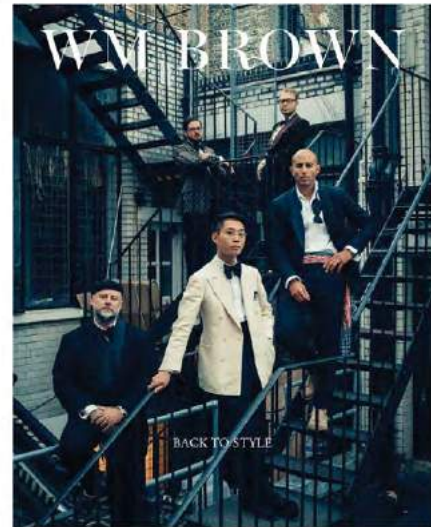
"Prior to that, I really hadn't done any research. So they walked me through the process and sharpened all of those important skills I ended up utilizing in law school," said Smith. "My research experience and the relationships I developed with my professors in the criminal justice and communication programs really set me up to be successful."

Smith is currently writing a book, scheduled to publish in early 2025, that shares her journey to becoming a lawyer. As she reflected on that journey, and looks toward her ultimate goal of becoming a judge, she offered valuable advice for students looking to find their own place in the world.

"One of my biggest struggles throughout my academic career was being my own worst enemy," said Smith. "It may seem tough sometimes, and you may question yourself and your capabilities, but I promise it's going to pass. Once you're at commencement and you're walking across the stage, and you're celebrating with your family and your professors, you're going to see it was all worth it and that moment of doubt was just a hiccup in your story."

Felicia Swartzenberg '19

Matt Hranek '90, right, founder and editor of *WM Brown* magazine, poses with Gerardo Cavaliere, who has modeled for two covers of *WM Brown*.



Magazine founder creates a one-stop shop for readers

Matt Hranek '90 (professional photographic illustration), founder and editor of *WM Brown* magazine and The William Brown Project, likes to spend his time exploring and embracing the diversity of life. By producing his own magazine, he's made a career out of sharing his life experiences with others.

The beginnings of *WM Brown*, a men's print magazine, can be traced back to Hranek's time working as a freelance photographer in New York City after graduating from RIT.

"I was able to refine my style of photography and found that I really loved magazine photography," said Hranek. "I wanted to be around all those amazing people that were producing print material for publications like *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*."

Hranek, originally from Binghamton, N.Y., worked for several popular magazines—

including *GQ* and *Condé Nast Traveler*—where he honed his skills as a photographer, writer, and editor.

When digital photography was first introduced, Hranek knew the field would be permanently altered. He believed the evolution was for the better, but as someone trained on film, he needed to change his course to better match his skills and ambitions.

"As far as a career at that point, I thought it would be interesting to shift gears and become an ideas guy instead of an execution guy," said Hranek. "I wasn't just a photographer. I was somebody who really had a grasp on editorial ideas and how to be a storyteller."

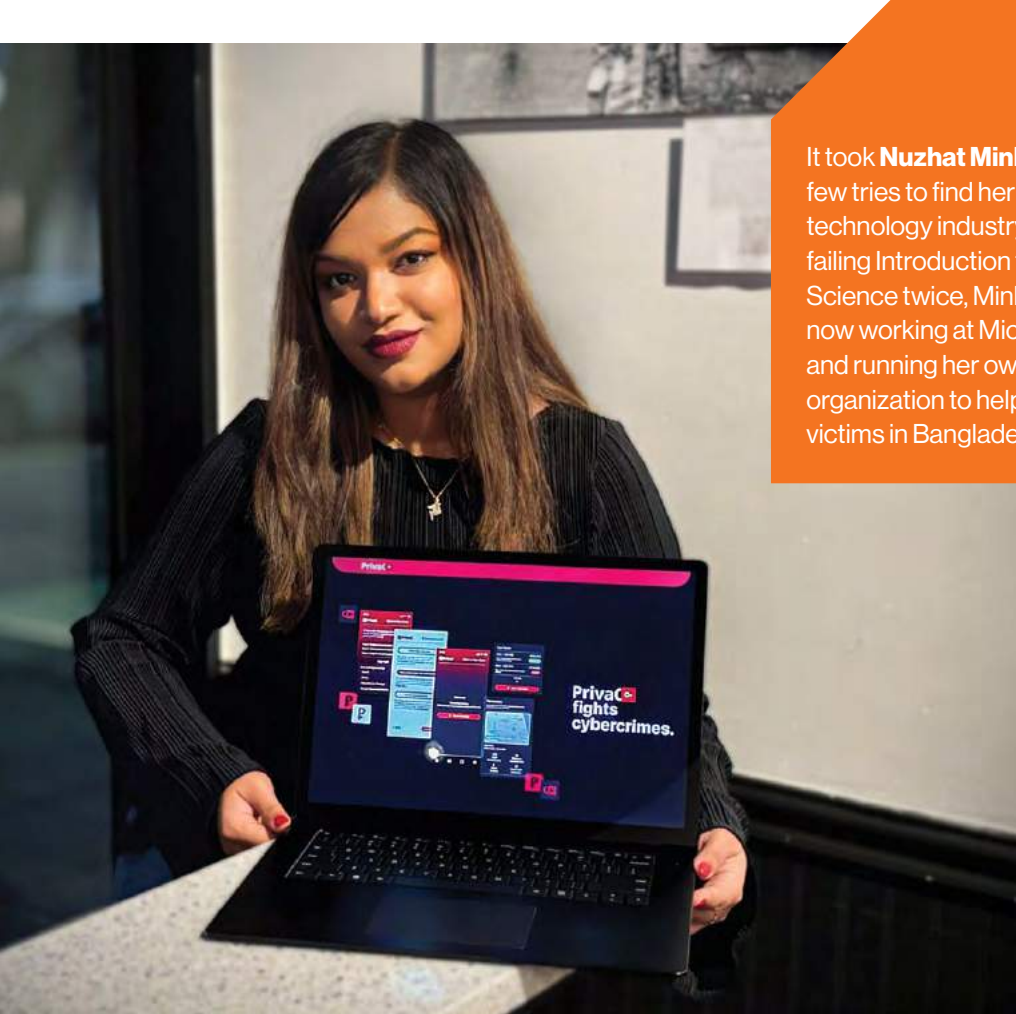
Hranek made a gamble not just to create a new, exclusively print publication, but to also take a different approach to content curation. Instead of settling on one niche, *WM Brown* readers can find articles about

cars, travel, style, food, drinks, and more, all in one glossy package.

"Starting my own magazine meant I could include all the topics I was interested in under one title. It was being shaped as an overall curation of an aesthetic point of view," said Hranek. "We had no idea where this was going to go. I just knew, selfishly, that I wanted to create something like this."

WM Brown is now on its 15th issue. In addition to his work with *WM Brown*, Hranek has authored several books, including *A Man & His Watch*, *A Man & His Car*, *The Negroni*, and *The Martini*. In 2023, Hranek published a new book, *A Man & His Kitchen*, and was invited to appear on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* to promote the book and share the story behind The William Brown Project.

Felicia Swartzenberg '19



It took **Nuzhat Minhaz '23** a few tries to find her place in the technology industry. Despite failing Introduction to Computer Science twice, Minhaz is now working at Microsoft and running her own startup organization to help cybercrime victims in Bangladesh.

Alumna goes from struggling with coding to creating technologies for coders

Nuzhat Minhaz '23 (computing and information technologies) isn't afraid to tell people that she failed the Introduction to Computer Science course—not once, but twice.

Although she struggled with coding at first, Minhaz has found strength in being open to failure. She credits the hackathon opportunities she found at RIT, which led to a job at Microsoft and the creation of her startup that aids victims of cybercrimes in Bangladesh.

"Being able to ask for help and advocate for yourself is so important," said Minhaz. "You'd be surprised how life-changing that can be."

Growing up in Bangladesh, Minhaz

viewed technology as a way to create social impact. She saw struggles with political turmoil, gender discrimination, and poverty and wanted to make solutions for people in communities similar to her own.

"However, when I started coding, I couldn't relate to why a Python turtle moving from point A to point B on my screen was important for me to learn before creating people-centric solutions," said Minhaz. "It was frustrating, but so many people at RIT wanted to help me reach my aspirations in tech."

While revisiting her decision to pursue computer science as a major, she discovered computing and information technologies. The degree program allows students to explore different areas of complex computing

systems before specializing. She also entered her first Women in Computing hackathon, where she came up with the idea for PrivaC—an app that connects cybercrime victims in Bangladesh with lawyers, psychologists, and other verified professionals who can provide expertise.

Today, PrivaC is building a web application and conducting research to develop a business model and user experience that supports both victims and experts. Several current RIT students and alumni are involved with the organization. As founder of the startup, Minhaz is also dedicated to creating opportunities for all genders to explore technology in Bangladesh. In 2020, PrivaC organized the country's first virtual hackathon for women, PrivaShe Hacks.

Minhaz also found co-op opportunities through hackathons at RIT. Then, work mentors steered her toward a dream career path that she had never heard of before.

"Product management is about understanding people and their needs and translating those into technical specifications," Minhaz said. "You then design systems and architecture based on validated research, not just creating things because they look pretty."

Minhaz is now a product manager at Microsoft's Developer Division within Cloud+AI. The division creates tools, technologies, programming languages, and experiences for programmers across the globe. She is leading Experimentation, a new product within Azure cloud services that will allow programmers to test and gain insights on which features will best help their customers.

Also working at Microsoft's Developer Division is Python creator Guido van Rossum. One of the first things Minhaz did on the job was send him a message about her coding journey, especially the struggles.

"He responded with a smiley face. I was like, 'my life is now complete.' And I'm now able to learn to code in any language."

Scott Bureau '11, '16 MBA

Allison Keeler '05 (biotechnology), left, has turned her lifelong interest in science into a career in medical research. She is the lead researcher in the Keeler Lab at the Horae Gene Therapy Center and assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School.



Scientist's RIT experience leads to career in revolutionary gene therapy research

Bryan Goodchild

From an early age, Allison Keeler '05 (biotechnology) always knew she wanted to be a scientist. As an adult, that dream has come true as she is an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Chan Medical School and the lead researcher in the Keeler Lab within the Horae Gene Therapy Center.

Keeler applied early to RIT, out of her high school in eastern Pennsylvania. After visiting the campus and learning the university had one of the few biotechnology programs available, she knew getting hands-on experience in research at RIT was the best path for her future.

Keeler earned her bachelor's degree in three years and was able to take advantage of a trip to the Galápagos Islands, where she realized she wanted to become an academic and a professor. After a research position at Duke University, she earned her Ph.D. in biomedical sciences from the UMass Medical School, where she now works. Mentoring and teaching in a lab environment has become her passion.

"Basics that I learned at RIT and each of my experiences have shaped where I am now and what I'm really passionate about," said Keeler.

Her background has led her to one of the most revolutionary medical fields today: gene therapy. This technology approaches disease differently, by attempting to change genetic makeups to prevent and treat disease instead of traditional treatments like medication and surgery.

In her lab, Keeler is learning about and understanding immune responses to gene therapy and engineering and developing new novel gene therapies for the treatment of different diseases.

The field is progressing rapidly. When she was a graduate student, there were no approved therapies. Now, there are many, with more being approved every year.

"It's been really interesting to watch the field evolve," said Keeler. "It's an exciting time in this field because several gene therapies have recently been approved."

The scientific area is familiar to the

dean of RIT's College of Science, André Hudson, who is repeatedly sought out as an expert in biochemistry and microbiology. His research interests are closely related to Keeler's, as both are excited about the future of science as it relates to the human body and disease.

"The work by Dr. Keeler and colleagues in this space is at the forefront of science and medicine," said Hudson. "I am heartened that one of our College of Science alumni is helping to lead the charge."

Keeler never envisioned she would be running her own gene therapy lab when she stepped on RIT's campus as a biotechnology major. But as science grows and evolves, more and more possibilities for careers in science exist. She encourages students to keep their minds open and to explore all opportunities.

"I didn't even know about gene therapy when I was at RIT," said Keeler. "But science continues to expand. Keep being curious, keep asking questions."

Mollie Radzinski

Why I Give

Ashley Carrington Donaghy's '15 annual commitment to giving back reinforces her enduring connection to RIT. Joining the Sentinel Society and supporting the RIT Fund enables Ashley to make a significant impact on the student experience and is the reason she chooses to give back.

Your Sentinel Society gift provides unlimited possibilities.

Join Ashley in supporting the RIT Fund and become a Sentinel Society member.



585-475-5500
givetorit@rit.edu
rit.edu/joinsentinel

RIT | Sentinel Society



I credit much of my success to my RIT student experience. Through my studies and involvement in student government, women's soccer, and Delta Sigma Pi, I developed key skills. Belonging to these communities provided a home away from home, where I always felt welcomed and valued.

I have always prioritized giving back to RIT through active engagement, and as a Sentinel Society member, my five-year pledge helps foster an inclusive community, enhance student access to resources, and ensure students have a rich RIT experience. ”

– Ashley Carrington Donaghy '15



Alumni Awards

Frank Sklarsky '78 and his wife, Ruth, gave \$2.5 million to create the Sklarsky Glass Box Theater in the SHED. The Sklarskys are longtime supporters of RIT.

Sklarsky Glass Box Theater



Sklarsky named RIT's 2024 Outstanding Alumnus

Franks Sklarsky '78 (business administration accounting), a successful businessman who with his wife, Ruth, has shared their philanthropy with RIT and others, is RIT's 2024 Outstanding Alumnus.

Established by the Office of the President in 1952, this is the highest honor the university can bestow upon a graduate. It is in recognition of professional accomplishments as well as service and generosity to the university. The award will be presented at convocation on May 10.

Sklarsky began his professional career as a certified public accountant for Ernst & Young, before earning his MBA from Harvard Business School.

He worked for Chrysler for 20 years and eventually became vice president for finance for DaimlerChrysler. Following that, he spent two years as chief financial officer for ConAgra Foods in Omaha, Neb., and then returned to Rochester as Eastman Kodak's CFO. He was also CFO for Tyco International and completed his career as executive vice president and CFO of PPG Industries, retiring in 2017.

That year, the Sklarskys funded an endowed scholarship that provides

tuition support for undergraduate students in STEM disciplines.

In 2018, the Sklarskys made an endowed gift to RIT's Saunders College of Business to support costs associated with the Sklarsky Center for Business Analytics. The 800-square-foot space supports collaborative and project-based learning.

And in 2021, they gave \$2.5 million for the Sklarsky Glass Box Theater, one of the main features of the new Student Hall for Exploration and Development (SHED).

They also became founding members of RIT's Sentinel Society, a community of leadership donors who make meaningful annual investments that support the university's most pressing and immediate needs across campus.

Sklarsky served on the RIT President's Roundtable and has been an RIT trustee since 2009, most recently serving on the enrollment management and marketing committee, as well as serving as chairman of the investment committee.

He calls RIT "a really outstanding and distinctive institution with a low level of ego. That's what separates us from some other really great universities. Everybody

at RIT checks their egos at the door, from the top down. It creates a really collaborative atmosphere. There's a lot of camaraderie and it feels really good."

Sklarsky still has fond memories of his time spent as a student on campus.

He recalls his time spent as a member of the Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity and can recall many of his professors.

"The one thing I'm really proud of which took a lot of work was to be named one of the RIT Outstanding Scholars when I was a senior," he said. "You had to be in the top 1 percent and I had a 3.96 GPA for my four years. To be named an Outstanding RIT Scholar, that meant more to me than just about anything because it involved so much work to achieve that."

Sklarsky said his success has been the result of support from his wife and family, as well as coaching from his parents, teachers, mentors, and colleagues.

"We feel fortunate to have found a way to give back," he said. "We have a group of students and a university that will help build a better place for future generations."

Greg Livadas

2023 – 2024

Distinguished Alumni Awards

Twelve RIT alumni have been honored with Distinguished Alumni Awards for the 2023-2024 year. The Distinguished Alumni Awards are presented annually by each of RIT's nine colleges, the School of Individualized Study, and the RIT Graduate School to alumni who have performed at the highest levels of their profession or who have contributed to the advancement and leadership of civic, philanthropic, or service organizations. It is the highest award an RIT college can bestow upon its alumni. The 2023-2024 recipients were honored during presentations throughout the academic year.



College of Art and Design
Michael Lambert '74
 (photography), founder and chairman of Lambert Media Group



College of Liberal Arts
Adam Histed '00
 (criminal justice), vice president of Total Rewards and HR Systems at BWX Technologies



National Technical Institute for the Deaf
Rosa Lee Timm '00 (social work), division president at CSD Social Venture Fund



College of Engineering Technology
Dan Throop '73
 (engineering technology), owner of Enthusiaser



College of Science
Dr. Breeann Wilson '02
 (biochemistry), podiatrist at Pure Podiatry of Western New York



Saunders College of Business
Jim Salzano '87
 (accounting), president and CEO of Jones & Vining



College of Health Sciences and Technology
Carolyn Khomyak '95
 (diagnostic medical sonography), chief operations officer of Viason Inc.;



Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences
Karen E. Roth '06 (software engineering), chief engineer at Air Force Research Laboratory's Information Directorate



School of Individualized Study
Mona M. Harrington '07 MS
 (professional studies), assistant director at National Risk Management Center



and **Sergio Khomyak '94**
 (diagnostic medical sonography), chief executive officer and co-founder of Viason Inc.



Kate Gleason College of Engineering
Scott Reardon '96
 (electrical engineering), chief executive officer of D3 Engineering



Graduate School
Nicholas Conn '11, '13 MS
 (electrical engineering), **Ph.D.** (microsystems engineering), founder and chief scientific officer at Casana

Class Notes

Abbreviations

CAST

College of Applied Science and Technology (now CET)

CAD

College of Art and Design

CCE

College of Continuing Education (now SOIS)

CET

College of Engineering Technology

CHST

College of Health Sciences and Technology

CIAS

College of Imaging Arts and Sciences (now CAD)

CLA

College of Liberal Arts

COS

College of Science

FAA

Fine and Applied Arts (now CAD)

GAP

Graphic Arts and Photography (now CAD)

GCCIS

Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences

KGCOE

Kate Gleason College of Engineering

NTID

National Technical Institute for the Deaf

SOIS

School of Individualized Study

SCB

Saunders College of Business

SVP

NTID "Summer Vestibule Program"

About Class Notes

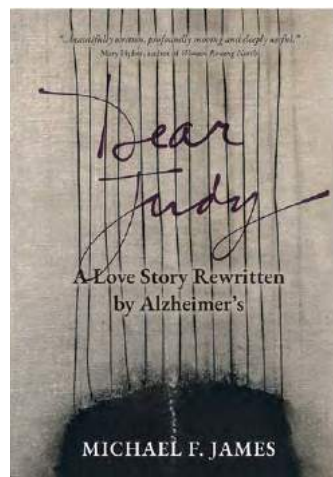
Class Notes are edited for space, clarity, and style. Share information by going to rit.edu/alumni/class-notes.

1968



Alvis Uptis '68 (GAP) had the cover and lead story in *The Quarterly Journal of Leica Society International*, vol. 56, issue 3.

1973



Michael James '73 MFA (FAA) published *Dear Judy—A Love Story Rewritten by Alzheimer's*, a memoir of the Alzheimer's journey he and his late wife, Judith, traveled after Judith's early-onset Alzheimer's diagnosis in 2009.

1975



Bob Green '75 (FAA) was named a finalist in the South Bend: The Next 100 Years poster design contest through the History Museum and the Studebaker National Museum.

1976



Jay Levine '76 (SCB) took on the role of volunteer chairperson for the PGA golf tournament formerly known as The Honda Classic.

1977



Keith Bullis '77 (GAP) has been named the 2023 University of Rochester Medical Center Board Excellence Award Winner for Eastman Institute for Oral Health. Bullis is pictured with his wife, Barbara, at the award ceremony.

1987



Armen Chakmakjian '87 (KGCOE) was promoted to vice president of software development, messaging security group, at Sophos, a British-based security software and hardware company.

1989

Bill Michaels '89 (SCB), president and owner of Fly Creek Cider Mill & Orchard, won the Mohawk Valley Choice Award for best tourism/season attraction. The award recognizes businesses that contribute to the region's economic vitality and enrich the lives of its residents.

1995



Jeremy Sniatecki '95 (CIAS) was chosen to design and fully illustrate several licensed retro-style metal lunchboxes for Toynk.com, including *Rocky IV*, *Svengoolie*, and *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*.

1998

Tony Sampognaro '98 (COS), '00 MS (COS), '23 EMBA (SCB) was interviewed for an article, "Outsourcing Needs More MBAs (Yes, You Read That Correctly)," in *Outsourced Pharma*, on Oct. 16, 2023.

2003



Justin Drawbaugh '03 (GCCIS) was promoted to IT cybersecurity specialist and DIBCAC assessor at the Defense Contract Management Agency in New Cumberland, Pa.

2006

Tanya Spony '06 (COS) was nominated as a justice to the New Hampshire Circuit Court and was unanimously confirmed Sept. 6, 2023.

2007



Nathan Holland '07 (KGCOE) earned his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from Old Dominion University.



Jennifer Fields '03 (SOIS) married the love of her life, **Alison Kittenplan '08 (SCB)**, on Nov. 4, 2023, at Springdale Station in Austin, Texas.



Sean Murray '07 (SCB) celebrated 40 years by bringing together more than 40 RIT alumni for a reunion in Jamaica, including members of Phi Kappa Tau, RIT Rugby, classmates, and friends.

2004



Meredith Bielaska '04, '06 MS (CIAS) completed her Ph.D. in higher education administration in August 2023 at Kent State University.



Brian Garrison '07 (CLA) wrote *Micropoetry for Microplanets*, a zine-sized book of 11 short poems accompanied by illustrations. Garrison wrote haiku for *Reporter Magazine* from 2004 to 2007.



Joi Conti '11 celebrates Filipino artists and makers in her new magazine, *TAYO NA*.

Celebrating Filipino artists in Austin

To help draw attention to the thriving Filipino community in Austin, Texas, Joi Conti '11 (photographic illustration) created a new magazine guide called *TAYO NA: Austin Filipino Artists & Makers Guide* in October 2023.

As a professional editorial and commercial photographer, Conti wanted to use her skills to promote other Filipino artisans and makers in Austin. She shared that promotional support like this can be invaluable, particularly for those who are still growing their businesses.

"I want people to know there is a vibrant Filipino community in Austin, and to make it easier for people to patron these awesome artists and makers," said Conti. "The guide is really a way for me to feature my fellow Filipino artists and makers. I want them to succeed because that's something that's really close to my heart."

Conti shared that her biggest takeaway from the

project was the value of community connections. She said *TAYO NA* couldn't have come together without leaning into and growing those connections.

"I met a soap maker named Emlyn and she was the one who opened up the door for me to meet more Filipino artists and makers, which really helped to get my mind going on this project," said Conti. "And when I started contacting people for the magazine, they kept giving me names of other artists and makers who I could include and it grew from there."

Conti anticipates publishing a second issue of *TAYO NA* in October 2024, and the first issue is currently available online and in print. The 2023 issue was created, in part, through funding from the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. Conti and her team are currently seeking sponsorship for the second issue.

Felicia Swartzenberg '19

Couple finds love and community far from home

Karuna Mukherjea and Deepak Sharma came from far away to attend RIT. The couple believes it was destiny that brought them together.

Both from India, Mukherjea '97 (finance) and Sharma '97 (MBA) found a welcoming university and community on the Henrietta, N.Y., campus.

"That is one of the best things that happened to us at RIT," Sharma said. "It was destiny. Through a twist of events, we both landed at RIT and took many of the same classes, resulting in friendship to love and then partners for life."

After meeting in the fall of 1996, Sharma recalled picking up Mukherjea in his car many mornings to drive to college together. "That is where our friendship and love blossomed," he said.

Each found Saunders College of Business—and the university at large—friendly and exciting.

"RIT was one of the most welcoming places for both of us," Mukherjea recalled. "The faculty, the administration, and the students were all warm—even though this was the first time in our lives we experienced snow! We felt like we had arrived at our new home and the opportunities were boundless."

Sharma still vividly recalls his first Diwali (Hindu festival of lights) while away from home, when one of his classmates and her family members dressed up in traditional Indian clothes, decorated their house,



Deepak Sharma '97, left, and Karuna Mukherjea '97 met when they were students. The California residents remain connected to the university.

and invited him over.

"It was such a welcoming act and completely overwhelmed me," he said.

"This left an impression on both of us that we feel very connected to RIT, even today, and I

will always find time to talk or help anyone from RIT," Mukherjea added.

Outside of classes, they both enjoyed exploring the city of Rochester. "Our friend circle was expansive, spanning 15

countries and included both grads and post-grads," Sharma said. "To date, some of our closest friends are in Rochester, N.Y."

The couple married at the iconic Japanese Tea Garden in San Mateo, Calif. Residents of the Bay Area for the past 20 years, each has gone on to successful careers using the foundation built at RIT.

Currently vice president of enterprise marketing at Workato, Mukherjea has become a champion of equity and diversity for the company's workforce and a mentor to young women. Sharma is chief client strategy officer at Photon, while also volunteering at local nonprofit organizations in the San Francisco area.

The couple recently joined RIT's Sentinel Society to support the university that launched their lives together. In honor of Mukherjea's father, they established the Joy Mukherjea Sentinel Scholarship to support students attending Saunders College.

The parents of two daughters, they enjoy their conversations and visits with their older daughter in college, golfing with their youngest, and play time with their dog, Mocha. They also enjoy streaming movies.

"So I see esoteric dramas with her and she watches action/comedy flicks with me," Sharma quipped.

And the occasional love story, like theirs.

Rich Kiley

2009



Kevin Smith '09, '09 MS (KGCOE) was named chief engineer at Orbit Fab.

2010

Ken Greenwood '10 EMBA (SCB) held the grand opening of Watershed Brewing Co., a microbrewery in Geneva, N.Y., in July. His business partner is his wife, **Lisa Greenwood '97 (CAST)**, RIT assistant professor in environmental, health and safety management.

2012

Andrew Donald '12 (CHST) was named an American Academy of Implant Dentistry Associate Fellow in November 2023.

Kristen Rinehart '13 (CAST) was recognized as a Notable Leader in Sustainability by *Plastics News*. She is the vice president and general manager of recycling with Advanced Drainage Systems in Hilliard, Ohio.

2014



Mike Glisson '14 (GCCIS) married Lauren Haffner in Kittery, Maine, surrounded by friends, family, and several RIT alumni.



Antwan Russell '14 (CAD) and **Jamal Henderson '14 (KGCOE)**, owners of EXP Studio, won the grand prize in the Pull Up & ROC the Pitch competition, hosted by RIT's Center for Urban Entrepreneurship.



Chris Wairegi '14 (CAD/CLA) was interviewed by *Good Morning America* about 600 Black Women, the nonprofit she founded to focus on uplifting Black women in the film community.

2015

Ray Ali '15, '15 ME (KGCOE) was promoted to vice president of technology solutions for the Army. He is a long-time leader at LMI, a technology company providing services for homeland security, next-generation technology for joint-force missions, and space initiatives.

2016



Jenna Bossert '16 (CLA) and **Eric Falkenberg '17 (GCCIS)** were married on Oct. 21, 2023, at Tamerlaine Sanctuary & Preserve. Their closest RIT friends and family were there to celebrate the special day.

Joseph Spilman '16 EMBA (SCB) is president of Optimax Systems, which has been ranked No. 23 among America's Best Small Employers 2023 by *Forbes*. Other RIT MBA alumni at Optimax include **Mike Mandina '03**, former president; **Alec Jarvie '17**, continuous improvement engineer; **Eric Bruening '03**, director, special projects; and **Brandon Szklany '20**, group leader.

Ortiz named Alumni Association president



Orlando Ortiz '04, '08 MBA wants to create more opportunities for alumni to get involved with RIT.

Orlando Ortiz '04 (manufacturing engineering technology), '08 (MBA) took over as the RIT Alumni Association president in January. He will serve for two years.

"There are a lot of alumni who are passionate about RIT, and we want them to really focus on the opportunities that are available," Ortiz said. "For example, how do we increase representation on the board for folks who haven't traditionally been well represented? Where are those gaps where we don't have voices?"

Ortiz, a real estate investment and property manager, has been a member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors for 10 years. He is also active with RIT's Lambda Alpha Upsilon Fraternity Inc. and is a mentor with RIT's Men

of Color, Honor, and Ambition (MOCHA) program.

He was RIT's 2020-2021 Frederick H. Minnett Professor. The Minnett Professorship brings distinguished Rochester-area multicultural professionals to the university to share their professional knowledge and experience with students, faculty, and staff for one academic year.

"I'm excited to get feedback from alumni who don't know what the Alumni Association really does, and for people to express interest in learning more," said Ortiz, who will also serve on the RIT Board of Trustees during his two-year term. "We have the ability to ensure we're engaging our alumni in the right ways so we can support RIT."

Mindy Mozer

Tiger Cubs

1



2



3



1 **Anthony Macri '08 (KGCOE)** and his wife, Alisha, welcomed the birth of their third child, Nicolas Simon, in July 2022. Nicolas was welcomed home by older siblings Maggie, 4, and Bennett, 2.

2 **Julie (Zepke) Krug '09 (CIAS)** and **Ken Krug '10 (GCCIS)** welcomed a baby boy, Shelby Paul Krug, in January 2023.

3 **Jeffrey Goldsmith '10, '10 MS (KGCOE)** and his wife, Jessie, welcomed twin girls, Rita and Darla, in March 2023.

2017



Hannah Barber '17 (CLA) and **Andrew Case '17 (GCCIS)** married in Auburn, N.Y., on a beautiful September 2023 evening surrounded by family, loved ones, and friends, including several RIT alumni.



Rachel Bratek '17 (COS) married **Miguel Murphy '19 (SOIS)** on Oct. 14, 2023, in Buffalo, N.Y. They were joined by fellow RIT graduates and Alpha Sigma Alpha alumni.



Sarah Ingerick '17 (CIAS) and **Kaleb (Davis) Ingerick '17 (GCCIS)** were married in the heart of Rochester in September 2023.



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Oct. 18-20, 2024

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vs.



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RIT

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Alumnus creates immersive exhibits



Beat the Boss is one of two interactives in The Strong National Museum of Play's permanent exhibition "ESL Digital Worlds: Level Up" that Pete St. John '03 MFA created.

Pete St. John '03 MFA (industrial design) created two interactive video game environments for The Strong National Museum of Play's permanent exhibition "ESL Digital Worlds: Level Up." In addition to museum exhibits, his St. John Design Group works on a wide range of creative materials for trade-shows, product development, and marketing strategies.

The first interactive is a rhythm game called *Beat the Boss*, which transports visitors into a musical fight against an animated opponent on the screen. The environment includes a stage, colored theater lights, and a subwoofer beneath the floor to add to the drama and immersion of the experience. According to St. John, rhythm games are a staple in the history of video games, and some believe they are beneficial to improving hand-eye coordination and attention.

"Our goal was to immerse the player in a stadium rock experience. We want you to feel the sound, see the lights, and lose yourself in the game

play," St. John explained.

Quick Cook, the second element, allows guests to join a food truck and see how dishes are created.

The exhibit uses RFID tags to track toy ingredients as players put them into the bowl to complete the menu shown onscreen.

St. John started developing the skills he would eventually use for these games during his time working in the theater industry. To broaden his horizons, he enrolled in RIT's industrial design program with an entrepreneurship

minor. The program enabled St. John to "focus the creativity into a corporate function," he explained.

"I'd always known that I was going to start my own company and, in 2006, that's just what I did," St. John said.

He runs St. John Design Group alongside his wife, Lisa. Their toy called "The Original Tooty Toob," designed by their other company, 5Saints, is in The Strong's permanent collection.

Jenna Warren '23



Pete St. John



Brooke Seamans '17 (CHST) and Max Mendelson '20, '20 MS (GCCIS) eloped alongside their closest family and loved ones, including members of RIT's Phi Kappa Psi, Delta Phi Epsilon, and RIT Study Abroad, on Dec. 9, 2023, in Hoboken, N.J.



Paula Ospina '17 (CAD) was the assistant editor for the documentary *FRIDA*, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival in January. The film recounts the life of famous Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.



Laura Silva '17 (GCCIS) and Nicholas Marchionda '17 (GCCIS) got married on Sept. 23, 2023, in Nahant, Mass., and were joined by RIT graduates.

2018



Linden Pohland '18 (CAST) began a new role as senior accountant at Octaura, a fintech startup in New York City.

2019

Clement Chung '19 EMBA (SCB) ran 147 miles around Monroe County, N.Y., in two days to raise awareness and donations for AutismUp. Chung raised \$14,400 to represent one in 44 children diagnosed with autism and received a New York state proclamation for his efforts.

2020



Kaitlin (Levine) Law '20 (NTID) and Nicolas Law '19 (KGCOE) got married on Sept. 21, 2023, on Long Island, surrounded by their RIT family. They met at RIT in 2017.



J'nez Thomas '20 EMBA (SCB) was first runner-up at the 2023 Ms. Veteran America competition on Oct. 8, 2023, at Caribe Royale Orlando in Orlando, Fla.

Peter Bilzerian '20 (SCB) was featured in a segment on *Good Morning America* about young people wearing hearing aids. Bilzerian, a two-time cancer survivor, advocates for people with hearing loss. He is a data engineer II/business intelligence lead with Bank of America.

2021



Tyler Villegas '21 (SOIS) founded his own game development and publishing company, Spooky Ghost Games, in 2022 and spent the last year developing, promoting, and playtesting *Lemon Game*, which began as his capstone project. A Kickstarter campaign for the game raised more than \$12,500.

“
My family and I have benefited from RIT in many ways. When I was invited to join the Sentinel Society, I felt compelled to make an even more impactful gift and leave a lasting legacy at RIT.

I've consistently earmarked my recent gifts to the most-needed areas of RIT, whether it's improving facilities or attracting great faculty—it all supports the students.”

—Reno M. Antonietti
AAS '58, BS '68

RIT | Planned Giving



Why I Give

A double alumnus, military veteran, and former RIT staff member, **Reno M. Antonietti AAS '58, BS '68** credits his profound RIT experience as both student and staff for why he gives back. For Reno, a consistent annual donor along with his wife, Jan, deciding to make a planned gift of life insurance was a natural progression.

From student to staff, Reno's RIT journey inspires his commitment to giving back.

Leave your own legacy.



585-475-3106
plannedgiving@rit.edu
rit.edu/yourlegacy

In Memoriam

Alumni

1944

John Maurer '44 (COS)
Oct. 3, 2023

1948

Joan (McCormack) Mawn '48 (SCB)
Oct. 28, 2023

1950

Alan Price '50 (GAP)
Aug. 24, 2023

1951

Charles Darling '51 (KGCOE) Aug. 31, 2023

1955

Margery (Senior) Mann '55 (FAA)
Sept. 28, 2023

Robert Seabrooks '55 (KGCOE) Oct. 29, 2023

Shirley (Stein) Stocking '55 (SCB)
Oct. 5, 2023

1956

Richard Hornung '56 (SCB) Oct. 8, 2023

1957

Barbara Hooker '57 (SCB) Sept. 17, 2023

Mary (Gayley) Hutcheson '57 (COS)
Oct. 29, 2023

Paul Tuttobene '57 (KGCOE) Aug. 27, 2023

1958

Thomas Alford '58 (GAP) Oct. 3, 2023

Thomas Flaherty '58 (KGCOE) Oct. 17, 2023

Philip Mordenga '58 (CCE) Aug. 20, 2023

John Nowicki '58 (CCE) Oct. 6, 2023

Gerald Thompson '58 (SCB) Nov. 4, 2023

1959

William Hughes '59 (GAP) Aug. 28, 2023

1960

Joseph Mahaney '60 (KGCOE) Oct. 12, 2023

1961

James Burns '61 (KGCOE) Sept. 21, 2023

Jere Osgood '61 (FAA)
Oct. 10, 2023

1963

Matthew Arena '63 (GAP) Sept. 8, 2023

R. Marcia Pugh '63 (SCB) Aug. 24, 2023

1964

Robert Cox '64 (KGCOE) Nov. 3, 2023

1965

James Hayes '65 (KGCOE) Oct. 4, 2023

Frank Mezler '65 (GAP) Oct. 3, 2023

1966

Stanley Kaut '66 (KGCOE) Aug. 18, 2023

Gilbert McGarvey '66 (SCB) Oct. 20, 2023

1967

Michael Allen '67 (SCB) Oct. 13, 2023

Ronald Bliss '67 (CCE)
Oct. 7, 2023

Sandra (Saulpaugh) Tuller '67 (SCB)
Oct. 30, 2023

1969

James Monteleone '69 (GAP) Sept. 22, 2023

1970

Philip Murray '70, '89 MFA (FAA) Sept. 11, 2023

Thomas Pfaffenbach '70 (SCB) Sept. 8, 2023

Vincent Tarquin '70 (SCB) Nov. 4, 2023

1971

Eugene Fuller '71 MBA (SCB) Sept. 15, 2023

James Lamb '71 MBA (SCB) Sept. 27, 2023

Leo Raab '71 (CCE)
Oct. 27, 2023

Paul Skillman '71 (CCE) Sept. 15, 2023

1972

Robert Ashe '72 (CCE)
Aug. 21, 2023

Ronald Mesolella '72 MBA (SCB) Sept. 9, 2023

Hugh Webster '72 (CCE) Aug. 27, 2023

1973

Berge Mangerian '73 (CCE) Oct. 28, 2023

1974

Leslie Gelly '74 (CCE)
Aug. 31, 2023

Richard Jones '74 (KGCOE) Oct. 22, 2023

1975

Anthony Bucci '75 (CCE) Oct. 23, 2023

Cleveland Forde '75 (CCE) Sept. 26, 2023

Michael Higgins '75 (KGCOE) Aug. 19, 2023

Richard Moncrief '75 MBA (SCB) Oct. 9, 2023

1976

Lawrence Gerst '76 MST (FAA) Sept. 16, 2023

Thomas Guard '76 (CLA) Aug. 23, 2023

John Kucik '76 ME (KGCOE) Sept. 21, 2023

Douglas Sharp '76 (SCB) Sept. 30, 2023

1977

Charles Braun '77 MBA (SCB) Sept. 16, 2023

Peter Dambra '77 (SCB) Oct. 16, 2023

Clarence Hannold '77 (CCE) Sept. 26, 2023

Gary Volk '77 (SCB)
Sept. 10, 2023

1978

Lawrence Chamberlin '78 (SCB) Oct. 24, 2023

Rodney Fernandez '78 (CAST) Sept. 28, 2023

Roger Landon '78 (CCE) Aug. 16, 2023

John Marks '78 MBA (SCB) Aug. 25, 2023

Ellen (Stucky) Trumble '78 (NTID)
Oct. 19, 2023

1979

Paul Aliprando '79 (KGCOE) Aug. 31, 2023

William Ludwig '79 (SCB) Oct. 24, 2023

David Rivaldo '79 MS (CAST) Sept. 15, 2023

1980

Richard Van Norman '80 (CCE) Aug. 25, 2023

1982

Patricia Foley '82 (NTID) Oct. 26, 2023

John Griffin '82 (CCE)
Aug. 20, 2023

Joseph Kavich '82 (CCE) Sept. 7, 2023

Kenneth Payne '82 (CCE) Nov. 1, 2023

Thomas Smock '82 (CCE) Sept. 3, 2023

Donald Walpole '82 (CCE) Sept. 7, 2023

1983

Jeffrey Bidlack '83 (CAST) Oct. 4, 2023

Jody Williams '83 MFA (FAA) Oct. 17, 2023

1984

James Hegstetter '84 (SCB) Sept. 7, 2023

1985

Richard Lenhard '85 (CCE) Oct. 29, 2023

1986

Ann Hovey '86 (SCB)
Aug. 31, 2023

Thomas Schuneman '86 (GAP) Sept. 9, 2023

Daniel Smialek '86 MS (CCE) Oct. 25, 2023

1988

William Anslow '88 (CAST) Nov. 9, 2023

1989

John Alderman '89 (CAST) Aug. 27, 2023

Leonard Petix '89 MS (CLA) Sept. 29, 2023

1990

Thomas Landauer '90 (CCE) Oct. 11, 2023

1991

Patrick Beattie '91 (CAST) Nov. 1, 2023

1992

Theresa Pfuntner '92 (COS) Sept. 3, 2023

1993

James Canning '93 (FAA) Aug. 31, 2023

1994

Peter Hofmann '94 (CAST) Sept. 15, 2023

1995

Judith Purdy '95 MS (CCE) Nov. 9, 2023

Michael Cramer '95 (CCE) Nov. 7, 2023

1996

Robert Dewey '96 (CAST) Oct. 2, 2023

1997

Hudson Ansley '97 (CAST) Sept. 21, 2023

Michael Howard '97 (CAST) Nov. 5, 2023

Kent Smith '97 MS (CAST) Aug. 21, 2023

1999

Joseph Amoroso '99 MBA (SCB) Oct. 14, 2023

Stephen Capperell '99 (KGCOE), '09 MS (GCCIS) Aug. 29, 2023

2000

Georgi Jossifov '00 (SCB) Oct. 27, 2023

John Swistak '00 MS (KGCOE) Aug. 21, 2023

2002

Ross Clary '02 (KGCOE) Oct. 3, 2023

2003

Timothy Whitmore '03 (CAST) Oct. 17, 2023

2005

Robin Hoffman '05 (CAST) Sept. 1, 2023

2008

Marita Johnson '08 MS (SCB) Oct. 24, 2023

2013

Daniel Pye '13 (NTID) Oct. 4, 2023

Faculty and Staff

Joseph Bochner, NTID professor and department chair, Oct. 22, 2023

Victoria Darcy, NTID associate director of admissions and marketing, Aug. 10, 2023

Lou Eltscher, retired College of Liberal Arts faculty member, Dec. 31, 2023

Glenn Kist, retired administrator and professor of history, Nov. 13, 2023

Joanne Mason, retired staff employee, Feb. 11, 2024

Athimoottil Mathew, retired Kate Gleason College of Engineering faculty member, Feb. 23, 2024

Bruce Meader, retired College of Art and Design faculty member, Jan. 14, 2024

Betty Schrader, retired staff member, Feb. 16, 2024

In memory of Linda Tolan



Linda Tolan worked at RIT for 42 years.

Linda Tolan, former senior associate dean of the College of Engineering Technology (CET) who worked at RIT for 42 years, died on Feb. 16, 2024.

Tolan, who began her career in 1981, served many roles. One of her biggest achievements was developing and presenting course work in RIT's growing online learning program, both on campus and at RIT Croatia. She was recognized with an Exemplary Distance Learning Teaching Award.

As an administrator with CET, Tolan helped build operations, programming, and

new departments. Those experiences, and her ability to be both candid and thoughtful, were assets to the many committees and task force teams she participated on or led.

Tolan is part of three generations of family attending or working at the university. Her daughter, Stephanie '93 (graphic design), '05 (cross disciplinary studies), is director of the Technology and Information Services department at NTID. Her granddaughter, Skylar, is a student in the environmental sustainability, health and safety program.

Michelle Cometa '00



University Archivist **Elizabeth Call** fills in missing pieces of the university's history by searching the archives.

NUMBER	SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAME	M	F	RESIDENCE	D	E	CLASS	TUITION			ATTENDANCE			LEASE			DEPARTMENT			
									FALL	WINTER	SPRING	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring	CIV.	Ind. Adv.	Rel. Adv.	Spec. Adv.
10	Spraggon	Belle	1		Peenewa, N.Y.	1		Summer - March	15												
16	Spraggon	Frederick	1		Washington, D.C.			Summer - September	25												
17	Schubert	Antonia	1		29 Lyndhurst St	1		Summer - September	5												
23	Stewart	Arthur L.	1		42 Prince St	1		Summer - September	5												
33	Smith	Isaac	1		554 No. St. Paul	1		Summer - September	5												

Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, granddaughter of Frederick Douglass, attended the Mechanics Institute in the 1890s.

Finding untold stories in the archives

It happens every time. Seeing a historical figure's handwritten name causes me to hold my breath and makes my heart quicken—even if it is not their handwriting, but that of another's.

The fact is that this person was standing in front of the person who was writing their name. It is evidence—evidence of their existence, of their movement through the world. As an archivist, I have experienced this often, especially since starting in my role in RIT Archives.

I had the pleasure of experiencing it again when I decided once again to search for a specific name in one of the many ledgers we have in RIT Archives—that of Fredericka Douglass Sprague Perry, granddaughter of Frederick Douglass, who attended the Mechanics Institute in the 1890s. (RIT renamed Nathaniel Rochester Hall after Douglass Sprague Perry last fall.)

These ledgers provide testament to the countless number of students, faculty, and staff who have walked through RIT's original hallways. RIT Archives is committed to collecting and making accessible diverse histories and lifting up untold, non-traditional stories and narratives about and within the collections.

To this end, we are digitizing the ledgers in the collections and working with RIT students inside and outside of the classroom to transcribe the ledgers and conduct research into the written names and addresses found there, to amplify and give life to these names.

In fall 2023, I had the pleasure of teaching Hands-On History: Examining RIT's Domestic Science and Arts Program, where students worked with original 19th-century sources held in RIT Archives—along with other sources that are available digitally—

to construct social histories and tell the untold stories of RIT's early history.

Additionally, throughout the semester there were hands-on activities using the techniques from more than a century ago, from sewing to cross-stitching to baking.

Through funding from the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of History, RIT Archives has been working closely with three student curators to design an exhibit around the history of the domestic science program at the Mechanics Institute that will adorn the walls of the history department's hallway.

This summer, we will have a current museum studies student work with us in RIT Archives to continue transcribing the ledgers and conducting research into the names.

Elizabeth Call, university archivist



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Tigers Connect is a great platform to use as I am working to find my first full-time position out of college.

I love that you can find people from the RIT community from anywhere, especially if you want to network with people outside of Rochester. ”

– Cass Tierney '24



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