Your new At Buffalo magazine contains even more than what’s inside these pages, including video, links to additional stories, events and more.

buffalo.edu/alumni/atbuffalo

FASHIONABLY NICE

"BE NICE"

is FERN MALLIS’ primary piece of advice to young career seekers. The founder of New York Fashion Week describes how UB helped her get her start.

EXPLOSIVE RESEARCH

What happens when lava and water meet? Explosive experiments with human-made lava are shedding light on the basic physics of lava-water interactions.

Big thanks

Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences students tell the story of the donors who made UB’s largest-ever gift, now valued at more than $56 million.

Looking for Class Notes? Read them online—or submit yours—at ub-connect.com.
Another championship season

“HISTORIC.” “Unprecedented.” “Record-breaking.”

When I read articles about the success of our UB sports teams, I notice adjectives such as these used with increasing frequency. If you have been following the upward trajectory of our athletics program over the years, I suspect you do, too.

To be sure, our student-athletes have given us much to cheer about. From best-ever seasons to startling upsets, their performance has been nothing short of inspiring—a fact that has not gone unnoticed by the national media. And while I am thoroughly impressed with the way that they represent UB on the national stage, I’m equally proud of their championship comportment off the field.

Look beyond the headlines and highlight reels, and you’ll find our student-athletes delivering donated backpacks to Buffalo Public School students, hosting free sports clinics, volunteering at a walk to support Alzheimer’s research, visiting patients at a children’s hospital—the list goes on.

Here’s a telling statistic that you’ll never read in a box score: During the 2017-2018 academic year, our UB Bulls athletics teams carried out some 1,000 hours of community service.

Clearly, giving back figures prominently in our student-athletes’ playbook. They are using their platform and profile to positively impact the lives of others. In my book, that clearly fits the definition of a role model.

One of my colleagues recently told me that his 8-year-old daughter, who had no prior interest in basketball, has taken up the sport in earnest, joining a youth league and running her dad ragged in the driveway with one-on-one play.

The source of this third-grader’s hoop dreams? Our UB women’s basketball team, which visited her school during an assembly.

Mind you, when our student-athletes speak to schoolkids, they’re not only expounding on the mechanics of a perfect layup or the importance of good sportsmanship. They’re also encouraging the next generation of college athletes to make the grade.

Balancing the rigors of academic studies with the demands of practice, conditioning and competition is no small feat. When we recruit student-athletes to UB, the invitation comes with both the expectation that they will prioritize academic excellence alongside athletic excellence, and the assurance that we will offer them the resources they need to succeed in the classroom.

And succeed they do—evidenced by our athletics department’s 13-semester streak of a combined GPA over 3.0, and by dozens of our student-athletes receiving individual recognition—from both the SUNY system and the Mid-American Conference—for their impressive academic performance. Last year, then-UB soccer midfielder Julia Benati was one of only 58 fall student-athletes nationwide to receive an NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship for academic and athletic excellence.

It is truly gratifying to see our student-athletes so committed to their studies, their sport and service.

Because of this dedication, it’s UB for the win, every time.

Sateesh K. Tripathi
at this time
Incoming students take their spots in the formation of the human interlocking UB, a Welcome Weekend tradition since 2004. In light of record-setting freshman enrollment topping 4,100 this year, the event was moved to UB Stadium to better accommodate the new crew.

PHOTO BY MARK ADAMS
BikeShare at UB gets a boost from 50 newly branded bicycles. The innovative program, available to all students, faculty and staff, allows members to locate a GPS-enabled bike using a computer, and then travel around and between all three campuses emissions-free.

Photo by Douglas Levere
INTRO TO A UB EDUCATION

EDUARDO MERCADO III instructs first-year students in a UB Seminar course titled PSY 199: Learning, Plasticity and Personal Informatics. The UB Seminars—small, intimate courses led by distinguished faculty and centered around critical thinking and reflective discussion—form the first step for undergrads in the UB Curriculum.

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS LEVERE
Dancers rehearse for Celebration 45, a performance commemorating Zodiaque Dance Company’s most recent milestone. The event, with new works contributed by faculty, students, alumni and guest choreographers, showcased the group’s signature mix of styles and repertoire.

PHOTO BY MEREDITH FORREST KULWICKI
The UB Bulls warm up at Ladd–Peebles Stadium in Mobile, Ala., before facing Troy University in the Dollar General Bowl. Though UB fell 42–32 to the Trojans, the game capped a triumphant season filled with record-breaking stats, including the most wins in school history (10) for a single season.
MAKING MACHINES SMARTER

THURSDAY, JAN. 3, 3:59 P.M.

Engineering researcher Rahul Rai with an unmanned aerial vehicle. Rai, a member of UB’s recently launched Artificial Intelligence Institute, is making AI systems more efficient and adaptable by giving them a grounding in physics. The research is funded by a $1 million grant from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS LEVERE
A Persistent Gap
When it comes to leadership, the gender gap has narrowed, but still persists, say UB management researchers. A study aggregating 59 years of research shows that societal pressures continue to foster gender differences in personality traits—with men tending to be more assertive, and women tending to be more cooperative—and that society continues to associate the stereotypically male traits with an ability to lead.

Fighting Crime in 3D
3D printers can make replacement organs. They can also print counterfeit goods and put guns in the hands of criminals. But new research led by a computer scientist at UB reveals that you can trace an object to the printer that created it, using the unique “fingerprints” that each machine leaves. The discovery has the potential to help law enforcement crack down on illegal use of the revolutionary technology.

Blue Dye, Green Energy
UB chemists have discovered that methylene blue, a common ingredient in industrial wastewater from textile mills, can store and release energy when dissolved in water. That makes the sapphire-colored dye a promising candidate for redox flow batteries—large, rechargeable, liquid-based batteries that could enable future wind farms and solar homes to stockpile electricity for calm or rainy days.

Anti-Social Media
Who hasn’t felt the sting of scrolling through their Facebook feed only to stumble on a social gathering they weren’t invited to? According to a UB communication researcher, that sting has consequences, not only negatively impacting users’ personal well-being but potentially affecting their thought processes in ways that could make them more susceptible to advertising messages.

Making Lava
Lava-water interactions in nature are poorly understood, sometimes triggering a huge blast, sometimes petering out in a whisper. UB geologists are conducting experiments with homemade lava to better understand these interactions, and to better predict their outcomes. One early finding of the long-term study is that explosions can happen spontaneously when there is at least a foot of molten rock above the mixing point.

UB IN THE NEWS
“FOR THE MOST PART, THERE’S BEEN AN INVISIBILITY TO ANYTHING BUT HUMANS THROUGHOUT THE LEGAL SYSTEM. WE HAVE TO BRING THE ANIMALS BACK IN.”

Law professor Irus Braverman in an article in THE ATLANTIC about an animal advocacy group’s efforts to relocate an elephant from the Bronx Zoo to an animal sanctuary.
Walking Out of the Woods
A study by UB epidemiologists involving more than 137,000 postmenopausal women in the 50-79 age range is the first to show that walking can significantly reduce the risk of heart failure in older women. Moreover, since intensity-specific activity did not reveal a similar correlation, it appears that it’s the amount of walking—not the intensity—that matters.

Science Through Storytelling
Native American students, who come from a tradition of oral learning, are frequently alienated by the Western academic method of teaching science. To remedy that, a UB education researcher is leading a project that will allow Native American students to tackle environmental issues through podcasts. The aim of the NSF-funded project is to generate greater interest among Native Americans in pursuing STEM research and, ultimately, careers.

Eat or Text?
When deprived of both food and their smartphones for several hours, and then allowed to work to get them back, students worked harder to get their phones. The study, by UB pediatrics researchers, is the first to show that smartphones reinforce behavior, in the same way that drugs, alcohol and food do. While the results don’t prove that smartphone addiction exists, reinforcement is strongly linked to addiction when it comes to substance abuse.

Miles of Mounds
A UB geographer used Google Earth to map an 88,000-square-mile network of giant termite mounds found in northeastern Brazil. She and her fellow researchers determined that the mounds, at least one of which dates back almost 4,000 years, are not nests but “the result of the insects’ slow and steady excavation of a network of interconnected underground tunnels.” The termites are apparently still at it, and so is the geographer, who intends to continue studying this remarkable phenomenon.
ERN MALLIS is nearing the end of a conversation about her life in the New York fashion scene when she’s asked if she ever wanted to walk a runway herself. Oh, no, she demurs. “The closest I ever came was that,” she says, gesturing to a photograph on the wall of her apartment on Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

In the photo, a younger Mallis is standing on a runway with the iconic American designer Calvin Klein, lit up by the flashes from a throng of photographers. Nearby is a framed New York magazine article from 2010, naming Mallis its “most photographed face” of the year. “It was kind of freaky,” she allows, “because Anna Wintour was number two.”

Mallis’ laconic manner prevents her from spelling it out directly, but for decades she was one of the most important figures in fashion—arguably as influential as Calvin Klein or longtime Vogue editor Anna Wintour. As executive director of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) from 1991 to 2001, and senior vice president of IMG Fashion from 2001 to 2010, Mallis was responsible for making New York Fashion Week—that extravaganza of designers, models, paparazzi and, now, social influencers that descends on the city twice a year—the global event it is today.

Sitting on a sofa in her cozy living room, dressed in a soft cream sweater, black pants and her signature dark-rimmed glasses, Mallis, 70, describes her career with the awe of someone who never lost her outsider’s amazement at the fashion scene, even when she was the ultimate insider. As she describes it, the majority of her experiences were “heady” or “fabulous.”
the summer in Manhattan, living at the Barbizon Hotel for Women with 19 other winners and serving as art editor for the August/September issue of the magazine.

She went on to get a full-time job at Mademoiselle, recruiting other college students to apply for the guest editor contest. From there she worked in the merchandising department for several years, and then left the magazine to become fashion director at the now-defunct upscale Manhattan department store Gimbels East, overseeing the window displays and interior layouts of the store. When the store was bought out in 1986, she opened her own public relations company, Fern Mallis PR, representing design and lifestyle companies. Before long Mallis found herself at the center of New York’s 1980s party scene, becoming a regular at Studio 54 alongside designers, models and celebrities.

“Even back then, she was like an icon,” says Jane Hertzmark Hudis, Mallis’ first assistant in her PR firm, who is now group president at The Estée Lauder Companies. “She was this tall, gorgeous, tan, sexy person—the ideal of what a New York woman should be.” Then the recession hit, and people no longer had the money for lavish interiors and indulgent events.

Still a faithful subscriber to Women’s Wear Daily, Mallis read that the CFDA, the leading trade association for American designers, was looking for a new executive director. After several rounds of interviews she was invited to give a presentation to the board of directors on a day that happened to be her birthday. The board sent Mallis into another room while they deliberated. When they brought her back in, there was a cake and a roomful of A-list designers—Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, Bill Blass—singing happy birthday to her.

She was in.

At that time, the biannual New York fashion shows were disjointed and disorganized. “There were 50 shows in 50 locations,” Mallis recalls. “The main designers were doing them in their showrooms. It was like a rave party moving around town.” The conditions were often cramped, poorly ventilated and sometimes hazardous. Freight elevators carrying guests to warehouse spaces got stuck between floors; fashion editors had to be pulled out by firemen.

At an Isaac Mizrahi show in Soho, a fuse blew and the audience sat in the stifling dark waiting for a generator to arrive, no one willing to leave and surrender a coveted seat. During a Michael Kors show in a loft space in Chelsea, vibrations from the bass music caused the ceiling to partially collapse, chunks of plaster landing on the runway and in people’s laps. After the Kors show, Mallis recalls, “I said, ‘I think my job description just changed.’” Her mission became finding a safe, sound venue for designers to come together and show their work.

The American fashion industry was not a particularly collaborative group at the time. When Mallis pitched the idea of convening in a single location, “all the designers looked at each other, like, ‘this is crazy,’” recalls designer and longtime friend Stan Herman, who was then president of the CFDA. Mallis pointed out that it was already being done in Europe. “They had tents in Paris, big venues in Milan,” she says. “Designers realized they had to check their egos and do this together to make the American fashion industry soar.”

Mallis secured Bryant Park as a location and in October 1993 oversaw the first centralized New York Fashion Week, rebranded as “7th on Sixth.” As she had predicted, the cooperation among designers allowed American fashion to soar, and 7th on Sixth soon became known as one of the “Big 4” fashion weeks in the world, alongside those in Paris, London and Milan.

In fact, the event grew so big that it was acquired by global media giant IMG in 2001. Mallis became the senior vice president of IMG Fashion and served as the company’s global ambassador, helping to launch fashion weeks in cities like Miami, Berlin and Moscow. Mallis was in her prime during this period, managing runway shows around the world and making frequent TV appearances on shows like “America’s Next Top Model” and “Project Runway.” She loved the work, but, she says, the business was slowly becoming less about fashion and more about business. Eventually she decided it was time to move on, and left IMG in 2010.
Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS (of which she was a founding member) and The Partnership for the Homeless. She helped create charity fundraising initiatives including The Heart Truth’s Red Dress Initiative for Women’s Heart Disease and Fashion Targets Breast Cancer. For her work in the industry Mallis has been recognized with a Fashion Industry Lifetime Achievement Award from Pratt Institute, FIT President’s Lifetime Achievement Award and a Woman of the Year Leadership Award from Concern Worldwide, among other accolades.

And yes, despite her still-packed schedule, she continues to attend the shows during Fashion Week, which moved from Bryant Park to an ill-fated tenure in Lincoln Center in 2010—just after Mallis stepped down—and now take place in several locations around Manhattan, an echo of the event’s decentralized origins. “It’s very disorganized now in many ways,” Mallis says. “It’s not as relevant. It used to be, you could recognize everyone in the front rows, and now it’s like, who are these people, what are they doing here?”

Still, she says, she finds herself going to more shows than she needs to, never tiring of looking for the next hot designer or great look. She may never have walked the runway herself, but to many fashion insiders, Mallis remains the face of New York Fashion Week.

“THERE WERE A LOT OF KIDS WHO HAD A LOT OF MONEY. I WAS MORE CLEVER. I KNEW HOW TO TIE A SCARF BETTER THAN ANYBODY. IF IT HAD BEEN THE DAYS OF SOCIAL MEDIA, I WOULD’VE HAD A YOUTUBE TUTORIAL ON SCARVES.”
ARODY DELEON is what you might call a “digital native.” The oldest child of Dominican immigrants, Deleon grew up surfing the internet (whenever the dialup connection was free) and gaming on the family computer that he had helped his father build when he was 9.

Today, Deleon is a senior at UB majoring in computer science and engineering. In spring 2018, as a junior, he became a TA with the department. Since then he has assisted with three classes, running labs and presenting lectures, and has even helped to rewrite a 300-level course on microprocessors as well as create, from scratch, an entirely new 400-level course. Last semester, as part of a project with computer science researcher Kris Schindler that explored how robotics can improve the lives of ALS patients, Deleon proposed the idea for a robotic arm that could play tic-tac-toe. He and his research partners debuted the invention for local schoolchildren at CSE Kids’ Day in December.

How did you first become interested in computers?

A lot of it is from my dad. He works as a principal radio frequency engineer for [defense contractor] Harris Corporation. He’s always been really into computers, and I first learned by helping him with builds. When I was growing up, I would sit at our family computer and was amazed at what I could do on there. I started to wonder how and why these things work. Then in high school, I joined a program called FIRST Robotics, an organization that runs regional robotics competitions for students. I wanted to try and see how the hardware talks to the software, to understand how we command a machine to do things. That’s what really inspired me to explore robotics and coding.

Did you enter college knowing you wanted to major in computer science?

Not entirely. I liked computers in high school, but I also liked shop classes, like machining. After high school, I went to Monroe Community College, and I took electrical engineering classes, computer engineering classes and mechanical engineering classes. But I decided on computer engineering, because it’s like a bridge between the electronics side and the programming side of computing. That’s what I like about it.

How did you end up at UB?

I graduated from MCC and then went to RIT for a semester. I transferred to UB because it’s really well-ranked for science and engineering, and is a lot less expensive. It wasn’t always easy transferring credits, and I ended up having to delay my graduation by a semester. At the time I thought I had wasted time trying to figure out my path, but I said to myself, everybody goes through life at different rates. You can’t worry about how long it takes to find your passion.

After you graduate, you’ll be going to work for Harris Corporation. What can you tell us about your job there?

Harris is a big Department of Defense company so I don’t know how much information I can give, but I think I can say I’ll be in developing. It’s pretty much a playground. We’re given ideas, and we get to test them out to see if they’re possible. The military tends to be a couple years ahead in terms of technology, so I’m looking forward to working on the latest and greatest.

What about teaching? That was a big part of your college experience.

I want to continue to teach somehow, even if it’s just volunteering. I give a lot of credit to FIRST Robotics, so I want to pay that forward. Becoming a mentor for a high school team—I would enjoy that. I guess it’s the way I grew up. My mom is a super charitable person, and we do a lot of charity work in the Dominican Republic. I want to share my knowledge. I don’t want it to be like, only the smartest can understand computers. That’s why I enjoy teaching; I enjoy showing people, hey, you can do this.
Compassion is this dentist’s calling

Othman Shibly, clinical professor in the School of Dental Medicine

In many ways, a toothache was the least of their worries. But it was a problem that Othman Shibly (DDS ’99, MS ’95) could actually do something about.

Shibly, a periodontist and clinical professor in the School of Dental Medicine, came to this realization during a professional conference in Istanbul in 2011. While in Turkey, he took a short side trip to observe a Syrian refugee camp, and noticed that while basic medical care was being provided to the residents, dental care was not. Those who had dental issues—a common occurrence within the grim conditions of the camps—had only two options: have their teeth pulled or suffer.

“When they heard that I’m a dentist, they started asking me, can you help us?” Shibly says. “In my heart came this feeling—that these are people like you and me who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. And they deserve more than extraction.”

That feeling stayed with him upon his return to Buffalo, where he immediately got to work on what would become for him an ongoing project, making humanitarian missions to run pop-up dental clinics at refugee camps in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Supported by a team of partners, from corporations to colleagues, Shibly has now journeyed to the region 16 times over the past eight years. Since 2012, he has helped open or support more than 20 clinics. Over the same period, he has also worked to establish more than a dozen schools within Syria for the thousands of children still living in the war-torn country. And recently, he led a dental mission to Iraqi Kurdistan to help the displaced Yazidi community there.

Journeys are nothing new for Shibly, who was born in Lebanon but escaped with his family to Syria as a youth when war broke out. “My grandfather was from Syria originally, but because of World War I, he ran to Lebanon, where both my father and I were born,” Shibly explains. “When civil war happened in Lebanon, we went to Syria to the house my grandfather had built there.” (With the current war in Syria, Shibly’s relatives are now back in Lebanon.)

Shibly studied dentistry in Syria before coming to UB in the early 1990s. “I did not have the money to study in America, so I was advised to come as a visiting doctor because it was free to observe,” he says. He was soon offered a position as a clinical research assistant and then a teaching position, which covered his tuition as he studied. Now he directs the postgraduate program specialty in periodontics, conducts research on advanced periodontal surgery and maintains a small private practice—all while planning, fundraising for and implementing his biannual missions to the Middle East.

Recently, this work has gone in a new direction. With every mission, Shibly has been able to serve about 1,000 people—and each one is a small victory. “But then I started thinking,” he says. “There are hundreds of thousands more people who need help. It would be impossible for me to help them all.”

So, with the assistance of Saint Joseph University in Beirut and other partners, Shibly has begun training a cohort of refugees within camps in Lebanon to work as community health care workers, delivering preventive dental care and basic health education on an ongoing basis. The goal is twofold: to have greater overall impact while also giving the refugees a sense of self-sufficiency.

The only downside of the new approach is less opportunity for UB students to participate. In the past, they helped raise funds and gather supplies, and sometimes even accompanied Shibly on missions. So Shibly has found another way to ensure that his students learn the value of helping others: making charitable service work a requirement of the periodontal program he directs.

“It doesn’t matter where—here in Buffalo, or someplace else, for children, veterans, anyone,” he says. “You won’t graduate until I see this.”

For while dentistry is Shibly’s chosen field, compassionate care—both doing it and teaching it—is his calling. He recounts a time when his daughter Thawab (BA ’12) was asked why she didn’t become a dentist herself, and she responded that her father never talked to his children about dentistry. Rather, he talked about how to be a good person.

“This is how we grow in this world,” he says, smiling.
A country doctor gives UB its largest gift ever

George Melvin Ellis Jr., MD ‘45

UNTIL RECENTLY, the details were as sketchy as they were remarkable.

Upon his death in 2010, a doctor who had practiced out of a modest house in the rural Midwest for more than 50 years donated $40 million to the University at Buffalo—the largest gift ever received by the university. He directed the gift to his beloved alma mater, the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. Today, combined with earlier donations and interest income on those contributions, it is worth nearly $57 million and supports, among other things, faculty recruitment, a scholarship fund for medical students, and the George M. Ellis Jr. and Kelly Ellis Professorship in Family Medicine.

Little has been known about the donor, George M. Ellis Jr. (MD ‘45), because he wanted to remain anonymous until both he and his wife, Kelly, had passed away. With her death last year, UB is finally able to tell the story of this profound act of generosity.

George Ellis was born in 1922 in Toledo, Ohio. His dream of becoming a physician took hold when he was 8 years old, while on a family vacation in New England. He fell ill and was diagnosed with appendicitis by a doctor who made a house call.

“Because of that experience, George became enamored of the skills of general practitioners,” says David Draper (BA ’85), associate vice president for advancement at UB, who knew Ellis for many years. “He was very proud of the fact that he was a clinician.”

In 1942, at the height of World War II, Ellis was awarded early admission to the Jacobs School after only three years of college. Due to the war and the need for physicians, many medical schools around the country offered accelerated medical education programs such as UB’s, where students graduated in three years.

The war ended in August 1945, six weeks after Ellis began his internship. Injured troops returning home required medical care, so Ellis was assigned to the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Dayton, Ohio. While at the VA, he met and began dating Gladys Kelly of Wilmington, Del., a nurse at the facility.

When his military service ended, Ellis relocated to Connersville, Ind., where he set up practice in his aunt’s former home. In 1951, he and Kelly married (at which point she took the name Kelly Ellis), and she began working as his nurse. Together, they saw patients out of that home for more than five decades.

They posted office hours, “but the hours didn’t really matter,” Draper says. “They never turned people away, even if they couldn’t pay. George’s life was dedicated to the health and well-being of the community he served. He really embraced the Hippocratic Oath.”

Despite his busy practice, Ellis remained highly engaged with his alma mater. “George was the glue that kept the Class of 1945 together,” notes Draper. “He remembered every one of his classmates and was in regular communication with many of them throughout his professional life and well into retirement.” Ellis also served in various volunteer capacities, was a long-time member of the Dean’s Advisory Council for the Jacobs School, and made it to every single class reunion until 2010, when he was too ill to attend.

For many decades, he served as class secretary for reunions while his classmate Herbert E. Joyce (MD ‘45) served as class chair. “My job was to stimulate giving for class reunion projects, but my totals always fell short,” recalls Joyce. “As a last resort, I would go to George, and he always said: ‘How much do you need?’—and then he’d write out a check for the deficit, usually a few thousand dollars. He never refused me.”

Joyce says he knew Ellis had some wealth because he was a savvy investor, but he never imagined he had acquired the assets he had. “George never changed,” he says, “in appearance or approach. He was always very friendly and very humble. He did not want his name mentioned or any accolades. Above everything was his love for the UB medical school.”
Progress by priority

With these three priorities, the Boldly Buffalo campaign seeks to transform cities and communities around the globe.

Our Students
$395M

Our Faculty
$32M

Our World
$62M

The power of collective giving

Though million-dollar gifts often make news, all gifts—of any amount—are essential to the success of our students. Collectively, annual gifts from alumni and friends sustain the UB Fund and help our students have life-changing experiences.

It all adds up!

When added up, gifts of all sizes open doors to opportunities that transform the lives of the next generation of leaders. Since the Boldly Buffalo campaign began, gifts of $1,000 or less have added up to $23 million in student support. That’s powerful.

$23 MILLION RAISED

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*As of 1/14/19

What do annual gifts do?

Annual gifts to the UB Fund make an amazing and immediate impact on our students, our faculty and our world. Because 100 percent of the UB Fund is used every year, annual giving is critical to sustaining these important programs:

- Faculty Research
- Emergency Assistance
- Public Service
- Study Abroad
- Student Entrepreneurship
- Collaborative Spaces

Learn more about the Boldly Buffalo campaign at buffalo.edu/campaign
The first computer at UB was put in operation in November 1961. The IBM 1620 model cost $86,000 ($700,000 in today’s dollars) and was the first data processing system at any college or university in the Western New York region. A 1961 issue of the UB newsletter Colleague described it accordingly: “Digesting and solving complex mathematical problems more quickly than a battery of skilled mathematicians ... the swift solving brain ... is as necessary to a modern university as microscopes and test tubes.”

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
Why I left my high-profile job at Twitter

Joel Lunenfeld, BA ‘99, co-founder of The Guardian Project

FROM 2011 UNTIL 2017, I was the vice president of global brand strategy at Twitter, successful in my career beyond any level I could have imagined. I was traveling around the world meeting with celebrities, C-level executives and government officials. I was inducted into the American Advertising Federation’s Hall of Achievement. Then, at the age of 40, I left it all to operate a gym for underserved kids in my community.

This is why.

My six years at Twitter taught me how much momentum one idea can create. I learned that 140 characters can change the world. A community can spark a movement. Influence and power don’t always go hand in hand. And sometimes a fight is the most noble cause.

A fight I believe in deeply is the one for our youth. My father was an at-home teacher for school-age kids in New York City who had health issues and couldn’t attend school. I was hugely influenced by his model, and as a teen I began working in after-school programs at my local YMHA Community Center in Brooklyn. Then came college and career, marriage and a house. In other words: Life. The unexpected passing of my father 10 years ago and the birth of my two daughters, Fiona and Lexington, woke up a part of me I had forgotten—the part that was most fulfilled giving back to the community. I quit my high-profile job so I could have more time to do just that.

While the population in low-income neighborhoods has grown by more than 10 percent in the last decade, the budgets for after-school programs have remained stagnant. This, despite the proven benefits of after-school programs, from higher grades, better health and increased graduation rates to lower crime and drop-out rates. Not to mention the numerous less measurable impacts of a safe, accepting environment and mentor relationships on a young person’s sense of well-being and self-esteem.

In 2013 Ben Kovacs, a former Twitter employee, and I bonded over two things: a love of martial arts and a desire to make a difference. Together we co-founded The Guardian Project, a nonprofit boxing, kickboxing and jiu-jitsu academy in Oakland, Calif., for at-risk youth. The academy offers free training to local kids between the ages of 10 and 18. It also gives them space to do homework, healthy meals donated from local restaurants, and, for our older students, the chance to network with adults for job and internship opportunities.

Since opening our doors in January of 2016, we have enrolled more than 250 kids from all over the city, creating a shared sense of purpose around a common passion. Our adult memberships along with individual donations help to subsidize the cost. Every day we see firsthand the change that confidence and a positive environment can make. Now we are actively raising money for a new headquarters in downtown Oakland.

My time at Twitter was an incredibly fulfilling journey, and leaving was a tough decision, but sometimes you have to listen to that voice in your head. My voice was telling me to spend more time fighting for our youth. I haven’t looked back once.
A university-wide celebration for alumni who graduated 50 or more years ago

University at Buffalo
Golden Reunion
May 3–4, 2019 | Buffalo, New York
For details or questions, call Alumni Engagement at 716-645-3312, email ub-alumni@buffalo.edu or visit the website at buffalo.edu/alumni/golden-reunion.

UB ADVENTURES AROUND THE WORLD
What could be more fun than traveling with alumni, family and friends? Discover new places as you roam with UB!
Details at buffalo.edu/alumni/travel

Iceland and the Northern Lights
Fall 2019

India
Hosted by UB President Satish Tripathi
Winter 2020

River Life
Dutch Waterways
Spring 2020

Europe
France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland
Summer 2020
My Bold Moment

“As a nursing student, I was fortunate to have UB’s support to travel on an incredibly humbling global outreach trip. Now I take students on these trips to help them change lives and understand the big picture of culture, diversity and leadership.”

Molli Warunek, DNP ’15, MS ’04 & BS ’04, clinical assistant professor and global initiatives coordinator

Bold moments are what make us great. Moments when we provide care to underserved populations around the globe. When we make a life-changing decision. And when we work together toward the greater good. The Boldly Buffalo campaign provides countless opportunities for students to discover their passions and achieve their dreams. To learn how you can help create a better world, visit buffalo.edu/campaign.