

North Star

a Warrior report for alumni & friends of Rochester University



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Serving

IN GOD'S WORLD

LETTER

from the President



Dear Friends,

Thank you for reading this edition of Rochester University's North Star. With this special publication, we invite you into an insider's look at many of the wonderful things happening at RU. Accomplishing the mission of Christian higher education becomes more challenging with each passing year, but thanks to our students, faculty, staff, and especially thanks to your support and the help of God, RU continues to grow and thrive.

As a Christian university, the RU community is fundamentally engaged in the relentless search for truth. We emphasize learning to reason well, to think critically and analytically, and to understand how to evaluate competing truth claims. We read good books. We strive to become literate in mathematics, the natural sciences and technology. We study the lessons of history, learn to appreciate and value the arts, and delve deeply into the human dynamics of the social and behavioral sciences.

In short, we are devoted to becoming well-educated human beings, better understanding and relating to God's world and other people. We will pursue this effort tirelessly, but RU will also never settle for a solely intellectual pursuit of truth. Instead, we will always ask the question, "How does the truth inform our way of living and being?" And even more fundamentally, we will always encourage each other to follow in the steps of the one who said about himself, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." At RU, we invite all who are willing to join us in pursuing this truth to be a part

of our "Open Table" community, where everyone belongs and is welcomed as an image-bearer of God.

At RU, we think of education not as a passport to privilege, but instead as a means by which we are equipped to better serve others. Our students are preparing for lives of stewardship and service. They are already a positive force for good. This issue especially highlights how our current students and alumni are serving in God's world, building on a foundation reinforced throughout their time at RU.

As you read this issue, you will learn more about how we are doing the important work of a Christian university and how some wonderful people are participating in our continued movement forward, as well as how our students are achieving excellence in multiple ways. You'll also learn more about how we are remembering and honoring our heritage, even as we point toward a bright future. We hope you enjoy this glimpse inside the life of Rochester University. As you read and learn more about RU, we invite you to join hands with us in the service of our vital mission.

May God bless you,

BRIAN STOGNER, PH.D.

President, Rochester University



ROCHESTER UNIVERSITY

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back row, from left to right:

MATTI COMBES
Freshman

ABIGAIL TURNER
Freshman

ISABEL SANCHEZ
Freshman

EMMA SADDLER
Junior

front row, from left to right:

SHANE LEWANDOWSKI
Grad Student

SAVANNAH TAYLOR-BANKS
Freshman

ALYXANDER LABRANCHE
Junior

ISRAEL HENSON
Sophomore

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Campus Updates



Dr. Vikki Bentley, dean of the School of Education, and Rebekah Pinchback, dean of the School of Business and Technology, cut the ribbon to commemorate the opening of the RU Alumni Center.



Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan Barnett speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the RU Alumni Center.



Tours are available to those interested in visiting the new facility.

Contact the RU Development and Alumni Relations Office at development@rochesteru.edu or call 248.218.2021.

RIBBON-CUTTING CELEBRATES OPENING OF NEW FACILITY

Members from the greater Rochester community gathered with RU students, faculty and staff to commemorate the unveiling of the new Rochester University Alumni Center on Sept. 14.

The Alumni Center houses the School of Business and Technology, the School of Education and the new Van Duyn Financial Planning Program.

Dr. Jason Van Duyn, president and founder of AQuest Wealth Strategies, is the first donor to fully sponsor a program at Rochester University.

The Van Duyn Financial Planning program currently has 18 students in its first year of being offered by the university. The program is an online or hybrid learning experience that blends together business fundamentals and financial planning knowledge students need to become successful financial advisers.

Rebekah Pinchback, dean of the School of Business and Technology, said Van Duyn's philosophy matches well with the university's. "We are proud of the holistic approach that we take in educating our students; Jason takes the same approach with his clients. He has a deep rooted desire to pass on knowledge and experience to the next generation of financial planning professionals," she said.

Rochester University purchased the building at 250 W. Avon Road in 2022 from the Rochester Church of Christ, which had originally purchased the property from the university in 1987. The addition of the property provides 45,000 square feet of 14 offices, eight classrooms, two conference rooms and an auditorium where weekly chapel services are held.

This additional building on campus provides space for the growth of the university. "I used to think to myself, wouldn't it be wonderful if some day, we had a facility at Rochester University that housed particular academic departments, where faculty could have offices, a place for classrooms and spaces for students to be," said Dr. Brian Stogner, RU president. "It is nice to be here today to celebrate this new space and the way the university can grow into it."

CAMPUS MOVES CREATE USER-FRIENDLY SETTING

The opening of the RU Alumni Center with its expanded classroom and office space has allowed for a revisioning of where to locate various offices to provide a user-friendly setting for students and to create a more efficient atmosphere for employees.

The moves include:

- The Campus Store and mailroom are now based on the first floor of the Richardson Center, providing better accessibility and visibility for shopping, mail and deliveries. The campus store added more merchandise, including new crewnecks, contrast hoodies and full-zip sweatshirts. Show your Warrior pride all year long with our Rochester University collegiate apparel, including t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats and more.
- Admissions and Enrollment Services and Marketing and Communication are located on the second floor of Campus Center.
- Faculty offices previously located on the second floor of Campus Center are now located in Muirhead Center, along with the Advising and Early College offices.
- The Department of Mass Communication and Shield Media are located in Gallaher West. The former Music Room is the Media Lab.
- The Department of Theatre and Music offices are in the lower level of Gatewood Hall, with continued operations in the Lab Theatre and RU Theatre.
- The Development and Alumni Relations Office is located in Gallaher East.



+ If you are in Rochester Hills, stop by and visit the new store, or shop online at rochesteruniversity.mybrightsites.com.



Bethany Musallam, assistant professor of nursing, and Rose (Jaynes) Nikollaj, junior, work on one of several medical mannequins in the Nursing Simulation Lab.

NURSING STUDENTS SURPASS 90% PASS RATE ON LICENSING EXAM

The School of Nursing and Health Studies reports a 2023 pass rate of 91% for candidates taking the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses on their first try.

The national average for Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs is 89.52%, according to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing with an overall average of 87.62% for total first-time, U.S.-educated students completing diploma, baccalaureate and associate degree programs.

Congratulations to all the RU nurses, their teachers and the entire SNHS staff.



RU Mascot, Crimson, in Beth Peterson's '06 fourth grade class at Hampton Elementary School.

RU MASCOT, CRIMSON, READS TO LOCAL ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Rochester University partnered with local schools to celebrate March is Reading Month by bringing Crimson, RU's new mascot, to read to students. He read a book, interacted with students and encouraged literacy.

Crimson's first visit was to Holy Family Regional School with Michigan State Senator Michael Webber, where they read to second and third grade students. After the reading, Webber and Crimson took questions from the class about working as a state senator and about Rochester University. When he was growing up, Webber attended Lake Norcentra Basketball Camp, coordinated by Coach Garth Pleasant and family.

For his second visit, Crimson spent a few hours at Hampton Elementary in Rochester Hills, reading to kindergarten, second, third and fourth graders. Crimson was serenaded by Taylor Victory's kindergarten class after his reading in appreciation for his visit to their classroom. While at Hampton, Crimson made a visit to RU alumnus Elizabeth Peterson's fourth grade class. Peterson '06 has taught at Hampton Elementary since her graduation from Rochester University.



Crimson also visited Pine Knob Elementary in Clarkston, reading alongside DeAndra Smith '88, a member of the RU Board of Trustees. Smith is a family engagement coordinator for Clarkston Community Schools and works closely with students at Pine Knob Elementary.

During the visit to Pine Knob, Smith and Crimson read the children's book "The What If's" by Emily Kilgore. After the reading, Crimson helped third-graders check out books in the library and waved goodbye to students at the end of the school day with Tilly the Tiger, Pine Knob's mascot.

"Students and staff are already asking when Crimson will be back," Smith said after the visit.



If you are interested in having Crimson visit your classroom, contact Taylor Isenberg at tisenberg1@rochesteru.edu.



PLEASANT MOVES INTO AMBASSADOR ROLE; “COACH” DOCUMENTARY CELEBRATES HIS INFLUENCE.

Garth Pleasant ‘69, long-time coach and professor, has transitioned out of the classroom and into the role of community ambassador. He now spends his time networking and fundraising with alumni, donors, retirees and friends in Rochester and the surrounding communities. His goal is to share Rochester University’s story with the community. He also will spend time mentoring RU’s 435 student-athletes and 22 sport teams.

“COACH: Make The Big Time Where You’re At” is a documentary released in 2023 that explores Pleasant’s legacy. The movie, produced by Tell Studios and Rochester University, premiered in April at Emagine Rochester Hills. The movie has also been screened in California, Tennessee, and at the Older Person’s Commission and Rochester Hills Public Library in Rochester.

Paul Glantz, co-founder and chairman of Michigan-based Emagine Entertainment, sponsored and donated Emagine Rochester Hills for the showing. “We are so grateful to Paul Glantz for his dedicated support of the movie and of the mission of RU,” said Luke Fler, vice president of development and alumni relations.

“COACH” uses storytelling and interviews with Oakland University’s Head Men’s Basketball Coach Greg Kampe; Milwaukee Bucks General Manager Jon Horst ‘06; former players; the Pleasant family; and more. Pleasant is a Hall of Fame basketball coach and sought-after motivational speaker. As coach at RU, Pleasant’s teams amassed 720 wins and four national championships.



If you haven’t seen the **COACH** documentary, watch it now at rochesteru.edu/coach.

STREAMING WADES INTO BEING HUMAN IN GOD’S WORLD

RU’s annual Streaming conference in October “helped move us down the waters of understanding by way of conversation,” said Dr. Mark Love, program director of the master’s degree in missional leadership and professor of theology and ministry.

This year’s conference looked at “Who are Humans that You are Mindful of Them?” Love said, “What you think it means to be human in God’s world matters and reveals a lot about what we believe about God.”



The speakers reflected from a variety of perspectives: psychological, philosophical, theological and biblical on this theme. Presenters included:

- **DR. LAUREN SMELSER WHITE**, Lipscomb University assistant professor of theology and author of “Flesh Made Word: The Protestant Interpretation Problem and an Embodied Hermeneutic.”
- **DR. RICHARD BECK**, professor of psychology at Abilene Christian University and author of several books, most recently “Trains, Jesus and Murder: The Gospel according to Johnny Cash.”
- **DR. MALLORY WYCKOFF**, speaker, spiritual director, peacemaker, and author of “God Is.”
- **DR. DAVID FLEER**, RU consultant and public speaker.
- **DR. NATALIE MAGNUSSON**, assistant director of RU’s MRE in Missional Leadership.
- **DR. CHRIS SHIELDS** ‘04, worship minister for the Woodmont Hills Church in Nashville.



Jessica Nichols '21, performs in "Twelfth Night" at RU's outdoor theater last summer.

SHAKESPEARE UPON AVON CELEBRATES LARGE CROWDS IN 10TH YEAR

Every summer, the RU Theatre Company partners with UnCovered Theatre Company to produce the award-winning Shakespeare festival: Shakespeare Upon Avon. Professional actors and directors from around the country come to RU's campus each year to perform some of the Bard's best plays.

Almost 300 audience members saw the performance over the course of five shows this past summer. This is the largest number of people to attend Shakespeare Upon Avon since before the COVID years.

The group presented one of Shakespeare's best known comedies, "Twelfth Night," directed by Rebekah Graham '22. This is the 10th year of Shakespeare on Avon.

The cast in this show included RU faculty, Rob Arbaugh and Brandon Langeland; alumni Jessica Nichols '22, Arianna Engnell '20 and Alex Link '18; local professionals Antonio Vettriano, Sarah Hartmus and Katie Akers, and RU student Ken Herndon.

"Shakespeare Upon Avon was one of my first experiences at RU," Engnell said. "The beautiful and electric magic of UnCovered's 'Romeo & Juliet' set the standard for what I expected out of theatre and myself. Over 10 years later, I was asked to be a part of the festival's production of 'Twelfth Night' as a member of UnCovered. The past and recent artists who worked on the festival have made it clear that theatre magic is made through the collaboration of people who adore the art form, the playwright's words and each other."

Rob Arbaugh, chair and artistic director of the Department of Theatre and Music, said Shakespeare Upon Avon is a great opportunity for students to work as apprentices onstage and off, and to work alongside professional actors, directors, designers and stage managers.

Shakespeare upon Avon has won multiple awards from BroadwayWorld Awards, including acting and production honors.



campus news compiled by

CARISSA HANSEN

RU digital strategist



Kentrice Brown, Sophomore

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION EARNS NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

After four years of preparation and a thorough accreditation visit, led by Dr. Linda Park, professor of education, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation granted full accreditation to the RU School of Education at the initial licensure level through Spring 2030. The CAEP accreditation gives RU national accreditation.

Dr. Remylin Bruder, provost, said, “This recognition demonstrates a commitment to quality in teacher education and is a testament to the excellence and leadership of our team in the School of Education.”

Dr. Vikki Bentley, dean of the School of Education and professor of education, said, “The accreditation journey encouraged change and improved processes in the SOE, and we are thrilled to have accomplished this goal.”

The School of Education also includes the Early Childhood Studies department, a fully online degree geared to help students with an associates degree complete a bachelor’s degree, led by Dr. Cynthia Clark, associate professor of education.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE CHILDREN GONE?

Dr. Dave Hutson, chair of the Department of Sport Studies, presented “Where Have All the Children Gone? Youth Sports and the Slow Demise of Unsupervised Play” at Smart Towns, a lifelong learning program led by educational organizations in the greater Rochester community at the Rochester Hills Public Library.

Hutson’s study focused on how the youth sports environment has significantly changed from the one experienced by those who grew up prior to the 21st century.

“With travel teams, tournaments and state-of-the-art facilities, the youth sports industry is evolving from an era of children playing sports for fun to one that resembles professional sports,” Hutson said.

A major societal shift has also occurred in the way children play, he said. “Children are spending less time playing outside than their parents did, and most children’s play is highly structured and supervised by adults.”

Hutson said his presentation is a multi-faceted approach to explore the evolution of children’s play, the societal influences of play, the rise and fall of youth sports and unsupervised play, and offer a new vision for youth sports.

Smart Towns’ partners work to provide a unique series of educational programs for the community. Participating organizations include Ascension Providence Rochester Hospital, Oakland University, Rochester University, Rochester-Avon Historical Society, Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm and Rochester Hills Public Library.



Dr. Dave Hutson



MASTER UP

University expands graduate offerings

Rochester University launched two new master's degree programs this fall, joining the university's original graduate degree in missional leadership.

"Our faculty saw the need for graduate offerings in specific fields to allow students to be more competitive and knowledgeable in those industries," said Dr. Remylin Bruder, provost. "Our psychology and sport management degrees are two of our largest programs at the undergraduate level. We have a strong history in these areas with expert professors and accomplished alumni, so we determined that we would expand our graduate level offerings."

In 2022, the Higher Learning Commission, RU's accrediting body, approved the new master's programs and a change in student body status to acknowledge the university's graduate-level work.

Adventurous Faith: MRE in Missional Leadership

RU's original graduate degree was a master's in religious education, which was transformed to focus on missional leadership in 2009, and 122 individuals have earned the degree since then.

The two-year, cohort-based degree is different from traditional religious master's programs, said Dr. Mark Love, graduate program director for the MRE in missional leadership and professor of theology and ministry. "The word 'missional' indicates that we live in a new era in which the traditional ways we have done ministry are no longer as effective. If that's right, it follows that training people for ministry has to change as well."

He says the MRE in missional leadership is "not your father's master's degree because it provides innovative preparation for a new adventure in ministry." The degree offers an integrated learning experience that combines courses in scripture, theology and ministry, along with the practices of leadership in one's faith community.

The 36-hour cohort-based degree program combines online learning with travel to a variety of locations in the U.S. at the beginning of each of the four semesters for a one-week intensive course and retreat.

+ To learn more about our graduate-level offerings, visit www.rochesteru.edu/graduate-learning.

Great Teams Need Great Leaders: MA in Sport Leadership

Through a blend of online and seated instruction, this cohort-based program provides an extensive curriculum that equips students with the necessary leadership skills for today's sport industry and prepares the next generation of leaders in the field of sport.

"We've designed this degree to expose our students to the many challenges and opportunities faced by the leaders of domestic and international sport organizations," said Dr. Dave Hutson, professor of sport studies. "We intentionally are combining academic learning with a travel intensive where students will learn from leading practitioners in the sport industry."

The 33-credit-hour degree is offered in a 15-month shared cohort model. Each cohort will begin the program with a required orientation and intensive course on RU's campus. A travel intensive to locations throughout the U.S. will be required during the summer.



Dr. Dave Hutson with the new cohort of students in the Sport Leadership graduate program.

Insights into Humanity: MA in Clinical Psychology

This clinical, scientist-practitioner program aims to help students deepen their understanding of human behavior while also using research-oriented training to advance their skills in clinical psychology.

Through 500 clinical practicum hours and 42 credits of coursework, students will attain the theoretical, scientific, technical and personal experience needed to practice clinical psychology with appropriate mentorship and supervision.

The master's degree is particularly appropriate for students who need advanced work to strengthen their profiles in preparation for application to Ph.D. or Psy.D. programs or for those who wish to explore graduate-level work before making a commitment to Ph.D. training.

WORK FROM THE HEART

Business school prepares students for professional achievement and ethical service

RU's largest academic school has a new home, expanded degree offerings, and an abundance of positive energy as it develops leaders to work from the heart.

With more than 300 students majoring in one of its 11 degree offerings, the School of Business and Technology aims to prepare graduates to work in an environment that reflects Christian principles, high morals and ethical standards, said Dean Rebekah Pinchback.

Faculty from the school moved into a new home this summer in the RU Alumni Center, which has 14 offices, eight classrooms and two conference rooms.

Because of the growth of the school and the need to build a strategic framework to support long-term growth and innovation, SBT has established three new departments.

■ *Crunching numbers*

The Department of Accounting and Financial Studies trains students to crunch numbers and manage money for business and investors. Kathryn Stokes, assistant professor of business, chairs this department.

Almost 40 majors are working toward their Bachelor of Business Administration degree in accounting. They are learning that accounting plays a vital role in running a business by providing management and investors with the financial information needed to make decisions.

The new BBA degree in financial planning is off to a strong start with the help of Dr. Jason Van Duyn, president and founder of AQuest Wealth Strategies in Rochester. The program, which is an online or hybrid learning experience that blends together business fundamentals and financial planning knowledge, currently has 22 majors in its first year of being offered at the university.



Kathryn Stokes, chair of the Department of Accounting & Financial Services, works with a student during accounting class.



Faculty from the School of Business and Technology hold a discussion panel with business students.

■ *Leading with integrity*

Jaymes Vettraino, assistant professor of business, chairs the Department of Management and Leadership Studies, which has more than 100 students studying management, nonprofit management or strategic leadership.

Students in the BBA in management degree receive a broad base of accounting, economics, marketing and management curriculum. Graduates will be ready to take on management roles in any organization.

The BBA in nonprofit management strives to make the world a better place and address challenging social issues with a strong business sense. This degree prepares students to think critically, creatively and collaboratively about issues facing government, for-profit and nonprofit enterprises.

The fully online BS degree in strategic leadership helps students understand what it means to be competent, creative, flexible and forward-thinking leaders in a corporate environment.

■ *Knock it out of the park*

The Department of Sport Studies, chaired by Dr. Dave Hutson, professor of sport studies, offers two undergraduate degrees and a graduate degree in sport leadership.

With 95 majors and a history as an innovative degree, the BBA in sport management prepares managers and leaders for today's global sport industry, which is expected to grow to \$599.9 billion by 2025, according to the Business Research Company.

The BBA in sport management gives students a strong business foundation with a focus on the sports industry. The BBA in sport management with an emphasis on esports and gaming provides specialized instruction in this developing, growing industry.



Jaymes, with his wife, Lynne and their two kids, Lia and JJ.



Vettraino with students in 2016 at a visioning session for downtown Rochester.

From Politics to Education

VETTRAINO BRINGS EXPERTISE TO RU

From managing political campaigns to working with small-to-midsize city governments, Jaymes Vettraino always strives to fully serve his community.

Vettraino, assistant professor of business who was voted most influential professor by RU students in Spring 2023, grew up in Sterling Heights, Michigan, as the eldest of two boys.

Even from a young age, Vettraino was interested in teaching. He grew up attending summer camp and later worked as a camp counselor, and this experience of working with young people led him to explore education as a career path when he enrolled at Michigan State University.

He took a combination of political science and education courses at MSU, but decided to pursue only a political science degree. After an internship with a U.S. senator, Vettraino moved to Pennsylvania to work on a congressional campaign, where he met Lynne, who would later become his wife.

After a few campaigns, Vettraino realized that although he liked the adrenaline of political campaigns, he wanted to see issues and policies completed. "Politics can sometimes be philosophical and even with your best effort, you can't get it done," he said. This, and a goal to stay near Lynne rather than chance the next political campaign, resulted in a decision to pursue the administrative side of government. He served as the city manager for Pen Argyl, Pennsylvania before moving to Kutztown, Pennsylvania.

After finishing his MBA, Vettraino taught entrepreneurship as an adjunct professor at Alvernia College, a small Catholic institution in Reading, Pennsylvania.

By 2008, Jaymes and Lynne had a young daughter with another child on the way. They wanted to move to Michigan to be closer to Vettraino's family.

The City of Rochester, Michigan, was looking for a city manager and Vettraino applied and earned the high-level position. Before this, Vettraino's primary experience with Rochester was visiting his uncle's restaurant, Lino's Italian Restaurant, a long-established favorite in the city.

In late 2008, when Vettraino stepped into the new role in Rochester, the United States was at the peak of a financial crisis, and Rochester didn't have a dollar to spare. Vettraino spent much of his time deciding how to retain and prioritize valuable city services while doing the most good with a decreasing budget.

"Most of my job was how to make sure we don't lay off our hard-working employees while ensuring all the services were still being delivered," he said. "How do we do the best we can with what we have?"

While Vettraino worked with the public administration program at Oakland University, he sat on an MBA exploratory committee for then, Rochester College. He started developing relationships with President Rubel Shelly and Danny Cagnet, former director of the RU School of Business. Eventually, Vettraino became an adjunct at RU. "I really liked the students. I liked the class size, and I thought it'd be a nice place to spend more time," he said.

In 2015, Vettraino began reflecting on his busy schedule, which included many evening meetings that kept him from his wife and children, then 11-year-old Lia and 7-year-old JJ. After talking with Shelly, Dr. Brian Stogner, then provost, and Tom Rellinger, executive vice president and chief financial officer, Vettraino realized his calling was turning back to education.

Changing career paths after 17 years as a city manager wasn't an easy decision for Vettraino. Logically, he said he should move to be a city manager in a bigger city, and he

Jaymes Vettraiño with the Rochester City Council in 2015. Photo courtesy of the City of Rochester.



worried that a mid-career shift would affect the family’s finances. “It was the hardest, best decision I’ve made,” he said.

Nearly 18 years after dropping his pursuit of an education degree at MSU, Vettraiño found himself teaching full-time at the university. He has designed new courses and degree plans, feeling called to teach while also giving back to communities. He became interested in social entrepreneurship and nonprofit management and determined they were a perfect fit for the university.

“The students in my class have big hearts. Their minds are telling them to enter certain professions, but their hearts tell them they want to make a difference in the world. There are lots of jobs in government and nonprofits that really fit what I’m hearing from them,” he said. Vettraiño developed RU’s nonprofit management degree and now oversees the Department of Management and Leadership.

He also leads several initiatives that fulfill this combination of business and service, including Warriors Serve, the Oakland Leadership Academy, and the RISE mentoring program.

In addition to serving the university, Jaymes and Lynne built Vettraiño Consulting. Lynne specializes in event management and political campaigns. Jaymes specializes in helping facilitate more effective and efficient local government.

“My consulting keeps me engaged with current management issues and topics facing my clients, which helps inform what and how I’m teaching my students; and my teaching helps me bring fresh academic perspectives to my consulting clients,” he said.

Vettraiño has also contributed two chapters to a textbook published in October 2023: “Local Government Administration in Small Town America,” and he helps peer review articles for the “Public Integrity Journal,” an international journal that publishes research on ethics in public administration, such as corruption, social equity, law, criminal justice and human rights.

JAYMES VETTRAIÑO HAS LED MANY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS FOR RU, INCLUDING:

Oakland County Leadership Academy

Rochester University won a bid in spring 2023 to coordinate the Oakland County Leadership Academy, which provides an opportunity for mid and upper level managers to explore leadership from multiple perspectives. Vettraiño facilitates the program for the county. Most of the departments in the county are represented including finance, IT, housing, public health, emergency management and more.

Warriors Serve

RU’s community service event was started by Vettraiño in 2018. Each year, students and employees gather to work with the Micah 6 Community, a neighborhood-based community development program dedicated to serving the city of Pontiac, Michigan.



Webster Community Center

Vettraiño is involved with Micah 6 and the Webster Community Center in Pontiac. Using the existing structure, Micah 6 is renovating the old elementary school to become a mixed-use community center featuring a collection of local non-profit organizations, small businesses, and community minded organizations, who, together, seek to build a brighter future for Pontiac.

RISE

A mentoring program designed for students to build meaningful relationships with alumni and friends of RU. Participating students are paired with a mentor established in their field of study or desired career path. Vettraiño has served on the RISE committee since 2020.



To become a mentor, visit www.rochesteru.edu/rise.



main article written by

DANIELLE CASTILLO

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Digital Editor of Shield Media

WALK THE TALK

RU Serves in God's World

Our mission is quite straightforward: “Rochester University prepares students for professional and personal success as they serve in God’s world.”

As President Brian Stogner said, “We strive to deepen our focus on the words and example of Jesus. We emphasize humble and selfless service, not seeking glory or recognition for our efforts, but setting an example and teaching our students that following the call of God means carrying a cross and serving others.”

Service really is a unifying value for our community. We know who we are and what we want to be. We know the importance of aligning our actions to match our words. We take meaningful steps to back up our words. We walk the talk.

The RU community from students to faculty serve in neighborhoods, businesses and organizations, striving for justice and mercy.

Here is a snapshot of how our current students are learning the value of serving others and how our alumni are already living this out as they use their vocation and their interests to serve others.

Warriors Serve

Warriors Serve, RU’s twice-a-year signature service event, was started in 2018 to engage our campus to work together to participate in a community-building project. At this fall’s Warriors Serve, more than 250 students and employees served with the Micah 6 Community in Pontiac, Michigan.

Micah 6 provides fresh food, activities for children, and programming for the Pontiac community and strives to “build the neighborhood that Pontiac deserves.”

For the past two years in a three-block area of Pontiac, the RU community cleared brush and garbage from public streets and vacant properties, weeded and planted urban gardens, and made improvements to the Webster Community Center.

After Warriors Serve, students are encouraged to reflect on the experience. They have written:

“A fellow neighbor came by and thanked us with a smile. That made me have butterflies inside knowing I’m helping the community.”

“Volunteering your love makes you feel more love.”

“I have always felt my vocation was to help people, joining this one-day service project helped me realize even more how much I like to give back to the communities around me that have given me so much.”

“God is showing me there are nicer things in life besides video games and athletics. Sometimes I need to step out of my comfort zone and enjoy what God made for us.”



Coleman Yoakum, Micah 6 executive director, said Warriors Serve is an event his team looks forward to every year. “Having students out, excited and eager to help is a big deal for us. Many hands make light work, and the week before, our team writes our project wishlist on the board and every year we get it all done with the RU students who show up,” he said. “Plus our neighbors, our neighborhood kids, and our partners really appreciate seeing so many people show up and care about the community. I also believe it gives something back to the students. Each year we see this event grow larger and more students come out to participate and return year after year.”

Our alumni are taking that vision they learn as students and applying it to their lives — even several years after graduation. Here are their stories about how their time at RU helped them form servant hearts.

Brad McKenna

EXTREME RESPONSE INTERNATIONAL

Brad McKenna '02, an interdisciplinary major in communication and sciences, is the president and chief executive officer of Extreme Response International, a nonprofit headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, that invests “in the lives of vulnerable people to help them break free from generational poverty.”

McKenna said Extreme Response changes the lives of people living in extreme, often life-threatening, situations. With about 100 team members working around the world out of four locations, Extreme Response serves as many as 600 people on any given day.

How did your education at RU help prepare you to serve in God's world?

“When I first came to RU (then Michigan Christian College), I felt out of place. I was not a Christian and I was not interested in attending class or any of the campus activities. But it was the people of RU that changed that. People poured into me regardless of my faith. They showed me I mattered to them and that I mattered to God. As a result, I began to investigate and started down a path of discovery. Ultimately, that led me to see that Christ was real and that



McKenna snaps a selfie with students at the Extreme Response Dream Center in Limpopo, South Africa

he had always been there waiting for me. A couple of years into my RU experience, I gave my life to Christ and soon after discovered I had a passion for serving others around the world.”

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

“At our Dream Centers, we work with students ages 5 to 13 who come from difficult backgrounds. In South Africa, a student named John faces significant challenges. He and his mom are refugees from Malawi, where I lived for nearly two years and I can speak the Chichewa language. When John and I met, we instantly made a connection, and to this day whenever we see one another, we have big smiles and a hug. I don't know what the future holds for John, but every time I am in South Africa at our Dream Center, he is the first student I look for!”

Sarah Feldman

CLEVELAND CLINIC



Sarah and Jake Feldman '22 |

Sarah (Brackney) Feldman '21, who majored in nursing, is a labor and delivery nurse for the Cleveland Clinic, a nationally ranked and internationally recognized hospital. She cares for patients admitted to the hospital to deliver their babies, and she helps patients through their labor, advocates for their goals and safety, and educates them about their experiences.

How are you serving in God's world?

“The most significant way I serve in God's world is by safely bringing new life into the world. I pray daily on my way to work for the families I care for and the newborn babies I will meet. I pray for their safety and health. I pray they will understand a glimpse of God's love for us through the love they will feel for their child.”

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

“My time at RU taught me there will always be opportunities to serve in God's world no matter where you are. The most important thing is to listen to the Spirit guiding you toward an opportunity and not back down when that opportunity arises. Reminding people of God's love for them does not (and should not) happen only at church or in religious settings. Sharing God's love can happen anywhere with anyone.”

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

“I was caring for a religious family that had Christian music playing during their labor. It was their first child, and they were obviously excited to meet their child. During the delivery, things got intense. Everyone made it out safe and healthy, but there was a lot of stress during and right after the baby was born. Their baby had to stay in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit during their hospital stay. Before I transferred the mom and dad to their postpartum room, I offered to pray with them about the situation and the health of their baby. They accepted, and we shared a moment connecting with God. They shared how important it was that I was able to be with them during a time of fear and stress.”



Tina (Ries) Gurganus with her husband Nathan and son, Wyatt.

Tina Gurganus

MADISON DISTRICT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Tina (Ries) Gurganus '02, who majored in in English/elementary education, is a fourth-grade teacher at Madison Elementary School in the Madison District Public Schools in Michigan.

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

"My time at RU provided the foundation to becoming the educator I am today. I was able to get great hands-on experience through different placements to broaden my understanding of what teaching would require. I was able to learn from professors who were still in classrooms themselves while having deep and meaningful conversations about our expectations in and out of our future classrooms. Learning from Christ-centered educators guided me into becoming a teacher who has Christ at the forefront of all I do."

How are you serving in God's world?

"Tending to and working with God's children through education. Throughout my 22 years of teaching, I have worked with students who have experienced trauma in many different ways. Being able to be an adult who fights for them, listens to them, believes in them, and prays for them has been the biggest blessing of being in this profession."

Julius Austin

SACRAMENTO HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY



Julius (J.D.) Austin '04, who majored in mathematics and science, is manager of resident services and manager of the Sacramento Promise Zone for the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency. This housing authority for the city and county of

Sacramento, California, is also the lead agency for the Sacramento Promise Zone, a federal designation and 10-year place-based initiative awarded to the agency in 2015. Austin is responsible for directing the daily operations of the Promise Zone and working with federal and local leaders to focus resources and opportunities on the most marginalized and underserved Sacramento communities.

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

"I am grateful I get to do work every day that helps others. My time at Rochester helped me to confirm the actions I take to provide service to others. The education I earned, the people I met, and the experiences I had at RU greatly added to my foundation as a young man. I am appreciative of everything I learned and experienced while at Rochester University."

How are you serving in God's world?

"I am serving by intentionally focusing on providing better outcomes for the most marginalized, underserved and historically discriminated against populations. I also focus on holistically changing communities by ensuring there are resources and opportunities in every area that are necessary for people and communities to strive."

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

"We've been able to give out over 50,000 culturally relevant and inclusive books so that every kindergarten through second-grade student in the Promise Zone schools receives a bag with six to eight books to own and have in their home. This increases access to books, and appreciation for reading and literacy abilities. Imagine seeing a 7-year-old Black scholar getting a bag of books, opening it up, and saying for the first time ever, 'This is MY book and the person on the cover of the book looks just like me!'"

Kara Tipton

222 FOUNDATION

Kara (Nulty) Tipton '04, who majored in communication, serves as the development director for the 222 Foundation, a Dallas-based nonprofit organization that helps future Christian ministry leaders stay in ministry and flourish. Nulty said she works to honor those who have engaged with the ministry, stewarding their gifts and looking for ways to connect them more deeply.

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

"I look back at my time at RU as transformational in who I am. I came to college quiet and reserved, and left with so much confidence and gumption. My professors poured into me. They were quick to point out my strengths and help me grow. I was given a safe place to explore who I am...I learned I was capable of pretty much anything."



How are you serving in God's world?

"Currently, I am an advocate for seminary students training to be pastors. The church can and should rally around those who serve the church full-time, ministering TO the ministers, and remembering that pastors are humans who don't belong on a pedestal."

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

"I'm working with a Dallas Theological Seminary student, his wife and 3-year-old daughter. They moved to Dallas from India so he could fulfill his ministry calling. He had been practicing family medicine and working part-time in a local church in India when he realized he needed more training on the theological side. Once he has his master's in theology completed, he plans to return home to grow the church in India and start a Bible-teaching institution that is affordable to Indians interested in a theological education."

Kelvin Brown

HOUSING CRISIS CENTER



Kelvin Brown '95 serves as the chief executive officer for the Housing Crisis Center in Dallas. The organization offers various programs and resources for those who are currently homeless or at-risk of homelessness in the metropolitan Dallas area. In addition

to providing safety and shelter, the Housing Crisis Center provides coaching sessions, life skills and financial counseling, a free legal clinic focusing on tenant rights and programs for veterans and other formerly homeless individuals.

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

"More than what I learned in the classroom, my faith was challenged, influenced and increased by godly people. People on campus saw something in me and challenged my thoughts and perspective of myself and God—how, at times, God allows things to happen or even leaves us in the midst of trials so we will turn back to him and recognize his importance. God blesses us with unique gifts and abilities and gives us the choice whether to use them for his purposes or our own."

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

"A single mother of two was raised in a church, but her father was far from a dad and definitely not an earthly example of our heavenly father. Her mother was a battered wife while her father was domineering, verbally and sexually abusive. She became a young unwed mother of two boys, and had just left an abusive relationship when I met her when she was in her late 20s. She would always say, 'I've sworn off men,' and I would add 'for now.' I was continually reminding her what she had experienced didn't define who God is, nor what he had planned for her future. And I took on the responsibility of being a positive Christian male example in her life. Now years later, she is married with three kids, and she and her husband are faithful followers of Jesus. I share her story as an example of how God redeems and how he can use us despite our self-doubt."



**If you are serving your community,
we would love to hear about it!**

**Contact us at
development@rochesteru.edu
or 248-218-2021.**

Candace Cain

HOPE HOUSE MONTGOMERY

Candace Cain '15, who graduated from RU with an MRE in missional leadership, serves as vice president for student services at Faulkner University in Alabama. She worked at RU as dean of students and vice president of student life from 1991-2007 and 2012-2016. When she lived in Michigan, Cain volunteered with Hope House Detroit that inspired her to start Hope House Montgomery that provides an after-school reading program, English as a second language classes, and regular neighborhood cleanups.

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

"My time in the master's program was pivotal in helping me understand that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are continually looking to widen their community. We welcome and help our neighbors and friends let go of the status of fear and power, and learn to live in love and mutual submission is the key. God helped me understand that my aim was not to get ahead but to help push others to reveal their full value. I had bought into the culture of power and status, and



I now see my role as helping others come out of that power struggle and to be a Christ-like presence that helps them join in a life of love and seeking to rescue others."

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

"Near the end of August, on the first day of the Read Around the Block program, a fourth grader named Kingston, came running through the house calling for me. He gave me a big hug, and wanted to know why he couldn't come during the summer because, "I need to come here!" I realized the summertime is when our kids need us most, and I promised him that we would have the reading program in the coming summer."

Natalie Taylor

GENERAL MOTORS/CHEVROLET



Natalie (Atkinson) Taylor '96, who was a business marketing major, is senior zone manager for Chevrolet, New England. She works with 70 assigned dealers in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island to help them grow the business, take care of customers and increase market share.

How are you serving in God's world?

Over the past 18 years, my husband and I have worked with Churches of Christ across New York State in Albany, Syracuse

and Buffalo. We have worked in teen ministry, young adult ministry, homeless ministry, ladies ministry, fellowship, activities, buildings and grounds, and church security.

How did your time at RU prepare you to serve in God's world?

"It's always about giving back and helping others get ahead and teaching them how to fish instead of giving them the fish, so they can contribute to the world and make it a better place. Also, I learned from examples that giving back makes you stronger and gives God glory in all we do!"

What is a specific example of someone you have helped?

"We have helped our foster daughter's birth mom get housing and get set up with food and clothing. We also helped our former foster daughter with rides and expenses."

Redemptive Work

As with any educational institution, we at RU certainly want our students to have success and value in their professional lives.

But as our current and past students say, we want more than that.

We want to discover and develop our gifts and abilities so we can participate in the redemptive work of God.



written by

LORA HUTSON

Associate Professor of Mass Communication
Adviser of Shield
RU Content Creator

ROCHESTER | RETROSPECT

Who we are. Who we've always been.

In early 2022, Rochester University was awarded a grant through a program of the Council of Independent Colleges called NetVUE, the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education. The NetVUE grant provides RU with funds for the institution to reflect on its heritage and history. This allowed RU to think about our story: Where did we come from? How does that affect us today? Where are we going from here?

With this grant in place, the university created a committee called Reframing the Institutional Saga, which is made up of RU faculty and staff and led by Rebekah Pinchback, dean of the School of Business. This committee branded the effort as “Rochester Retrospect,” which includes a series of essays and symposiums written by faculty and staff to help different constituencies of the institution better understand who we are.

Pinchback said their goal is to “paint a picture for all of our community members to see their story inside of RU’s story, which is a part of God’s greater story.” Pinchback said the committee members asked each other “What are the pivotal moments that got us here today?” “How do we tell the RU story with our heritage in the Church of Christ but not solely a Church of Christ story?”

“Rochester University has a rich heritage and significant affiliation with Churches of Christ,” said Larry Stewart, director of alumni information. “The NetVUE grant has allowed us to dedicate time to look back on that heritage and see how it defines us now and into the future.”

Several of the essays focused on the university’s connection to Churches of Christ and Christianity as a whole, as well as our own interpretations of the Bible and how we live

that out in our community. “The open table is not a table at which we serve a blended puree of various things that become indistinguishable from one another, but a diverse potluck, with many types of food represented and appreciated – ‘a feast of rich food for all peoples (Isaiah 25:6)’” said Dr. Naomi Walters, chair of the Department of Ministry and Theology, and author of one of the essays.

Pinchback said the final essay by Dr. Brian Stogner, RU president, expands on the open table concept that is fundamental to RU’s identity. **“Everyone is welcome at the table of the Lord.”** To reiterate, that principle creates for us a foundation for our emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion. It means we will be welcoming and inclusive of all believers and unbelievers, all races and ethnicities, all political persuasions, all socioeconomic statuses, all orientations, and citizens of every nation,” Stogner writes.

“It’s so beautiful when I look around and see how many different faiths are represented here,” Pinchback added. “Even if you don’t have a faith background...you belong here and you have a seat at this table. This is who we’ve been all along.”

The final Rochester Retrospect symposium featured Richard T. Hughes, theologian and author/editor of 17 books, who offered reflections on the essays prepared about RU’s history and identity.



written by

RACHEL WILLIAMS

RU Director of Marketing & Communication



FACES OF RU

Que Morgan '17, President of the RU Alumni Association



On July 1, 2023, I had the honor of being elected as president of the Rochester University Alumni Association. I am privileged to be working with the university to represent the 12,000 alumni of Rochester University. I want to thank

Jim Chambers for all the wonderful work he did in his tenure as president of the association.

The Rochester University Alumni Association is the perfect opportunity to mentor students, volunteer and help with fundraising initiatives. The association is committed to engaging alumni through social activities, service projects, and special events on-and-off campus. Our goal is to continue to collaborate with the university to serve our alma mater in the best way possible.

My plan is to continue to recognize our alumni who are doing amazing things, raise funds for student scholarships, create engaging activities, and support our current students in career connections.

I challenge you to stay connected with RU and show support for your alma mater by updating our office with your current contact information, attending alumni events, and supporting RU financially so current and future students will have the same incredible experience you had.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your alumni association president. I look forward to the incredible work we are going to do together.

Best wishes,

QUE MORGAN '17



RU Alumni Association Board wants to connect you with RU

With nearly 12,000 alumni around the world, the RU Alumni Association seeks to enhance alumni and student connections to the university, while fostering lifetime and active engagement.

Officers:

- **PRESIDENT QUE MORGAN '17**, assistant marketing development manager, General Motors
- **VICE PRESIDENT CANDACE CAIN '15**, vice president for student services and dean of students, Faulkner University
- **SECRETARY NICHOLAS O'NEIL '17**, business development representative, Revolution Group

Alumni Association Board Members

- **JIM CHAMBERS '15**, workforce development specialist, Southwest Solutions
- **ALEX DRAKE '18**, marketing manager, Partridge Creek Mall
- **JOE DU LAC '19**, regional vice president and chief performance officer, Trinity Health
- **KERI RAYMENT GAILBREATH '08**, operations manager, United Parcel Service
- **TERRILL HALL '03**, unit manager, Travelers Insurance
- **AMANDA LABEL '22**, inbound pump sales specialist, Tandem Diabetes Care
- **KATHLEEN COTTER SMITH '96**, instructional design assistant, Walsh College
- **ANDREA WALKER-LEIDY '05**, owner, Walker Publicity Consulting



Lackowski '07 credits RU with his foundation in academia

Dr. Mark Lackowski '07 recently completed his doctoral degree in theology from the University of Notre Dame, a full circle moment for the former RU basketball player and biblical studies major.



When Lackowski was at RU, he and another first-year student surprised Dr. Ron Cox, former faculty member, when Cox was defending his own dissertation in the same program at Notre Dame.

“Katy (Allison '07) Hacias and I drove down to Indiana to surprise Dr. Cox at his dissertation defense because he was our favorite professor. He was so shocked to see two of his students show up that day at Notre Dame!” Lackowski said.

The faculty in RU's Department of Theology and Ministry encouraged and inspired Lackowski to pursue his own career in biblical studies, he said.

“I was recruited to play basketball at RU, but it was really the courses offered and the faculty in the theology department that made me excited about school for the first time,” Lackowski said.

He traveled twice to Israel with Dr. Craig Bowman, former professor of Old Testament, where he participated in an archeological dig at an ancient military fort. That trip inspired Lackowski's interest in the history and literature of the Hebrew Bible.

Lackowski now lives with his wife and son, Elliott, in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, where Mark teaches biblical studies at Loyola University, and Laura is the director of teaching and learning in the Professional Education Department at the University of Chicago.

In her own words: Isenberg's lifelong connection to RU

Rochester University has a special place in my heart. My mom, Lora Hutson, has taught in the Department of Mass Communication since 1999. My stepdad, Dr. Dave Hutson, has had several roles in the 25 years he has worked at RU, including coach, assistant athletic director and now professor.

I remember as a child attending Shield Media meetings with my mom, going to basketball games as a family, and running around campus with my step-siblings, Davis and Kate.

Originally as an 18-year-old, I was not wild about the idea of attending RU because of all these familiar family ties with the place. Once I was involved as a student, I fell in love with the inviting atmosphere, community and connections I made.

I began serving on the alumni board after graduating in 2020, then started my current role as development and alumni relations officer in fall 2022. My step-brother, Davis, works at RU as an A/V technician, which makes four of our family members working here!

I am passionate about connecting alumni with their alma mater and helping share the story of how special RU is to so many.



Dr. Dave Hutson, Lora Hutson, Taylor Isenberg and Davis Hutson with Crimson at Homecoming 2022.

**We Want
To Hear
From You**

Whether you have started a new job, expanded your family, traveled the world or just want to say hello, please reach out to the Development and Alumni Office. We want to hear from you with any life updates you may have!

To share your news, contact Taylor Isenberg at tisenberg1@rochesteru.edu or call **248.218.2170**.





Tyler Leipprandt

graduated in
2008

majored in
EDUCATION

employment
OWNER AT MICHIGAN SKY MEDIA
TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Leipprandt captures Michigan beauty

Capturing extreme photos and dangling out of Coast Guard helicopters are part of daily life for Tyler Leipprandt '08.

Leipprandt is the founder of Michigan Sky Media, a full-service media company specializing in drone videography and photography. Leipprandt has taken photos of iconic Michigan landscapes and views from the top of the Mackinaw Bridge.

Leipprandt has a “bucket list” of dream photographs to capture. “I want to seek out bucket list photos to give people a new perspective,” Leipprandt said.

Last October, Leipprandt grabbed one of his bucket list photos by capturing a jaw-dropping panorama shot of the Big House during the Michigan/Michigan State game from a helicopter 3,200 feet above the field. It shows a Coast Guard helicopter flying directly over the block M on the field.

The picture itself is flawless, but getting the actual shot was a challenge. “I have dreamed of getting this shot, and seconds before I did, I thought I blew the opportunity,” he said. As Leipprandt was getting ready to take the shot, the helicopter landing skids covered the view of the field. Acting quickly, Leipprandt moved his camera angle between the helicopter and the landing skids, held the shutter down and captured the photo, which has attracted the views of thousands of fans. Over 1 million people have seen Leipprandt’s photo on Facebook and Instagram.

Leipprandt studied education at RU and worked in that field for a number of years, but he had an idea to purchase a drone to take real estate pictures. “Drones had just come out and I really wanted one. My wife told me that if you can figure out a way to make money with this, go ahead and get it.”

Before purchasing the drone, Leipprandt already was talking with real estate agents about taking photos from the sky of the houses and properties they were selling. Then, he envisioned taking drone pictures and videos of famous Michigan landscapes.

Leipprandt built up Michigan Sky Media while still working in education, and then he quit his teaching job to work full-time as a photographer in Traverse City, Michigan.

During Leipprandt’s time at RU, he played on the basketball team and met his wife, Rachel (Stuewer '10).



A Coast Guard helicopter flies over the block M on the field of Michigan Stadium, a once in a lifetime photo for Leipprandt. Used with permission.

Visit www.michiganskymedia.com to view and/or purchase any of Leipprandt’s photos.



Josh Graves

graduated in
2002

majored in
HISTORY

employment
**PREACHING AND TEACHING
MINISTER AT OTTER CREEK CHURCH
BRENTWOOD, TN**

Josh Graves pens fourth book

Josh Graves '02 recently published his fourth book, "A Simple Secret: Choosing Love in a Culture of Hostility," which explores different ways Jesus loved others, no matter their background or socioeconomic status.

"I was inspired to write this book in 2020. During that time, we were in the middle of this major global pandemic, political hostility and social upheaval. There seemed to be no room for kindness or love in our culture, and I wanted to explore the way Jesus loved others," Graves said.



Graves studied each passage in the New Testament that mentioned love and each of the people that Jesus showed love to. Each chapter covers different topics, such as loving the poor, loving your enemies and loving the earth.

While Graves was at Rochester University, he played on the men's basketball team and was involved with Shield Media and Campus Ministry. After graduation, he earned his doctorate in ministry with a focus in post-modern culture studies from Columbia University. Graves then ministered at Rochester Church of Christ before becoming the preaching and teaching minister at Otter Creek Church in Brentwood, Tennessee.

Otter Creek Church hosted a showing of the new documentary, "COACH: Make the Big Time Where You're At," about Coach Garth Pleasant and his impact on Rochester University.

"Nashville has a strong historical connection to Rochester University. The showing brought all these different parts of my life together that day," Graves said.

“There seemed to be no room for kindness or love in our culture, and I wanted to explore the way Jesus loved others.”



+ "A Simple Secret" can be purchased on Amazon or anywhere books are sold.



articles written by

TAYLOR ISENBERG
RU Development & Alumni Relations Officer



ONLINE ARTICLE

Hudney Piquant uses cutting-edge strategies to safeguard digital world



Scan to read more about Hudney Piquant's story.



James Fisher

RU stats
JUNIOR
 majoring in
MASS COMMUNICATION

Basketball & Community

James Fisher is hard to miss on campus. With his tall stature and friendly face, he is glad to be a part of the RU community. Fisher, a junior mass communication major from Armada, Michigan, is a forward on the men’s basketball team.

James embraces his love for the small community experience that he welcomes at RU. “The ability to approach professors is unmatched here at Rochester,” he said.


In his journey at RU, Fisher said the basketball program has helped him grow most. “There are not many uniting people in our world but sports still have the unique ability to do that. I really love and appreciate that. I try to cherish every moment of this opportunity playing the sport I love at the school I love.”

Fisher redshirted his freshman year and spent last season learning and working through injuries. Excited for the 2023-2024 season, Fisher said he’s learned much about basketball in his time at RU. **“I’ve also learned a lot about how to approach things in life. Coach [Klint Pleasant] always says there are a lot of things we do here that transcend the game of basketball,”** he said.

A proud Catholic, Fisher said he sees himself as someone who lives out his faith every day through everything he does. “The Catholic faith has pulled me through everything in my life that has been difficult, and that’s no different with college or college basketball at all,” he said.

Being at RU adds to his journey in community and faith. “I am in a good spot right now, as far as God’s will for me. I am exactly where He needs me to be right now here at Rochester University on a basketball scholarship.”

Fisher was chosen to lead the prayer at the Rochester Area Prayer Breakfast in 2023, an event held in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer that invites people of all faiths to pray for the nation.

 Scan here to read an inspiring story about James





Gabby Costello

RU stats
SENIOR
majoring in
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Teaching & Learning

As a regular volunteer for Warriors Serve, Gabby Costello is a senior elementary education major who hopes to become a teacher of fourth through sixth grades or in a Montessori preschool. Since preschool, Costello knew she wanted to become a teacher. “My mom was a teacher, [and] a lot of my family members work in the school system. I wanted to follow in their footsteps,” she said.

Costello originally heard about Rochester University through the athletic program and was recruited to play volleyball. Transferring from Kellogg Community College, she said she enjoys the small, tight-knit community that Rochester brings.

“I have loved my experience at this small Christian university to be able to expand my faith,” she said.

With smaller class sizes, she is able to connect and get to know her classmates and professors better.

As a regular volunteer for Warrior Serve, RU’s signature service event, Gabby enjoys giving her time and efforts to help others. “Warriors Serve is a great opportunity to help a surrounding area and do small projects to make it look nicer! I love being able to help others and provide for something better than myself!”

Since her time as a student, she has gained clinical hours at Long Meadow Elementary School and Hampton Elementary School in grades three and four.

Costello is busy taking five classes this semester and tutoring in the ACE Lab.

When she is not in the classroom teaching or learning, she is on the volleyball court perfecting her craft. As a senior captain and defensive specialist, Gabby leads her teammates on-and-off the court with energy and skill. Racking up over 300 digs this season alone, Costello is proud to finish off her volleyball career at RU.

“My greatest hope is to be that teacher who everyone knows cares about them and is a safe person to be around. In life, I hope to be a great friend and daughter, and to make the people around me better and find joy in life,” she said.



written by

EMILY CARROLL
Senior, Mass Communication



Women's participation in sports at the university level has witnessed a remarkable transformation in recent years, and the same holds true at Rochester University.

RU started its first women's sports team, basketball, in 1969, but the team played sporadically based upon student interest and coaching availability. The basketball team has played every year since 1986-1987. Softball was added in 1981 and volleyball in 1986.

Now with 177 female student athletes on RU's nine women's teams and two coed teams, their presence is evident on campus.

SHARPLEY IMPACTS FEMALE ATHLETES

As the number of women teams and athletes continued to grow, RU named Tai Sharpley, assistant athletic director, as its senior women's administrator. A former softball player for Norfolk State University, Sharpley started at RU as the head softball coach in August 2015.

Sharpley consults on major departmental and university initiatives, provides leadership and guidance for Title IX and gender equity, participates in budget development and major financial decisions, advocates for student-athlete well-being, and mentors female athletes, coaches and staff.

Sharpley said she is passionate about helping student athletes and finds fulfillment in seeing their success. "My position is giving that platform to support the female coaches and athletes and giving them a time to shine and be recognized," Sharpley said.

Sharpley works with a women in sports committee, made up of coaches and professors who are eager to see young women succeed. They oversee initiatives tailored to female athletes and their needs, including events and opportunities



that focus on nutrition, strength and conditioning, mental health and well-being, and athletic burnout.

Sharpley is most proud of how RU athletics has grown. "I started when it was Rochester College. I sometimes forget the Garth Pleasant Arena wasn't even here when I first started."

Sharpley said she takes pride in supporting the academic and athletic success of athletes. "Watching their growth and maturity on and off the field over the course of four-to-five years...from a nervous freshman to a confident upperclassman leader. I literally love to see the light bulb come on!"

FEMALE ATHLETES STAND TOGETHER



Kayla Parks-Albrant, head coach of women's lacrosse and an admissions recruiter is preparing to lead the lacrosse team at Rochester University. She also is impacting female student athletes at RU.

In her own experience as a student athlete, Parks-Albrant said, "I think our biggest allies can be us together, us women. No one supports women like women support women."

Parks-Albrant worked to create FAST: Female Athletes Stand Together, as an opportunity to grow relationships

and create bonds with athletes at RU. She has brainstormed with coaches such as Emma Fickel, head coach of track and field, to create team bonding opportunities and more.

Parks-Albrant said opportunities for FAST include athletic training tailored to women and their menstrual cycle, self defense, cross training between sports, and events for coaches and players to learn about each other.

As a coach and mentor of female athletes, Parks-Albrant said she thinks, "Are my girls happy? Are they good students? Are they respectful? Really at the end of the day I'm just giving them four-to-five years to learn how to be good people to go out into the world."

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CLAIMS CHAMPIONSHIP

Rochester women's basketball secured its first WHAC tournament title in program history in 2023 and its second WHAC championship after winning the regular season title in 2021.



After the departure of Coach Brent Wichner, Jared Ocampo has stepped into the role of head women's basketball coach. This season is Ocampo's first head coaching stint at the collegiate level after multiple years as an assistant coach for the Warriors and as the team's director of player development for the last two seasons.

"I'm looking forward to empowering the young women of Rochester University through the game of basketball," Ocampo said. "I'm excited about the opportunity to continue building on the foundation of serving a mission and purpose in God's light to fulfill a championship culture for our student-athletes that will extend outside the institution's walls."

WOMEN IN SPORTS PRESENTATION

The RU Sport Leadership master's program commemorated National Girls and Women in Sports Day in February with "Women in Sports," a look into the experiences of two female sport leaders about their journeys in the sport industry.

Dana Schmitt, president of the United Shore Professional Baseball League is the first woman in the U.S. to lead a men's professional sports league. She has more than 20 years of experience working as an executive and attorney in the sports industry. She serves on the Department of Sport Studies advisory board and is teaching Legal Aspects of Sports at RU. She spoke about her experience working with her team getting Jimmy John's Field built in Utica and how she wants to help young people in the sports industry, especially students at RU.

Sharpley also spoke at the presentation about the significance of women in sports. "It is important to acknowledge the importance of women's roles in sports," she said. "Many times it is overlooked because we are not acknowledged for the work we do and how much we contribute to the overall success of athletics."



written by

EMILY CARROLL

Senior, Mass Communication

GAME CHANGER

PHASE 2: BILL SHINSKY ATHLETIC FIELDS

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO MAKE THIS A REALITY!



THIS \$8 MILLION FACILITY WILL INCLUDE

ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD for men's and women's soccer, baseball, softball, women's lacrosse and club football

LIGHTING SYSTEM to allow evening competition

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BUILDING THIS SPORT COMPLEX WILL IMPROVE

Student-athlete's lives, removing the commuting time to several places around Metro Detroit to practice and compete.

The collegiate experience for all our students. Rooting for your university's athletic teams is a classic part of the collegiate experience.

Community engagement. A turf field in the heart of Rochester Hills will be in high demand as a rental facility for youth sports and camps.



For more information, go to rochesteru.edu/gamechanger or call 248.218.2021.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Rochester University Financial Summary | June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023

REVENUE

Tuition and Fees	\$ 19,743,398	79 %
State and Federal Grants	\$ 541,033	2 %
Gifts and Grant	\$ 2,018,488	8 %
Miscellaneous / Auxillary	\$ 2,619,709	11 %
TOTAL	\$ 24,922,628	100 %

EXPENSES

Scholarships	\$ 8,468,180	34 %
Instruction	\$ 7,372,849	30 %
Research and Public Services	\$ 128,737	1 %
Student Services	\$ 3,321,435	13 %
Auxiliary Services	\$ 659,344	3 %
Management and General Operations	\$ 4,020,714	16 %
Fundraising	\$ 896,875	4 %
TOTAL	\$ 24,868,134	100 %

NET REVENUE \$ 54,494

COMBINED GIFT REVENUE

Friends	\$ 286,632
Businesses, Foundations and Churches	\$ 281,717
Alumni	\$ 206,626
Board Members	\$ 1,111,493
Estates	\$ 126,244
Corporations (Matching Funds)	\$ 1,750
Miscellaneous	\$ 4,026
TOTAL	\$ 2,018,488

GIVING

Donor Digest

PARTNERSHIP DINNER 2023 HITS A HOME RUN

About 350 people attended RU's 52nd annual Partnership Dinner on April 22, which featured a panel of former Detroit Tiger players from World Series championship teams.



Former Detroit Tigers champs share their experiences at Partnership Dinner

Outfielder Willie Horton and catcher Jim Price shared memories about the 1968 championship season, while catcher Lance Parrish and pitcher Dave Rozema did the same about the 1984 World Series season. The Detroit Historical Society also exhibited artifacts from historic Tiger Stadium, memorabilia from the 1968 and 1984 championships, and a selection of signed, game-used equipment.

Several individuals were honored during the ceremony:

- **JIM DAWSON**, associate professor of education: RU Excellence Award
- **GARTH '69 & PAT '70 PLEASANT**: Alumni of the Year Award
- **ART POPE**, member of the Board of Trustees for 33 years: Warrior Partner Award
- **CONNIE GRAHAM '71** and a member of the Board of Trustees for 20 years: Warrior Partner Award
- **CATHY RIES '73**, development coordinator, was honored and given a bouquet of flowers, thanking her for 42 years of service at RU and for coordinating events like Partnership Dinner. She received a standing ovation!



Save the date for the next Partnership Dinner, which will be held on **April 20, 2024**, at the **Royal Park Hotel in Rochester.**

GEORGE AND BETTY SEIFERT DEDICATED TO SERVING ROCHESTER COMMUNITY

Since the formation of the Seifert Family Foundation in 1993, George and Betty Seifert have given back to countless lives in the Rochester community.

Their philanthropic spirit has empowered the couple to support multiple Rochester-area nonprofits and universities, including the Rochester Community Foundation, the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm, the Rochester Area Prayer Breakfast, Oakland University and Rochester University.

Through their philanthropy, they have become community leaders in the greater Rochester area and were named the Grand Marshals of the Rochester Hometown Christmas Parade in 2017.

“It has meant so much to us as a family to be able to give back. God has been good to us and we want to help others through the resources that God has provided us with,” George said.

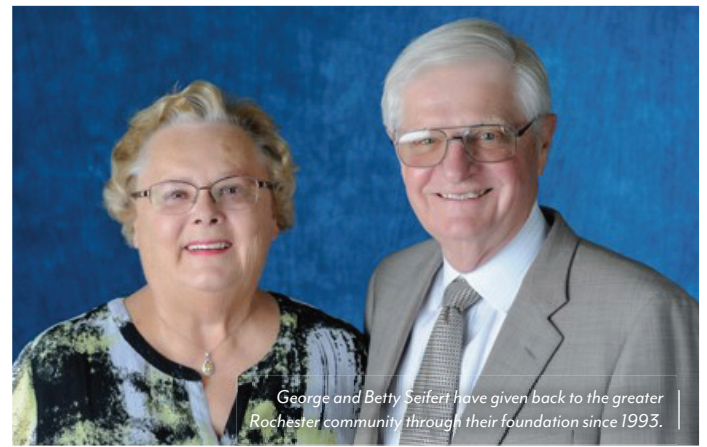
The Seiferts became involved with Rochester University after forming a relationship with Tom Rellinger, executive vice president and chief financial officer.

“After working as an adjunct business professor in multiple public universities, I was really impressed with the Rochester University philosophy,” George said.

George has served on the Rochester University Foundation Board since its inception in 2012. The couple have established four endowments for the institution including the Finish Line Scholarship and the Clinton Shultz and Kenda Pyle-Shultz Scholarship, which benefits nursing students. The scholarship was formed in honor of Betty’s sister, Kenda, who was the lead nursing officer for the state of Oregon. A fifth endowment is forthcoming, honoring the Rellinger family.

“*You don’t have to be wealthy to show kindness to people through philanthropy.*”

The couple has generously given to Rochester University and they encourage others to consider giving as well.



George and Betty Seifert have given back to the greater Rochester community through their foundation since 1993.

FROSTS HONORED WITH PHILANTHROPIST OF THE YEAR AWARD



Mark and Niki Frost with Dr. Brian Stagner and Luke Fleer.

In recognition of their philanthropic spirit and commitment to the Rochester University community, this year’s Philanthropist of the Year Award was presented to Mark and Niki Frost at the President’s Circle of Honor Dinner on Oct. 27.

Rochester University established an annual award to honor those who have modeled sacrificial service and philanthropic generosity to others in support of the institution.

Niki (Schafsnitz) graduated from Michigan Christian College in 1972. Her grandparents, James and Bessie Gallaher, were active in the formation of North Central Christian College. Gallaher Center was named after her grandparents in 1973. The Kirkpatrick Family Scholarship was created after the passing of her late daughter, Katie Kirkpatrick ‘04, and her late husband, David ‘72. The women’s locker room is named after Katie, and Mark and Niki are a part of the Heritage Society.

A lifetime investment that helps young people

Estate planning is a responsible caring act that protects your assets, helps your loved ones, and preserves your legacy. Making a bequest, or a gift to Rochester University, from your will or trust helps RU further its mission and vision. Talk with your attorney or adviser about adding Rochester University to your will or trust.

Further estate planning resources are available online at rugiving.org or by contacting the Development and Alumni Relations Office at development@rochesteru.edu or [248.218.2021](tel:248.218.2021).



MARY UTLEY LEAVES INFLUENTIAL LEGACY



Longtime friend and supporter of Rochester University, Mary Utley, passed away at age 95 on Oct. 26, 2022. Mary was a pioneer for RU, organizing the Associates of Michigan Christian College, a group of women across Michigan and Ohio who helped raise millions of dollars through fundraising events such as Fall Festival and the Silverdome project.

Along with her husband, Robert, the Utley's donated funds to create the Utley-McCauley Student Center in memory of their daughter, Lorie McCauley. The center houses Kibo Corner and is a frequent gathering spot for students. Her daughter, Pat, is married to Duane Harrison, a member of the RU Board of Trustees.

Mary's legacy continues through her family and on our campus. She will not be forgotten for her influence and support in the growth and development of Rochester University.

Remembering Myra Shelly



Longtime friend and supporter of Christian higher education and Rochester University, Myra Shelly died at her home in Spring Hill, Tennessee, on Aug. 13, 2023. Myra is survived by her husband, Dr. Rubel Shelly, former RU president, and their three children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. In a letter to Bob Russell, a pastor, speaker and friend of the family, Shelly described Myra's final days as "In the old movies, it was a great moment when a girl let a boy walk her home. And I'm walking my girlfriend home!" The Rochester University community extends its deepest condolences to the Shelly family.

TRANSITIONS & NEW HIRES

JENNIFER PORTER '07 has transitioned from her role as director of development and alumni relations and executive director of the Rochester University Foundation into a new position as vice president of development and marketing for HAVEN Oakland County, which helps victims of domestic violence and sexual assault by providing shelter, counseling, advocacy and educational programming. Porter served Rochester University for 13 years, propelling the university forward with alumni engagement, fundraising, branding and community outreach. We are thankful for her service to Rochester University.



DARREN MCCULLOUGH '05 has started a new role as director of development operations at Rochester University. McCullough formerly worked in various IT roles at Rochester University and will continue to assist with special projects in the IT department as needed. He will provide leadership to all aspects of development operations. Rochester University is excited for this new collaborative position and welcomes McCullough to the development and alumni relations department.



Development and Alumni Relations Team:
Taylor Isenberg '20, Darren McCullough '05, Luke Fleer '04, and Cathy Ries '73.



AMEN

Blessing for the Adventure

Since Abraham heard the call of God to leave the land he knew for the sake of something unknown, adventure has always accompanied faith. If the Bible teaches us anything, it is that people are often called into situations that require them to take risks with only their trust in God to rely upon. Faith won't let good enough alone, because there is always more of God and neighbor to love. And so, faith requires adventure as a way of loving God.

We currently live in a hinge of history, what the MRE program calls a new missional era, where all the familiar labels are being swapped for new ones. Maybe you've noticed that churches are doing everything they know to do, better than they've ever done it before, with diminishing impact.

We are living in an age of rapid, discontinuous change. Too often, churches disoriented by their new circumstances try to go back to the way things used to be, to trade faith's birthright for a cold bowl of nostalgia.

They would rather go back to Egypt where at least they had three squares a day, than follow a cloud by day and fire by night. They would rather live small and secure than brave what awaits them on only the promise of God.

One wonders if these churches have chosen to love themselves rather than God and neighbor.

“ But the way forward is always the way forward, into God's promised future, toward the glorious day of the Lord when God will be all in all.

It has always been the case that a missionary God partners with a missionary church to cross into new frontiers with cultural dexterity and improvisation.

The call of the church, then, in this new era of being God's people, is to square our shoulders, turn our face to the future's horizon, and throw ourselves into the adventure of loving God.

This means we will enter the world to find God and not just to take God. This means we will have to love our neighbors the way God does until it becomes clear to us how we are to join in what God is already doing.

This work is less strategic, and more spiritual, less grasping and controlling and more trusting, less whining and complaining and more joyous. And for this we will need God's blessing. We will need the assurance of God's grace, the confidence of God's peace, and a bucketful of God's hope.

So, as we face together the uncertainty of leaving the land we know, may we go under this blessing:

May God enlarge our hearts, inhabit our dreams, give us courage for the adventure of trusting him, showing us more than we could have asked or imagined.

May the Christ draw us fully into the self-giving love of God so we might know that nothing given is lost but awaits the glory of the resurrection.

May the Holy Spirit, as the pledge of the coming salvation of God, give voice to our groanings and secure our hope in power.

AMEN.



written by

DR. MARK LOVE

Graduate Program Director:
MRE in Missional Leadership
Professor of Theology & Ministry

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