

# UB INTERNATIONAL

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UB International

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## CONFERENCES FOR PUBLICATION

In May 2024, more than a dozen scholars from six countries gathered at the Richardson Hotel in Buffalo for the inaugural conference in a series co-sponsored by the Office of International Education to support global and international research at UB.

**Pieces of Circumstance: An International Colloquium on How Early Moderns Lived the Context of their Experience(s)**, a symposium organized by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL), kicked off the series bringing

and thereby advance our international research collaborations and capacity," said Nojin Kwak, Vice Provost for International Education and professor of communication.

Amy Graves Monroe, professor and chair of RLL and the lead organizer, delivered one of the conference papers, "No Man in an Island of the Whole of the Human Condition: Circumstances of Injury and Illness in Montaigne and Donne."

### Medicine, the Body, and the Senses: Asian Perspectives

The UB Asia Research Institute (ARI) hosted a conference on Medicine, the Body, and the Senses: Asian Perspectives, April 11-12, 2025 in 10 Capen Hall (the Buffalo Room).

The conference featured a keynote address by Judith Farquhar, Max Palevsky Professor Emerita of Anthropology and of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, and 22 paper presentations by international scholars in many different fields.

The theme for the conference was developed by Yan Liu, associate professor of history at UB and an ARI affiliated

faculty member, and Genie Yoo, post-doctoral fellow at Dumbarton Oaks and an incoming assistant professor of history at UB.

"The conference put a spotlight on the important work of UB professors related to medicine, culture, and society in Asia and lay the groundwork for significant future research and publication opportunities for UB faculty and conference participants," said Nojin Kwak, Vice Provost for International Education.

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Keynote Judith Farquhar giving her talk in the ARI conference

together leading scholars from around the world to deliver papers that will be the basis of a special journal issue or edited book.

"Pieces of Circumstance" assembled early modernists from ten universities in the UK, France, Germany, Poland and the US to explore aspects of everyday experience, as represented in the art and culture of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

"Our office has been pleased to partner with the deans to launch this series of international scholarly conversations at UB

## FROM THE VICE PROVOST

A key priority of our office has been to foster and support international research collaboration across the university in alignment with academic unit goals and faculty interests. To that end, our OIE Research Grants Program, launched in 2022, has already awarded 105 grants totaling \$575,000 in support of international research during the program's first seven semesters.

Ranging from short-term initiatives requiring immediate funding via our Rapid Grants for Global and International Research to major multi-year projects to facilitate faculty promotion through our Associate Professor Fund, OIE is providing international research support where it is needed, particularly in fields where there are fewer external funding opportunities.

Our Seed Grant opportunity, jointly funded by the Office of Vice President for Research and Economic Development, has been particularly popular, as it enables faculty to launch international research projects that can qualify them for significant external funding.

We are pleased with the enthusiastic response to our grants program, which has engaged faculty in all of UB's schools and facilitated vital research endeavors. I am grateful to our faculty colleagues on the Council on International Studies and Programs, who have helped conceptualize the program and served on the selection committee.

To build on that success, our office has recently launched a new program to sponsor international conferences organized by senior UB faculty aimed at publication of the conference papers in the form of a special journal issue or edited collection. Such conferences bring leading experts to UB and foster international research communities that benefit our faculty's research careers longer term.

It is often the case that unit resources are insufficient to bring leading researchers from abroad to participate in conferences at UB. Our new Conference for Publication program helps address that need while strengthening UB's international networks generally; to date, OIE has committed \$180,000 to support these conferences.

Our feature article in this issue highlights the first four international conferences sponsored or co-sponsored by this OIE program—on a wide variety of topics. I congratulate all our faculty partners who have taken the lead in organizing these events.

We have been encouraged by the strong interest in this opportunity to date. While the initial conferences in this series were organized over the past year, future conference-to-publication opportunities will be available each semester based on availability of funding.

We look forward to partnering with faculty to expand participation in the program and facilitate exciting new international scholarly conversations. ♦

## CONFERENCES FOR PUBLICATION

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Participants addressed how understandings of the body and its various senses in premodern and modern contexts shape healing outcomes, religious experiences, gender relations, and sociopolitical processes. The conference also explored social, political, religious, and cultural contexts that frame perceptions of sensorial experience and embodied practice.

Taking a multidisciplinary approach and paying attention to local features and transregional knowledge exchange, the conference fostered fruitful conversations that advance crucial Asian perspectives on the body and the senses and offer fresh insights on the particular Asian societies under study.

Yan Liu said, "We are excited to organize a conference that gathers a stellar group of scholars by invitation and from the overwhelming response to our call for papers. We appreciate ARI's generous support, which will foster a stimulating conversation on Asian medicine across time, space, and disciplines."

Genie Yoo added, "We were absolutely delighted to organize this interdisciplinary conference for ARI, which attracted more than a hundred applicants from across North America, Asia, and Europe.

"It is unique in its sensorial approach to the study of

medicine and in its engagement with every region of Asia. We're grateful for the opportunity to bring such incredible scholars together at UB, and for the support and encouragement provided by ARI and the other sponsors," Yoo said.

Medicine, the Body, and the Senses: Asian Perspectives is the second in an ARI annual conference series. The annual conferences draw on UB faculty expertise to convene international scholars who present new research on critical topics in the study of Asia and Asian diasporas.

The annual conference series, along with other ARI programs that promote faculty scholarship and cutting-edge research, strengthen UB's position as a regional hub for Asia-focused research and teaching.

The conference was cosponsored by UB's Asia Research Institute, Office of International Education, Departments of History, Anthropology, and Asian Studies Program in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Global Health Initiatives in the School of Public Health and Health Professions, and the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

### Moral Media Conference

Some of the world's leading researchers working at the intersection of media and morality gathered at UB from April 11-13, 2025 for this year's Moral Media Conference. The conference was jointly sponsored by the university's

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## UB LAUNCHES TRAVELER ASSIST

By Grace Gerass

UB is launching Traveler Assist, powered by International SOS, to offer round-the-clock medical, mental health, security support and evacuation services for students, faculty and staff traveling internationally or domestically on behalf of the university.

Traveler Assist offers the following services to faculty, staff and students traveling on official university business to enhance the safety, security and well-being of the UB community:

- **24/7 support:** World-class medical and security professionals anytime, anywhere.
- **Pre-travel guidance:** Tailored tools and advice to prepare for travel, including destination-specific health and safety insights.
- **Emergency assistance:** Prompt and professional help during medical or security incidents, including evacuation if needed.
- **Peace of mind:** A trusted partner to rely on in uncertain situations.

"We are excited to announce this new emergency and traveler-assistance tool," says Laura Hubbard, vice president of finance and administration. "The university is committed to the safety of those traveling on behalf of UB. Having this service available helps provide peace of mind for our university community."

Access to Traveler Assist will roll out over the next few months, beginning with international travelers in May and June 2025. Starting in summer 2025, students, faculty and staff traveling through the Education Abroad Office will be able to use the service. Domestic travelers will be trained in fall 2025.

To use Traveler Assist, the UB community members must create an account and register their trip with International SOS prior to traveling and download the International SOS app, available in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

- **For faculty and staff:** Itineraries will automatically be

transferred into the International SOS system when domestic or international business-related travel is booked through Concur. Faculty and staff who do not use Concur to book travel will have the option to manually upload their itineraries.

- **For students:** Students should consult their department or program office for guidance on submitting their itinerary. Students participating in UB Education Abroad programs, including other SUNY-sponsored programs, will be automatically registered.

All participating travelers are also encouraged to request and carry their International SOS Membership Card while on business travel. This card provides essential contact details for emergency support. UB Traveler Assist does not replace an individual's insurance. Travelers should ensure that they understand their coverage before and during their travel.

UB Traveler Assist was a collaborative, cross-campus effort with input and expertise from various departments across campus. Members of the project team: Jennifer Pesany, Financial Management; Adam Rubin, Education

Abroad; Patricia Shyhalla, International Education; Meg Mitchell, Travel Services; Joe Raab, Environment, Health and Safety; Greg Howland, Enterprise Application Services; Jeff Dambrowski, Enterprise Application Services; Beth Rogan, Student Life; Daniel Baker, University Communications; and Janelle Toner, Business Reporting and Systems.



"The hope is that those traveling do not have to utilize the emergency services," says Beth Corry, associate vice president of business services and controller. "But the service also provides vital information on the location that you are traveling to ensure that you are prepared. This will help travelers be more confident in their travel."

Virtual town halls are being offered to share more information about UB Travel Assist. ♦

Grace Gerass is an internal communications manager for University Communications.

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Office of International Education, the Department of Communication, and the Media Psychology & Morality Lab.

Now in its eighth year, the annual event attracts scholars in a range of disciplines – such as media psychology, cognitive science, communication, psychology, and sociology – interested in media portrayals of morality and how these portrayals affect media consumers' social relationships.

This year's conference featured presentations from four keynote speakers:

- **Helena Bilandzic**, professor of media effects and processes at the University of Augsburg, Germany, an expert in narrative experience and persuasion.
- **Morteza Dehghani**, professor of psychology and computer science at USC, who studies how extreme forms of moral worldviews can lead to prejudice, violence and hate.
- **Allison Eden**, associate professor of communication at Michigan State University, who published research that centers on understanding media enjoyment, particularly the role enjoyment plays in attention to and selection of media content, and more broadly the effects of entertainment on user behavior and well-being.
- **Frederic Hopp**, assistant professor of big data in psychology at the Leibniz Institute for Psychology in Trier, Germany, who primarily investigates how morality permeates human communication and how moralized messages are cognitively processed and motivate behavior.

"People often ask why put media and morality together," says Lindsay Hahn, assistant professor of communication and one of the conference's co-organizers, along with two colleagues in the Department of Communication, professors Melanie Green and Arthur Raney.

"The reason is that we consume media socially. Media influences, to some degree, who we are, which influences what types of media we select," says Hahn. "Given this social process, it becomes necessary to understand how this phenomenon is taking shape and the ways in which media help bring us together or how it might drive us apart."

Through the years, the conference has grown considerably, from a small working group to an event that has contributed, through scientific inquiry, to advancements in

the area of media and morality.

In addition to its multidisciplinary approach to exploring morality, organizers also expanded the conference's scope from previous conferences, which looked at these questions within the context of the U.S., to adding an international component that explores media and morality in a global context. "I'm excited by this conference, which brought together scholars from 23 institutions across six countries discussing advances in media and morality research," says Hahn.

### After Europe: On Rodolphe Gasché and the Ends of an Idea

Bringing together leading scholars from across the globe at the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences in late April 2025, "After Europe: Rodolphe Gasché and the Ends of an Idea" engaged with Gasché's extensive and influential work on European thought, philosophy and the limits of the European idea. Through interdisciplinary dialogues, panel discussions and presentations, participants

critically reflected on the philosophical, political and cultural dimensions of "After Europe."

Gasché, SUNY Distinguished Professor and Eugenio Donato Chair of Comparative Literature at UB, who participated in the conference, is an internationally renowned scholar of continental philosophy, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century French literature, and critical theory. His extensive bibliography includes many works on the writings of the French philosopher and critic Jacques Derrida.

The conference explored and celebrated his work on the "idea of Europe," as developed in several books, including "Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept" (2008) and "Locating Europe: A Figure, a Concept, an Idea?" (2021). Participating scholars came from Australia, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

David E. Johnson, the lead organizer and professor and chair of the Department of Comparative Literature, delivered a paper on "Executing Europe." His colleague Shaun Irlam, associate professor, presented "Fanon's Tears."

Other conference presenters included Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, "Hans Blumenberg's 'Theory of Non-Conceptuality'"; Francesco Vitale, Università di Salerno, "The Telos and the Event: Rodolphe Gasché's Deconstruction of Teleology (through Derrida)"; and Aïcha Liviana Messina, Universidad Diego Portales (Chile), "The Desire of Europe." ♦





## FOSTERING GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE FIRST YEAR

By Anna Heinz

When Katie Kerwan arrived at UB last fall, she was eager to explore a new city and build a community for herself.

"I really wanted to dive into my first year head-first," Kerwan says. "I was looking for any opportunity to broaden my knowledge as a student and become a better citizen."

Her participation in the Ready, Set, Buffalo! community engagement program fueled her drive to seek out opportunities to engage and broaden her worldview. During the winter session, that drive took Kerwan to the United Kingdom as part of the UB First-Year Global Experience in the United Kingdom.

For 10 days in January, Kerwan and her classmates traveled around the U.K., developing their intercultural communication skills, enhancing their ability to live and lead in a global society and learning from faculty leaders about United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a collection of interlinked objectives designed to address some of the major challenges

faced today by people around the globe.

The group volunteered at a local soup kitchen; fundraised on the streets of London; toured Brixton, where they learned about its historical roots and lingering racial prejudice; and visited Oxford University, where they met with the head of environmental sustainability to learn about eco-conscious campus efforts and renewable energy.

The program engages first-year students from across UB — and their experience doesn't end with the trip. Now that they're back on campus, the students and faculty will continue to meet to share reflections with the UB community and participate in poster sessions and other presentations at the UB Global Summit event during Accepted Students Day.

For Kerwan, the experience gave her a deeper look at issues of social justice and sustainability, including SDGs.

"The program showed me that everyone faces their own unique troubles, but issues like food scarcity, racial prejudice, poverty and pollution have no border," Kerwan says.

"We observed how close the U.K. is to achieving their sustainability goals, and it was incredibly inspiring to see the progress they've made over the past decade or two," she adds. "It shows that change is possible and that small actions can lead to big impacts."

As UB prepares students to lead in a global world, study abroad may be out of reach for many because of financial means, course requirements or other obstacles. First-year programs aim to address these challenges.

"We wanted to create an opportunity that increased access to study abroad for students and provided a transformational global experience right at the beginning of their time here," says Adam Rubin, assistant vice provost

and director of education abroad. "We also wanted the program to tie into UB's focus on sustainability while remaining affordable and accessible to students from a broad range of academic perspectives."

The program began three years ago as a study abroad initiative that allows students to receive three credits toward their Global Pathways requirement. For the past three years, students traveled to Costa Rica in January to develop skills necessary to succeed in a global society.

The program grew last year with the addition of the U.K. option.

"About 80% of students enter college thinking that they want to study abroad, but only about 10% of students nationwide study abroad," Rubin explains. "We wanted to create an opportunity for students that would help overcome those barriers and make it easier for them to study abroad during their first year at UB."

The program has grown from 12 students in 2023 to 40 students in 2025. The opportunity is open to first-year students and new transfer students, and participants represent a very diverse range of students from the UB community. This year, there were 17 students in the Costa Rica program and 23 students in the U.K. program representing 17 different academic majors. And many were first-generation, Educational Opportunity Program or international students.

When Brianna Wray, a transfer sophomore nursing student, learned about the UB First-Year Global Experience



First-Year Global Experience participants on historical tour of London

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## FIRST-YEAR GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

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in Costa Rica, she immediately knew she wanted to participate.

"Studying abroad is something that I've always wanted to do," Wray says. "I wanted to be immersed in another culture and I thought it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so I really wanted to make sure that I experienced it." Nursing programs have strict course requirements, which can make it challenging for students to find study abroad opportunities.

"I can't take my nursing classes abroad, which is why this was such a rare opportunity for me," Wray says. "It was the perfect way to study something relevant to my major while experiencing a new place and culture."

Wray's favorite experience was visiting with members of the BriBri, an indigenous tribe and autochthonous people of the Talamanca region on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica.

"It was eye-opening to witness how they navigated their day-to-day lives, offering a completely different perspective on gender roles," Wray says. "The structure was matriarchal, with women in charge, while men took on roles like caring for the children and agricultural work. Hearing the women's points of view and understanding their lives was incredibly valuable, especially because we were fully immersed in their culture."

The program also gave students the opportunity to live with Costa Rican host families, learn about sustainable ag-

ricultural and meet with leaders of a non-governmental organization that supports women who have recently immigrated to Costa Rica from other Latin American countries.



First-Year participants learn about sustainable agriculture in Limón, Costa Rica

For Wray, her experience solidified her plans to become a travel nurse after graduation. "My experience changed my perspective and the way I look at the world because I was able to see what life is like in another country," Wray says. "It helped me to see what things could look like here in the U.S." ♦

Anna Heinz is a 2025 graduate in Communication and was a student assistant in University Communications.

## UB SCHOLARS LEAD UN PANEL ON GENDER EQUALITY

A UB faculty member and a PhD candidate led a panel discussion last month as part of the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69).

The panel, titled "Uniting Research, Policy, and Practice: Advancing Equality, Peace, and Sustainability for Women and Girls," brought together global leaders, activists and scholars to tackle critical issues related to gender equality.

Barbara Wejnert, professor in the Department of Environment and Sustainability, and Senay Imre, a PhD candidate in the Department of Global Gender & Sexuality Studies, led the panel, which was attended by more than 100 participants.

The conference, held at the United Nations in New York, aimed to contribute to the international dialogue on empowering women and girls worldwide, showcasing the global commitment to advancing gender equality.

It also commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a groundbreaking framework ad-

opted in 1995 that set forth a comprehensive agenda for advancing women's rights and gender equality worldwide.

The gathering and conference were "a pivotal moment in the ongoing fight for gender equality," says Imre.

"As members of the UB academic community, in a time when women's rights are facing pushback, it is more important than ever to offer our perspectives and be part of this critical gathering with the world," Imre says. This anniversary serves as a reminder that while progress has been made, our work is far from over — and it is more difficult than ever."

The conference's central theme, "Push Back: How to Push Back the Push Back," highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by women and girls worldwide and emphasized the collective action required to protect and advance their hard-won rights. The sessions at the UN not only reflected on the setbacks but also celebrated the progress made since the adoption of the Beijing Platform, underscoring the continued fight for gender equality, organizers say. ♦



## STUDYING ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

By Madeleine Sophie Sutton (MArch '25, BS Arch '23)

I chose to spend the culminating semester of my UB Master of Architecture Program as an exchange student at University College Dublin, Ireland. This was different from an earlier summer study abroad trip when I travelled to Ireland and Scotland with classmates and a UB professor. We went from city to city visiting the “highlights” of each new place.

For an exchange student, there is time to establish new routines, discover favorite train stations, bus routes, and coffee shops all the while joining new communities of people. The time spent independently exploring makes the experience feel special and memorable.

During my studies at UCD, I lived with a local resident in Milltown – a historic and walkable neighborhood in Dublin. Unlike typical student apartment living, this offered a closer look into daily life in Ireland – a life where laundry hangs on lines in back gardens, washing machines are in kitchens, ‘Euro News’ is on the television and conversations are frequently about the best tea and biscuits.

Cycling past historic terraces on my daily bike rides to school also led to discoveries of new places, buildings and architecture that complemented specific visits to Irish landmarks such as the Cliffs of Moher and Ireland’s National Gallery. The learning never stopped.

The Irish are incredibly chatty, and I was often asked, “What are you studying?” or told “That looks interesting” while people in stations would share news of the next train or of new timetables.

Attitudes towards the weather were optimistic and, when it was raining – which it often was – people would still go about their daily routines, walking dogs, biking children to school and riding scooters to work.

People didn’t wait for the weather to “get better” – if they did, they would never be outside! And even on cold grey December days people strolled through Herbert Park to shop at the Saturday Market.

After growing up in a car-centric society with very limited public transportation, the trains and buses connecting all parts of Dublin and nearby towns were magical to me. Public transportation was easy to navigate, and I enjoyed hopping on trains for weekend adventures to new places.

By the end of the semester, I had memorized the names of all the seaside towns and suburbs along the DART rail and LUAS tramlines. Seeing the changing landscapes, seasons and towns from the train offered insights into history, character and design.

The differences that I noticed during my first few weeks in Dublin also left me wondering how architectural education there might differ from my experiences at UB.

At UCD my studio included full-time Irish students and students visiting from North America, as well as others from Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, and Australia.

My cohort quickly adopted a daily routine with shared classes, insights about different approaches to design and lunches on the lawn at UCD’s campus.

The architecture curriculum emphasized working by hand and drawing on trace paper to develop ideas and solve problems.

Only at the end of the term were we encouraged to prepare a final set of digital drawings. And even then, some still preferred to work by hand and chose to finish their presentations using pens, pencils and paper.

It became clear that while technological design skills varied from program to program, it was possible to find common ground through other ways of working.

Sketching was a universal tool. It helped communicate ideas in group settings and during class discussions. Returning to analog ways of working was fascinating as I reached the end of my formal architectural education. While computer programs are always changing, drawing by hand remains a unifying method of representation across cultures.

The opportunity to live abroad for four months was transformative. My time in Ireland developed heightened curiosities about architecture, people, and cities and how they are shaped by history and landscapes. I deeply appreciated public transportation, conversations, new friends and weekend adventures.

As I reflect daily on my various experiences, it is with gratitude to UB’s International Exchange Programs. Thank you for the opportunity to take a life-changing trip and for the confidence it instills. Now I am ready to enter the architectural profession as a global citizen! ♦



Madeleine Sutton’s work space in a busy UCD studio.

## INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION IN GHANA

By Naomi Smith

For students, the university's annual trip to Ghana was an unforgettable experience: A collaboration between the School of Management, School of Medicine, School of Nursing, School of Social Work, School of Public Health, School of Architecture, School of Dental Medicine and School of Pharmacy.

Each year, the trip offers students the opportunity for interprofessional collaboration, giving them the chance to engage with and learn from the people of Ghana through medical outreach, business and cultural visits, and sharing of best practices.

The group landed in Accra, where they organized medications for each clinic they would attend. Before diving into their work, the group explored the vibrant streets of Ghana, enjoying the bustling markets filled with fresh produce, handmade goods and roadside stalls. They tried fresh coconuts, participated in an impromptu soccer match with local children and embraced the cultural exchange with open minds.

The warmth and hospitality of the Ghanaian people were remarkable. Despite the language barrier, communication flowed easily.

The group traveled to their first clinic in Kumasi, where local Ghanaians received health care from UB physicians and local doctors working together. Students assisted by testing blood pressure, checking weights, and performing lab work such as glucose tests.

Multiple stations were set up throughout each clinic, where patients were evaluated by physicians, tested for illnesses like malaria, and received appropriate medications. They also learned about oral care and received dental hygiene products, feminine hygiene products, and glasses.

The turnout exceeded expectations — hundreds of people visited on the first day alone, eager to learn about oral hygiene and receive care.

After three successful days in Kumasi, treating about 800 patients over three days, the team continued their mission in Accra. The support from the School of Medicine made it possible to provide essential medical knowledge and supplies. In total, the team served more than 1,300 patients throughout the entire trip.

During their time in Accra, the UB travelers attended a

school assembly where the community chief spoke passionately about the importance of education. "It's been awesome to learn from everyone, and it's definitely a life-changing experience," says Nathan Coleman, BS '25.

Samantha Sorensen, BS '27, organized a dental hygiene supply drive in Buffalo before the trip to gather dental supplies such as toothpaste and toothbrushes to share at the medical clinics.

"It was amazing to share my passion for dental health," she says. "I never realized how much I took for granted by having oral hygiene products available."

Through a partnership with the University of Ghana Dental School, more than 200 patients received dental care for the first time at a mobile dental clinic.

The trip was made possible through the support of UB professors Dorothy Siaw-Asamoah, Rose Hu and John Hu, and School of Management faculty from the department of accounting and law, who provided soccer balls and medical supplies. Additionally, professor Joana Gaia, who specializes in management science and systems, spearheaded a

school supplies drive, with the collected items later donated to local schools in Ghana.

The team also collaborated with outstanding partners throughout the trip, including the All-Africa Students Union, University of Ghana Dental School, University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA) and Kwame Nkrumah University Science and Technology (KNUST), who provided food, a mobile dental vehicle and interpreters.

This journey was more than experiential learning; it was a lesson in gratitude and cultural exchange. The experience highlighted the importance of the mutual benefits of sharing knowledge and resources. Students and faculty alike gained knowledge in global collaboration, cultural understanding and interprofessional engagement for positive outcomes. ♦

Naomi Smith is program associate in the Global Programs Office of the School of Management.



Helping at a medical clinic in Ghana



## CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDY RUSSIAN

By Anna Heinz

UB students Anna Givens and Fiona Serrano have received prestigious scholarships from the Critical Language Scholarship Program (CLS) for summer 2025, both to study Russian abroad.

The CLS, a program of the U.S. Department of State, is a fully funded program for American undergraduate and graduate students that offers immersive instruction in 13 different languages considered critical to the U.S.'s global engagement. CLS programs cover the equivalent of a full year of language study in eight weeks and offer both virtual and in-country instruction options.

"The Critical Language Scholarship is a transformative opportunity that empowers students to immerse themselves in new cultures and languages, broadening their global perspectives and enhancing their academic and professional growth," says Megan Stewart, director of fellowships and scholarships.

"We are incredibly proud of Fiona Serrano and Anna Givens for earning this prestigious award. Their dedication to language learning and cultural exchange exemplifies the spirit of excellence and curiosity that defines our UB community."

The CLS program was established in 2006 to broaden the base of Americans studying and mastering critical languages and building relationships between the people of the U.S. and other countries. CLS provides opportunities to a diverse range of students from across the country at every level of language learning.

Buffalo resident Anna Givens is a second-year PhD student studying anthropology. She will travel to Kyrgyzstan to study Russian through the CLS.

"Fieldwork is at the heart of anthropology," Givens says. "You immerse yourself in a community, build relationships, conduct interviews and engage in daily life. Being able to speak the language fluently is absolutely essential for that kind of work."

Givens chose Russian because it is widely spoken in the region where she plans to conduct her dissertation research.

"Many people in Kyrgyzstan still speak Russian due to

the area's historical ties to the Soviet Union," she explains. "The CLS program provides a unique chance to sharpen my language skills in a setting that mirrors where I'll be working."

Beyond academics, Givens values the personal connections that immersive programs like CLS foster.

"I studied abroad in Latvia as an undergrad, and I still keep in touch with my host family and classmates," she says. "These kinds of programs really allow you to form deep and lasting relationships because you're navigating new experiences together."

Looking ahead, she hopes to use her language skills to help shift scholarly discourse in post-Soviet studies.

Shirley, N.Y., resident Fiona Serrano is a senior majoring in English, global gender studies and history, with a minor in Jewish studies. This summer, she will travel to Latvia to study Russian through the CLS. Serrano sees the program as a crucial step toward her goal of becoming a professor specializing in Soviet, Eastern European and

Russian history. She will join UCLA's history PhD program.

"I've always loved Russian history and literature, and I've wanted to learn the language so I could read the original texts," Serrano says. "Having strong language skills in Russian will help me access and understand primary sources and give me a head start on my research."

Her planned graduate research will examine how experiences with abortion in the Soviet Union were shaped by factors like gender, class and ethnicity — work that relies heavily on untranslated Russian-language materials.

"Russian doesn't always translate well into English," Serrano says. "Knowing the language helps me connect more deeply with the culture I'm studying."

Serrano has already completed an intensive Russian immersion program and is excited to build on that experience.

"A few of my friends from my last program also got into CLS, and we'll all be in Latvia together," she says. "Plus, I've never been out of the country before, so just getting to visit a new place and experience a new culture is incredibly exciting." ♦



Anna Givens (l) and Fiona Serrano (Meredith Forrest Kulwicki)

## GSE STUDENT NAMED FULBRIGHT ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

By Anna Heinz

Russel Bassarath, a fifth-year student studying history and social studies education in the Graduate School of Education's UB Teach program, is one of only 20 individuals to be selected as a 2025 Fulbright alumni ambassador.

The Fulbright Alumni Ambassador Program was established in 2008 to identify and train a group of approximately 20 alumni annually to serve as representatives for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

As an ambassador, Bassarath, who received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) to Cyprus in 2023, is increasing awareness about the Fulbright program and sharing his experiences with other UB students.

"Being one of only 20 Fulbright alumni ambassadors across the country is truly an honor," Bassarath says. "I'm incredibly grateful to have been selected for this role. It was a humbling experience to be in a room with so many individuals doing incredible work across so many different fields and backgrounds."

Each fall, U.S. embassies and individuals from the various Fulbright commissions, program managers and the outreach division come together to recommend alumni for the ambassador program. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs then approves the final selection of ambassadors.

Ambassadors offer guidance to prospective student applicants and share firsthand accounts of their Fulbright journeys — including the challenges of adapting to life abroad.

"At its core, the role is about storytelling and sharing what Fulbright has meant to me, and what it can offer to others," Bassarath explains.

Fulbright alumni ambassadors speak at in-person and virtual events, take part in outreach initiatives and connect directly with students who are considering applying to the program.

"Just recently, I had the chance to speak at an online info session with 200 to 300 prospective applicants where I shared my experience as a Fulbright English teaching as-

sistant in Cyprus. Bassarath says. "It was a full-circle moment to reflect on my journey and offer encouragement, especially knowing how overwhelming and intimidating the application process can feel."

Bassarath considers the opportunity as a chance to not only share his experience, but also as a way to open doors for others.

"I see my role as both a responsibility and an honor to share what this opportunity can do for individuals from all backgrounds," he adds.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is regarded as one of the world's most prestigious national scholarship competitions for grants to study, research and teach abroad. The program

provides grants for individually designed study/research projects or for English teaching assistant programs.

While abroad, Fulbright recipients meet, work, live with and learn from the people of their host country, sharing daily experiences. The program facilitates cultural exchange through direct interaction on an individual basis in the classroom, field, home and in routine tasks, allowing the grantee to gain an appreciation of others' viewpoints and beliefs.

"I had the opportunity to connect with scholars and researchers from around the world, which deeply influenced my approach to peace education," Bassarath says of his time in Cyprus.

He notes his experience was shaped by the teachers he collaborated with, as well as the professors with whom he's now co-authoring papers.

"My Fulbright experience really pushed me to move beyond a U.S.-centric lens, especially one rooted in New York standards, which heavily influenced my earlier work," Bassarath says. "Being immersed in global perspectives helped me broaden my thinking, both in how I approach challenges in education and how I recognize and learn from the incredible innovations happening around the world.

"It's had a real impact on how I teach and engage with students here at UB," he adds. ♦



## MEDICAL STUDENT'S OUTREACH TO LOCAL AFGHAN COMMUNITY

By Ellen Goldbaum

One evening last fall, 15 women, most of them recently resettled in Buffalo from Afghanistan, gathered for dinner and a presentation on women's health at the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at UB.

The success of that event has led organizers to plan a second event for Afghan women focused on mental health, to be held this spring.

The October event was designed exclusively for women. The all-female environment helped attendees feel comfortable hearing about and discussing personal health information. The main speaker, Abeer Eddib, clinical assistant professor of urology in the Jacobs School, a woman and a Muslim, was chosen not only because of her expertise, but because she was someone attendees could relate to.

For those who weren't fluent in English, Salima Panahzada translated from English to Dari, one of Afghanistan's main languages. The Jacobs School organizers provided child care, and a halal dinner was served from a local restaurant.

For Parveen Attai, a second-year MD candidate at the Jacobs School and an Afghan native herself, these details were critical. A medical student with a master's degree from UB's School of Public Health and Health Professions, she feels a strong responsibility to keep her community informed about health and medical topics.

"Over the last few years, there has been an influx of Afghan refugees coming to Buffalo," she says, noting that it can be hard to access health care and other resources during resettlement. "I did feel an urgency to do an event like this, to tap into what their needs are."

Attai is a member of Community Health Speaks, an initiative led by Jamal Williams, assistant professor of psychiatry in the Jacobs School, that aims to bridge the divide between the scientific community and those from historically marginalized communities.

Attai asked Williams how to arrange for funding for the event. Williams understood her interest and the need to do it sooner, rather than later. Noting that a key goal of the Jacobs School is to serve as a resource for the community, he adds that Attai is one of the people portrayed in the

vast Diversity of Medicine mural that greets visitors in the school's atrium.

"Parveen is one of the people in the mural. This is her house and her community," Williams says. "I told her, 'We don't need to wait for funding. Let's just do it.'"

Within weeks, they had arranged for transportation for attendees, reserved a room, announced the event on an Afghan community chat on WhatsApp and arranged with a local halal restaurant to provide dinner. Williams and

Mike Lamb, director of surgical education in the Department of Surgery in the Jacobs School, volunteered to provide child care and serve dinner.

Eddib's talk focused on women's health with an emphasis on preventive care. Topics ranged from age-specific screening tests to birth control, pregnancy and menopause. The event highlighted the need for continued community-driven health education.

"People want to do the right thing, but they may lack knowledge or be misinformed," Attai says. "When you fill the gaps in their understanding, you empower them to take charge of their health."

Feedback from the attendees was overwhelmingly positive. All the women indicated they benefited from the event and want to be contacted about future sessions. One attendee wrote in Dari, "Prevention is better than cure."

Attai's sense of urgency lies in her observation that there is a tendency to see health equity as binary, absent or present. "But health equity is a gradual process that needs attention across many different groups of people," she says. "Buffalo is a diverse environment, and many populations have their own, specific problems. It's important to address the root causes of health disparities with a thorough understanding of the social determinants of health."

Williams agrees. "Without having a more diverse workforce, we will never get there," he says. "If Parveen wasn't here, who would be talking about Afghan women?"

Attai's family, owners of a local bakery, has played a key role in supporting Western New York's Afghan community. The bakery has become a hub for communicating important health information, especially critical throughout the pandemic. During that time, Attai led efforts with the Erie County Department of Health to vaccinate hesitant individuals in the county's Afghan, Bangladeshi and Hispanic/Latino communities.

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L to r: Parveen Attai, Abeer Eddib, Salma Attai, Razia Attai (Sandra Kicman)



## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WIN PANASCI COMPETITION

By Kevin Manne

The creators of an AI-powered tool to aid speech language pathologists took first place April 24 at the University at Buffalo's Henry A. Panasci Jr. Technology Entrepreneurship Competition (Panasci TEC).

Hosted by UB's Startup and Innovation Collaboratory powered by Blackstone LaunchPad, the event brought together UB students from science, technology, business and other disciplines to maximize their potential and create viable businesses in Western New York.

The winning team, PhD students from the UB School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Wei Bo and Shuwei Hou, will receive

\$25,000 in startup capital and in-kind services valued at \$40,000 for their company, SATE (Speech Annotation and Transcription Enhancer), which uses AI to save speech language pathologists time on manual annotation work, allowing them to focus on their patients.

The audio application is the first of its kind. Current tools for speech language pathologists rely on manual transcription, which can take days for humans to process. Using their patented AI process, SATE can generate annotated results in a fraction of the time.

Bo was inspired with the idea after she arrived in the U.S. to study and noticed some students received extra time for exams—a practice that wasn't common in her home country of China. After digging deeper and discovering the accommodations were for students with speech and

language disorders, Bo partnered with Hou and put their computer science skills to work to develop SATE.

"The Panasci competition was transformative. It not only helped us on the business side, but it also helped us improve our product, our algorithms and our vision for the future," says Hou.

Bo says the team benefited from the support of UB's entrepreneurial ecosystem. "UB has been an incredible place for supporting student ideas, whether technical or entrepreneurial," she says. "This ex-

perience pushed us to grow as founders and as individuals stepping onto the stage for the first time."

In addition to \$25,000 in seed funding, the winning team will receive in-kind awards valued at \$40,000 for business counseling from Atlas Alignment Growth Partners; legal services from Colligan Law LLP; accounting services from Lumsden & McCormick LLP; website development and creative agency services from ThreeSixty; Intellectual Property legal services from Stake; and co-working space from the UB Office of Business and Entrepreneur Partnerships.

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L to r: Shuwei Hou, Wei Bo, and Hadar Borden (Nancy J. Parisi)

## MEDICAL STUDENT'S OUTREACH

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Attai's desire to practice medicine and share health information was sparked by her mother, Razia Attai, whose dream was to become a doctor herself.

"My mother's drive was evident from childhood; she consistently ranked as the No. 1 student in school," Attai says. "But she was not able to finish her education due to circumstances outside her control. She was not able to become a physician herself, so instead, she nurtured two of her daughters into becoming physicians."

Attai's older sister, Salma Attai, graduated from the Jacobs School in 2024 and is now a urology resident at UB. A younger sister, Sahar Attai, is an undergraduate pre-dental student, majoring in biomedical sciences at UB.

"I'm really passionate about uplifting communities that

are disproportionately affected," says Attai, "and I know that it's women who cause ripples into future generations.

The proverb is that 'when you educate a woman, you educate a nation.' She won't keep that information to herself; she will tell her kids, her community and beyond. For me, my mother is the epitome of this proverb. Educated women are the ripple effect. That's what fuels my passion."

The health event was sponsored by Community Health Speaks and co-sponsored by the Office of Inclusion and Cultural Enhancement in the Jacobs School, with support from the Office of Student Development and Academic Enhancement in the Jacobs School and the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement in the School of Public Health and Health Professions. ♦

Ellen Goldbaum is a news content manager for University Communications.



## CULTURAL IMMERSION IN MOROCCO

By Cheryl B. Lucas

In January 2025, I participated in a trip to Morocco, North Africa, to explore the country's culture, participate in service learning, present at a conference for allied health professionals, and examine opportunities for UB students to engage in a study abroad clinical and cultural immersion program. The trip exceeded expectations due to the historic, cultural, geographic, and social experiences that enriched the 10-day journey.

The country's diverse landscape, mountains, deserts, and coastlines, creates a vibrant national identity, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and traditions. The tour provided opportunities to participate in the diverse cities of Casablanca, Kenitra, Rabat, Tangier, and the blue fortress city of Chefchaouen and Fes.

The term "tapestry" aptly describes Morocco, as the integrated and interwoven aspects of the experience fostered awe, understanding, knowledge, and peace through communal organic dining, interviews with community leaders, cultural immersion service-learning projects at five distinct locations.

Interactions with educators from multiple universities and five Arab world countries, as well as health professionals from Morocco working with people with disabilities and other health conditions was a highlight while presenting and attending at the Occupational Therapy Association of Morocco 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.

Morocco's history is a blend of diverse cultural and political influences living in co-existence. Berber Indigenous groups have inhabited North Africa for over 4000 years with migration to the area now known as Morocco.

Various cultures throughout history have colonized the land including the Phoenicians, Romans, and the French, but the arrival of Islam in the 7th century CE marked a significant transformation, laying the country's foundations.

All the groups contributed to the architectural infrastructure, including ancient medinas, a city center of courtyards and alleyways, mosaic stonework and fountains, and the beautiful traditional Moroccan riad, a home built around an indoor garden or courtyard which allowed privacy and protection yet access to beauty from the outside world.

Today, Morocco operates as a semi-constitutional monarchy under the governance of King Mohammed VI within a dual-party system (Barbour, et.al, 2025). The King holds significant executive and legislative powers and financial endowments, that he utilizes to sponsor community programs upon recommendation from the legislature.

Despite its rich cultural heritage and economic progress, Morocco faces socio-economic challenges, including poverty, high illiteracy rates, and decreased healthcare and

educational access, especially for people with disabilities and those in rural areas.

Islamic philosophy deeply influences Moroccan society in its focus on health through physical and spiritual purity and a holistic approach to well-being. Ethical behavior towards others, daily rest and prayer, hygiene and cleanliness, and halal, organic eating are keys to daily activities and function. Halal is an Arabic term meaning "permissible" under Islamic law and is most associated with food



Chefchaouen, Morocco

and drink designations. Foods and drinks that are considered forbidden include pork, alcohol, and any products containing these ingredients.

Halal is also related to the way animals are slaughtered, ensuring they are treated humanely (Open AI, 2025). This was keenly apparent during meals, which featured organic, farm-to-table produce, olives, and dates grown locally, with no sight of alcohol. Instead, Moroccan green tea with mint was served at each meal, symbolizing tradition, and camaraderie.

Acts of charity, known as Zakat, are another important aspect of Islam ingrained in Moroccan society. Zakat mandates Muslims give a portion of their wealth to those in need.

This philosophy extends to various forms of assistance and is evident in widespread charitable activities, community support systems, and the importance placed on hospitality and generosity. Private citizens initiated, developed, and led all the programs attended for the service-learning experiences.

Most of the programs were funded by friends, local communities, and benefactors assisting with donations. Some well-organized experiences, like a vocational school for adolescents with developmental disabilities, a facility for elder adults and an orphanage for abandoned infants,

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## PANASCI COMPETITION

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In second place were Mariam Sadawi, MBA student from the UB School of Management, and Arianna Wink, MBA/MSW student from the UB School of Management and UB School of Social Work. The team will collect \$10,000 for NIA (which rebranded overnight from HINT), a juice brand that provides freshly made, high-quality beverages using natural ingredients with no added sugars or artificial flavors. Panasci TEC provided coaching and mentoring to participants to prepare them for their pitches.

Selected from a record 41 first-round pitches and 13 semifinalists, five teams of finalists delivered long-form presentations to judges and spectators on April 23. At the final event on April 24, they delivered 5-minute pitches, 43North style, to a panel of judges and other viewers.

Other new venture ideas included a process that uses yeast bioengineering and natural plant products to produce small-molecule therapeutics; and an AI-powered mobile app that provides mental health support before, during and after therapy sessions.

In addition to the competition, organizers recognized the event's 25th anniversary while celebrating the future of entrepreneurship and innovation at UB. Guests enjoyed free food from nine local "foodpreneurs" linked with UB's entrepreneurial initiatives and engaged with the Queen

City Connectors, a group of regional leaders who drive economic growth in Western New York.

Hadar Borden, director, UB Startup and Innovation Colaboratory powered by Blackstone LaunchPad, and the Western New York Prosperity Fellowship program; and Thomas Murdock, clinical assistant professor of entrepreneurship, UB School of Management, served as masters of ceremony. Welcome remarks were given by Ananth Iyer, dean of the School of Management.

Judges for the final presentations were Lalit Goel, MUP '90, MBA '97, CEO, Aerostar Manufacturing; John Hannon, MBA '87, PhD, founding director, Brook T. Smith Launchpad, Clemson University; Rachel E. Jackson, BS '95, Esq., founder and general counsel, Realize Music, and managing partner, Jackson & Jackson LLP; Penelope Shihab Saidan, PhD, executive director for innovation and collaborative ventures, UB; and Trevor Titley, BA '12, founder, The Ticketing Co., and co-founder/CEO, Good Looks Foundation.

Panasci TEC was created in 2001 by the UB School of Management and the UB Office of Business and Entrepreneur Partnerships, and is funded with a \$1 million endowment from the late Henry A. Panasci Jr. to facilitate and promote the commercialization of UB-generated technologies. ♦

Kevin Manne is associate director of communications for the School of Management.

## CULTURAL IMMERSION

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received financial sponsorship from the King's ministry.

Multiple languages are spoken in Morocco including Berber, Arabic, French, Spanish and English. Many of the people encountered were multi-lingual. The signage on buildings, road signs, and businesses throughout the country are written in Berber, Arabic, and French acknowledging the presence and peaceful co-existence of multiple populations.

The communication barrier was highlighted due to my inability to speak or read any of the languages we encountered. The difficulty in speaking any of the above languages provided an innate sense of cultural humility unique vulnerability when interacting with others. Mosques, churches, and an ancient synagogue were all part of the tour and allowed for continued understanding of the similarities among the groups.

Moroccan pottery represents this unity with the Symbol of Solomon, a 6-point interlocking star embraced by ancient Islamic, Christian, and Jewish states that is often found at the center of the pieces. Designs also include the

Berber abstract tribal symbols that tend to be less geometric and arabesque patterns that are flowing and mimic the natural world of vines and flowers representing the Islamic ideas of infinity and the interconnections of life.

In addition to the multi-cultural design, Moroccan pottery symbolizes the intersections of the pure and natural environment utilizing natural lead-free clay found in the mountain rivers and colorful organic paint materials.

The service-learning trip was an opportunity for growth and transformation for all participants, emphasizing cultural humility and openness to learning about a peaceful Arabic nation with strong Islamic traditions.

The experience highlighted the importance of physical and spiritual wellness, through sharing meals, appreciating the natural and built surroundings, participating in service-learning projects, and in-depth interactions with leaders, citizens, professionals, and craftsmen.

This cultural immersion and education experience fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of an integrated Islamic society allowing for reflection on current beliefs and a model for the possibility of cross-cultural understanding and multi-cultural co-existence. ♦

Cheryl B. Lucas is clinical associate professor and assistant director of the Occupational Therapy Program.

## UB ANTHROPOLOGIST EXPLORES “SIDEWAYS MIGRATION” IN NEW BOOK

By Bert Gambini

**I**t's estimated that by 2016 as many as 400,000 French citizens had relocated to London.

And though there have always been French people living in London, the migration trend greatly accelerated in the early 21st century.

Migration studies look mostly into the experiences of people who move searching for a better life in a more prosperous country. But moving from one socially and economically well-off country to a similar one is a population shift that didn't even have a name until the publication of a recent book by a University at Buffalo researcher that broadens previous conceptions of emigration and transnationalism.

"I'm calling this 'sideways migration,'" says Deborah Reed-Danahay, professor and Jean Monnet Chair of the Department of Anthropology in the UB College of Arts and Sciences. Her book "Sideways Migration: Being French in London" (Routledge) explores the personal narratives and other factors that lead middle-class people to move to a country geographically close to and much like the one they left.

Why do middle-class French people make a sideways move to London? What led people to leave the familiarity of home to settle in a nearby, comparable location? The book pays particular attention to emplacement, a recent research trend that refers to "a sense of belonging."

Emplacement implies feeling at home, a social as well as a physical anchor. French citizens in the UK haven't simply moved there but "seek emplacement" both in London and back home in France. By studying this under-researched area of migration, Reed-Danahay provides novel ideas and insights into relocation, settling and belonging that are distinct from research investigating the experiences of refugees and poor economic migrants.

"Most of the work in migration studies has, historically, and rightly so, been on people who are motivated to move because of desperate circumstances," says Reed-Danahay. "But more and more, these issues of the relative privileges related to the middle-class demand that we look at different types of migration."

That meant first finding people to interview and hear their stories. Reed-Danahay contacted three organizations in London that served diverse segments of the French population, including those assisting individuals who followed spouses working in the UK. Another organization, which dates from the 19th century, serves those who can't afford medical care, which introduced Reed-Danahay to

people struggling, yet who chose not to return to France. The third and most surprising organization was an employment service based in London and partially funded by the French government and designed to help young people find employment in their new home.

"I had never heard of anything like this third organization, but through it, I got to know a lot of young people who arrived as I was starting my work and was able to follow over 10 years of research."

And it was an eventful 10 years, accompanied by Brexit—the UK's departure from the European Union (EU) following a 2016 referendum—and the COVID-19 pandemic, unforeseen events that brought a sea change to Reed-Danahay's original objective.

Brexit rocked what started as a project centered on the freedom of mobility in Europe, as people who previously had rights to live in London were suddenly subject to new laws.

"It was a cataclysmic shift for the French in the UK who had lived there a long time and hadn't needed to obtain UK citizenship," says Reed-Danahay. "The vagaries of the Brexit process,

and especially its delays, led me to prolong my research to see Brexit through to the end. But it also prompted me to understand that change would be a constant in my fieldwork, including the restricted mobility that accompanied the pandemic."

For four years, people weren't sure what would happen in the settlement between the UK and EU, an uncertainty that would meet the leading edge of the pandemic.

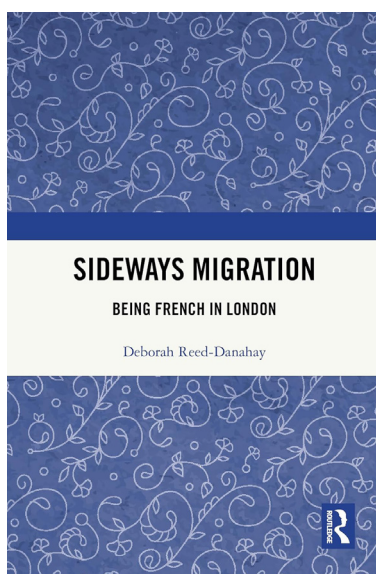
"I studied people who came after Brexit, who knew it was happening, while also interviewing people who had been in the UK and been affected emotionally by Brexit as their historical welcome turned into rejection," she says.

Reed-Danahay sees her book as bringing together strands of earlier scholarship in France, and later among former Vietnamese refugees in Texas.

"My first fieldwork project was among farmers in rural France," she says. "I can see that it was perhaps somewhat inevitable that I would eventually become engaged with studies of mobility and migration and connected issues of home, emplacement and dislocation."

"A thread woven through all my research projects, however, has also been that of power and social hierarchy, and this book reflects that long-standing interest." ♦

Bert Gambini is a news content manager for University Communications.





## A JOURNEY OF NEW HOPE TO SOUTH AFRICA

By Jaekyung Lee

I am grateful to both the World Education Research Association and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) for supporting my month-long visit to the University of Pretoria, South Africa. It gave me an unforgettable and invaluable opportunity to immerse myself in the research journey.

My experiences there were eye-opening and transformative. During my stay there, I have learned a lot about this beautiful nation and people. I met and collaborated with many great researchers, including Liesel Ebersohn, Funke Omidire, and other colleagues.

I also visited a variety of local schools, including urban and rural, public and private, mainstream and special schools, where I met many dedicated education leaders and practitioners who strived to transform students' lives.

As a Korean-American education researcher, I wanted to find out cross-cultural insights and policy lessons that South Africa can learn from Korea; despite many differences, both share historical trauma of oppression and resilience.

I have conducted research using TIMSS (IEA international assessment data) to examine protective factors that influence academic resilience among at-risk students. Then I gave my research talk entitled "Transforming Lives through Education: A Comparative Study of Korea and South Africa."

In this seminar, I enjoyed sharing my research and interacting with the local audience. Some key findings include: (1) Post-apartheid education inequality persists in South Africa where progress towards narrowing the racial/ethnic achievement gaps is reversed after the pandemic, and (2) South Africa lags behind Korea in achievement, not only because of higher adversities and lower assets but also due to more negative adversity effects (i.e., greater vulnerability) and less positive asset effects (i.e., less returns on education).

The key takeaway of my study implies "untapped potential", that is, "waste of talents and resources", possibly due to systemic inequalities and inefficiencies in South Africa. It calls for removing systemic barriers such as racism, conflict and corruption, while breaking the vicious cycle of poverty,

unequal education and unemployment.

Notwithstanding such challenges, I have seen some signs of resilience and hope for changes, particularly among educators and students. Systemic education reform requires a comprehensive set of policy enablers such as more funding, higher standards, better teachers, stronger accountability, more capacity-building and incentives. Further, it calls for collective efficacy with cultural shifts from deficit/status quo mindset to asset/growth mindset.

Thirty years ago, Nelson Mandela offered a powerful vision for new South Africa, that is, "one nation, one people



Jaekyung Lee (center) visiting Sunnyside Primary School in Pretoria, South Africa

with freedom and justice for all". This dream is still alive and resonates among people in the world as well as South Africa.

As Mandela said, education is the most powerful weapon to change the world. Like the 'Cape of Good Hope' which symbolizes the potential for a new route, we as educators and education researchers should hope and fight for the better world. "A dream is not a dream until it is shared by the entire community" (Khoi proverb). ♦

Jaekyung Lee is professor of counseling, school and educational psychology and former dean of the Graduate School of Education.



## SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL NETWORKS CRITICAL FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS

By Tiffany J. Nhan

Immigrants who have supportive social networks are better able to navigate the U.S. financial system and build wealth than immigrants without supportive social networks, according to a new study led by a University at Buffalo School of Social Work researcher.

The research showed supportive social networks help immigrants navigate language barriers, discrimination and other obstacles by providing financial resources and information.

Led by Yunju Nam, PhD, associate professor in the UB School of Social Work, the paper is available online ahead of a forthcoming print edition of the *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research*.

Nam's co-authors on the paper were Yingying Zeng of the University of Georgia; Margaret S. Sherraden of Washington University in St. Louis; Jin Huang of Saint Louis University; and Eun Jeong Lee, founder of the Asian American Resources and Information Network.

Nam and her co-authors interviewed 13 low-income Asian immigrants in Los Angeles to assess the participants' financial experiences, including access, management and asset-building.

After analyzing the interviews, the researchers identified five key themes, including structural barriers immigrants faced integrating into the U.S. economic system, how social networks could help or hinder their financial stability, and when government programs were most helpful.

Structural barriers that immigrants face include language barriers and limited knowledge about the U.S. financial system. "When I call 1-800 numbers, there are only two options: English and Spanish. I have no idea about where to go or what to do. [I can't find] documents in Korean," one participant said.

Additionally, limited knowledge about the U.S. financial system restricted access to financial services and caused significant losses. Some participants struggled with creating bank accounts and taking out loans and reported limited economic opportunity. "Well, there is no money to manage," one person said. "Within one month after I deposit money, every dollar goes out."

Supportive social networks could help by providing basic information on how to navigate U.S. financial systems, open bank accounts, remove institutional barriers and access direct economic benefits.

"We opened our own account through a friend of our son who is a bank manager," one subject shared. "[Without an endorsement they would] ask for many requirements."

Social networks were not always beneficial, though, as they sometimes depleted financial resources and increased mental distress. Some participants who loaned money to or relied on others to manage household expenses were negatively impacted by their social networks. "A traditional Taiwanese man always lets the wife control the [household] finance," said a participant. "That's totally a disaster. My wife spent \$2.5 million in 5 years."

Supportive social networks sometimes negatively impacted participants who were more dependent on their networks, which limited opportunities for financial independence.

For example, one participant reported she "knew nothing about money," but after her husband passed, she began to "learn more about money and manage money."

Participants who believed in their ability to control their own life were more likely to find solutions when social networks were unhelpful. These participants were more likely to find external information and resources.

One participant reported: "When we were here for the first few months our children wanted giving us money [sic] ... but I'm not used to that situation so I told my wife, 'Let's find some work because we cannot forever rely on them. These are just temporary help.'"

Government benefits were helpful as a last resort. When facing crises they could not overcome through their social networks or individual efforts, immigrants were able to rely on government programs to assist in income for basic needs, such as housing and food.

Overall, the study found supportive networks are crucial to immigrants' financial capability because they provide financial information and resources that help immigrants overcome language barriers, discrimination and other obstacles. Immigrants with non-supportive networks drained their limited economic resources.

The researchers say social workers should advocate for more government programs and funding for vulnerable immigrant populations.

"U.S. society has done little to support the economic and social integration of immigrants, despite their growing numbers," Nam says. "We must remember that immigrants have been a driving force behind economic growth and cultural enrichment. It's essential to stand with immigrants and combat xenophobia and prejudice." ♦

Tiffany J. Nhan is a Ph.D. student in the School of Social Work.

## INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF FACULTY AND STAFF

## SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

## Department of Architecture

**Joyce Hwang**, professor, completed a two-month residency as a visiting professor at the National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in Tainan, Taiwan. Hwang taught a workshop titled “Habitecture: Designing for Multispecies Environments,” in which undergraduate students conducted research on local species and collaboratively designed and built a multispecies habitat installation. Additionally, she delivered two public lectures at NCKU as well as one lecture for a seminar on designing ecologically-forward building facades, in addition to serving as an advisor for student projects. Hwang also conducted research in various cities in Taiwan regarding urban biodiversity, architecture, and landscape. This work in Taiwan was supported by the Office of International Education’s Faculty Grant in Global and International Research.

## Department of Urban and Regional Planning

**Daniel B. Hess**, professor, authored a book chapter “Understanding the Origin, Trajectories, and Future Prospects for Large Housing Estates in Europe” (in collaboration with Tiit Tammaru and Maarten Van Ham) in the book *Large Housing Estates Under Socialism: Experiences and Perspectives on Sustainable Development of Mass Housing Districts*. (The book is edited by Barbara Engel and Nikolas Rogge and published by K. Verlag Publishing (Berlin). Hess also published an article titled “From the Conflict Border: Urban Response to the Refugee Crisis in Poland Resulting from the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine” in *Town Planning Review* (vol. 95, no. 6), the oldest journal in the urban planning discipline. The latter work stems from his 2023-2024 academic stay in Poland at Kraków University of Technology, courtesy of a Fulbright Scholar Award. Most recently, Hess won a visiting professor award from the Baltic-American Freedom Foundation for teaching and research at the Institute of Architecture and Design at Riga Technical University, a longstanding partner of UB. During the first half of the spring 2025 semester, he was in residence at Riga teaching urban planning courses to European students and conducting research about access and mobility in Eastern European urban contexts. During his academic visit to RTU, Hess served as keynote speaker at the international conference “Quality of Living Environment and Affordable Housing for Urban Climate Resilience and Competitiveness.” He also delivered guest lectures at the RTU Institute of Architecture and Design about urban planning and sustainable development. Hess also participated in the RTU research project “Developing common spatial strategies for equitable and sustainable mobility in large-scale residential areas.”

## COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

## Department of Anthropology

**Colin Quinn**, assistant professor, conducted six weeks of archaeological fieldwork in Romania in 2024. His field research investigated the origins of inequality in Bronze Age Transylvania. Along with partners from University College Dublin (Jess Beck) and Muzeul Național al Unirii-Alba Iulia (Horia Ciugudean), Quinn directed excavations at an Early Bronze Age cemetery in the village of Râmeț. In 2024 he published “Settlement Ecology of Bronze Age Transylvania” in *Frontiers of Human Dynamics*.

## Department of Art

**Abdi Osman**, assistant professor of practice, is part of two group exhibitions titled, “Here: Pride and Belonging in African Art”, at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American Art, Washington, DC, from May 24, 2025 to Aug 30, 2026, and “Trans Futurity”, at Hartnett Gallery, at the University of Rochester, Rochester, NY from August 1, 2025- September 12, 2025. Osman was invited to participate and present in the Atelier ‘Gesture & Affect’ which takes place at the Institut des Études Avancées (IEA) in Nantes, France from April 10-16, 2025.

## Department of Chemistry

**Luis De Jesús Báez**, assistant professor, has been selected as a 2025 Young Observer by the U.S. National Committee for the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC). IUPAC is the world authority on chemical nomenclature and terminology, including the naming of new elements in the periodic table, as well as on chemistry digital standards, standardized methods for measurement and atomic weights. Established in 1977 to foster interactions with internationally acclaimed scientists in various fields, the IUPAC Young Observer Program introduces the work

of IUPAC to a new generation of distinguished researchers and provides them with an opportunity to address international science policy issues. De Jesús Báez and the nine other 2025 Young Observers will attend the 53rd IUPAC General Assembly and 50th World Chemistry Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in July 2025.

**Emanuela Gionfriddo**, associate professor, delivered a plenary lecture at the international workshop that concluded the multi-year networking and training effort of the Spanish National Network for Sustainable Sample Preparation, led by Marisol Cárdenas. The international workshop was organized by Verónica Pino and Javier Hernández Borges on March 26-28, 2025 at the Universidad de La Laguna in Tenerife, Spain.

## Department of Communication

Since 2021, **Junhao Hong**, professor, has published three academic books about media, communication and social change in China and Taiwan. In early 2025, he published a solo-authored book entitled *China’s Internet in the 2000s*. The book was published by Springer Nature. Previously, an edited book entitled *China in the Era of Social Media* was published by Lexington/Rowman & Littlefield in 2021, and a co-authored book entitled *Alternative Media and Taiwan’s Socio-Political Transformation 1970s-1990s* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2023.

In March 2025, **Yotam Ophir**, associate professor, and **Siwei Lyu**, Empire Innovation Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, participated in an international workshop in São Paulo, Brazil. The four-day long meeting, sponsored by the NSF and the FAPESP, brought together scholars from the US and Brazil for a collaborative work on topics in the cybersecurity domain, including the security of communication networks, artificial intelligence, information ecosystems, and information integrity in light of misinformation. According to the workshop organizers, the goal of the workshop was to explore the challenges and innovative solutions regarding cybersecurity in ways that benefit scientific collaboration between Brazil and the US, promote long-term relationships among the researchers, and create connections that facilitate broader cooperation networks.

## Department of Economics

**Alex Anas**, professor, made a moderated webinar presentation on March 3, 2025 titled “Downs’s Law Revisited: How and Why Expanding Roadways Reduces Congestion Despite Induced Travel,” sponsored by the Travel Behavior and Demand National Center of the Cockrell School of Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. The webinar was attended by 146 participants from six countries. Anas presented his paper “Pigouvian taxation, the Henry George Theorem in the presence of distortional taxation” at the 15<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of the Urban Economics Association, Berlin, Germany, March 28-29, 2025. He also chaired a session and served as discussant at the conference.

**Todd Pugatch**, associate professor, was part of ongoing evaluations of international education interventions. He presented findings from an evaluation of an early grade numeracy intervention in Malawi to the Malawi Ministry of Education (virtual, October 2024); presenting findings from baseline data collection evaluating a performance-based education financing intervention in Cameroon to the Cameroon Ministry of Education (virtual, December 2024); and visiting research sites of an early grade Arabic literacy intervention based on principles of cognitive science in the United Arab Emirates (January 2025). He also organized the Lakes Development Economics Workshop, a development economics conference for researchers in the upstate New York and Southern Ontario region, co-sponsored by UB Department of Economics and the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, held at UB on April 25, 2025.

## Department of Geography

**Adam M. Wilson**, associate professor, was invited to attend the 3rd Annual National Academy of Sciences Frontiers in Science Meeting in February 2025 in Kigali, Rwanda, where leading researchers gathered to explore groundbreaking scientific advancements. The meeting featured discussions on emerging technologies and interdisciplinary approaches to addressing global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable agriculture. Wilson presented *BioSCape*:

*Advancing Biodiversity Science Through Integrated Remote Sensing, Field Surveys, and International Collaboration* at the event. BioSCape is NASA's first biodiversity-focused airborne and field campaign, conducted in South Africa's Greater Cape Floristic Region. The project integrates remote sensing technologies such as LiDAR and imaging spectroscopy with extensive field surveys to generate high-resolution biodiversity data. By bridging critical spatial and temporal gaps in conservation research, BioSCape enables a deeper understanding of ecosystem functions and future biodiversity trends. A key aspect of Wilson's presentation was BioSCape's commitment to ethical and inclusive international collaboration. With equal representation from U.S. and South African researchers, the project avoids "parachute science" by prioritizing co-design with local experts. BioSCape also advances Open Science principles, ensuring that its data products are FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) to maximize long-term impact. The initiative exemplifies how cutting-edge technology and global partnerships can drive meaningful biodiversity conservation efforts.

#### Department of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies

**Senay Imre**, PhD candidate, attended the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in March 2025, at the invitation of the Federation of Women's Associations of Türkiye. This year's session was a momentous occasion, marking the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. The gathering was a significant platform where a diverse group of women's group representatives from Türkiye, along with international delegates, came together to discuss both national and global issues. Civil society discussions and negotiations were central to the dialogues, providing a unique opportunity to engage with a wide array of perspectives on gender equality. The CSW69 session brought together a remarkable assembly of global leaders, activists, and scholars to address pressing issues related to gender equality. The central theme of the session was "Push Back: How to Push Back the Push Back," reflecting the ongoing challenges to the rights of women and girls worldwide and the collective action needed to safeguard and advance these hard-won rights. This session also underscored the ongoing battle to address both setbacks and advancements since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.

#### Department of Media Study

**Laura Kraning**, assistant professor, has screened her latest short film "ESP" internationally in October 2024—at UltraCinema Experimental Film Festival in Mexico, Antimatter Media Art in Canada, with upcoming film festival screenings at the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival and Istanbul International Experimental Film Festival in Türkiye. "ESP" has also been honored with the Best Film Award in the Ribalta Animaata section of the Ribalta Experimental Film Festival in Vignola, Italy.

#### Department of Music

In May 2024, **James P. Currie**, associate professor, presented the paper "Queer Orpheus" in the conference "Music in Difficult Times: Global-Plural Temporalities," at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, and in November 2024 participated in the public conversation ("Queer Life, Disciplinary Life, and the Life of Musicology") in the Department of Music, at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada about his intellectual and artistic endeavors over the past two decades. His collaboration with the French-Singaporean composer Diana Soh, "I Linger Latently Beyond my Time," was premiered by the Ensemble Intercontemporain and the soprano Claron McFadden at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July of 2024 in France. And his article, "The End of American Musicology" appeared in Chinese in the venerable Chinese music history journal, *Music Research*, in the fall of 2024.

**Sungmin Shin**, associate professor of practice in guitar performance, completed a five-country concert and masterclass tour of Asia in March 2025. Shin presented his program "Generation One - Music of Immigration" for solo classical and electric guitars. Exploring a wide range of styles, genres and idioms, the core theme of the program deals with identity and authenticity as an Asian American performing artist living in the United States through the lens of the guitar. The five venues were Seoul, South Korea - Korea University; Kobe, Japan - Inoi Guitar School; Bangkok, Thailand - Mahidol University and Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University; Singapore - Singapore Classical Guitar Society and UB Singapore at SIM; and Manila, Philippines - University of Santo Tomas, PLM University, and University of the Philippines.

**Ming Tsao**, Birge Cary Professor of Music, had a portrait concert of his musical compositions on March 1, 2025 at the National Theater in Mannheim, Germany, with internationally renowned music ensembles. This concert was in preparation for his upcoming opera at the National Theater in 2027 titled "Mudan ting" which is a reworking of the Ming Dynasty Chinese Kunqu Opera.

#### Department of Physics

**Hao Zeng**, Moti Lal Rustgi Professor, has been awarded a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program grant to conduct research on novel semiconductor materials at the Institute of Science Tokyo in Japan in 2026. In collaboration with Hideo Hosono, a world-renowned materials scientist known for the discovery of iron-based superconductors and amorphous oxide semiconductors, this project aims to develop advanced techniques for high-quality thin films of chalcogenide perovskites. The goal is to address the "green gap" in solid-state lighting and foster long-term collaboration between UB and the Institute of Science Tokyo.

#### Department of Political Science

**Carla Martinez Machain**, professor, traveled to Stockholm, Sweden in October 2024 to serve as the faculty opponent in the dissertation defense of Emil Grünberg Petersson at the Swedish Defense University. The dissertation was titled "Strategy of Intervention: The Dynamics of External Use of Force in Civil War," and Martinez Machain's role involved summarizing and discussing the project as an expert in coercive uses of air power.

#### Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

**Henry Berlin**, associate professor of Spanish, was the 2023 winner of the La corónica International Book Award for his monograph, *Alone Together: Poetics of the Passions in Late Medieval Iberia*. The award was announced at the May 2023 International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University. The prize is awarded annually for the best monograph published on medieval Hispanic languages, literatures, and cultures.

**Paola Ugolini**, associate professor, gave an invited lecture titled "Sincerity in Early Modern Italy" at Ghent University, Belgium in September 2024.

#### Department of Sociology and Criminology

**Christopher R. Dennison**, associate professor, and **Yunmei (Iris) Lu**, assistant professor, each contributed a chapter to the *Handbook on Crime and Inequality* (2025), a UK publication featuring the work of scholars from around the world on the role of inequality in crime.

#### SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE

##### Department of Oral Biology

**Hyuk-Jae Edward Kwon**, assistant professor, was invited to give a lecture, entitled "Exploring dental, oral, and craniofacial birth defects through the lens of developmental epigenetics," as part of the Spring 2025 Special Lecture Series by Distinguished International Scholars at Kyungpook National University, Daegu, Korea. The lecture was conducted online via Zoom in June 2025.

**Frank Scannapieco**, SUNY Distinguished Professor, joined several hundred invited speakers to present at the annual Congress of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy (UMFCD) Bucharest, Romania, held at the Palace of Parliament, Bucharest on October 24-26, 2024. He spoke on the topic of "Progress in the understanding of oral-lung disease associations." UMFCD, a public health sciences university, is the largest and oldest institution of its kind in Romania. Scannapieco also met with a number of students and members of the dental faculty to discuss topics pertinent to research and educational collaborations.

#### GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

##### Department of Learning and Instruction

**Erin Kearney**, professor and chair, has been awarded a \$687,495 grant from the New York State Education Department for the Clinically Rich Intensive Teacher Institute, which is focused on bilingual education and English for speakers of other languages. **Tim Monreal**, assistant professor, is a co-PI. Monreal also received a \$70,000 grant from the National Academy of Education/ Spencer Foundation for his project, "Somos El Sur: Mapping the Collective Experiences and Dreams of Latinx Teachers Across the U.S. South."



**X. Christine Wang**, professor and senior associate dean for interdisciplinary research, has been awarded a \$10 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to establish the Center for Early Literacy and Responsible AI. This center will focus on harnessing AI to transform early literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. GSE co-PIs are **Christopher Hoadley**, **John Strong** and **Jaekyung Lee**, and local partners include Buffalo Public Schools and Erie 1 BOCES. In addition, Wang received a \$34,878 grant from the National Science Foundation to support the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS) 2024 Annual Meeting, specifically for the Doctoral Consortium and Early Career Workshop.

#### SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND APPLIED SCIENCES

*Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering*

**Caemallettin Basaran**, professor, gave an invited lecture on "Modeling corrosion fatigue in bcc metals with unified mechanics theory" in May 2025, at the EUROMECH Colloquium on Data-driven Mechanics and Physics of Materials, Gothenburg, Sweden. On May 26, 2025, Basaran gave an invited lecture on "What is Unified Mechanics Theory & Recent Advances" at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) in Copenhagen, Denmark.

*Department of Computer Science and Engineering*

**Siwei Lyu**, Empire Innovation Professor, has been appointed as a member of the Board of the International Media and Information Literacy Institute (IMILI). The institute, awaiting approval as a UNESCO Category 2 center at the National Open University of Nigeria, aims to advance media and information literacy (MIL) through global research and cooperation. This six-month appointment, issued on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria and IMILI, recognizes Lyu's contributions to fostering a peaceful society and promoting MIL. As a board member, Lyu will play a key role in shaping IMILI's strategic direction, advocating for MIL on national and international platforms, advising on research and policy development, and strengthening partnerships with governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society. IMILI's mission is to build a just and sustainable future by addressing the challenges of digital transformation and fostering intercultural knowledge.

**Junsong Yuan**, professor and director of the Visual Computing Lab, organized an NSF-sponsored workshop at the National University of Singapore in April 2025 titled US-Southeast Asia Regional Workshop on Responsible Artificial Intelligence. The workshop gathered 25 AI experts from Southeast Asia and 25 from the United States to discuss strategies for responsible AI research and deployment. As a follow-up event to the Second U.S.-Singapore Critical and Emerging Technology Dialogue, this important event aimed to foster collaboration, share research roadmaps, and explore how AI can drive economic growth and societal well-being. It served as a platform to align national AI policies and build partnerships across academia, government, and industry, and explore research collaboration between the National Science Foundation (NSF) and AI Singapore (AISG) through grant calls on responsible AI.

*Department of Mechanical Engineering*

**Deborah L. Chung**, SUNY Distinguished Professor, gave invited talks on "My 50-Year Journey in Science" to large audiences at five secondary schools in Hong Kong in December 2024 and January 2025. During this trip she also delivered lectures at universities in Hong Kong and China: Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, "Structural self-sensing provided by measuring the resistance, capacitance or inductance of the structural material, without sensor incorporation"; Hong Kong Polytechnic University, PAIR Distinguished Lecture (university wide), "Carbon fiber multifunctionality enabled by conductivity, dielectricity and inductance"; Chinese University of Hong Kong, Faculty of Engineering Distinguished Lecture, "My 50-year journey in science"; Tsinghua University, Shenzhen International Graduate School, Daikin Lecture, "Carbon fiber multifunctionality enabled by conductivity, dielectricity and inductance"; South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, China, "Carbon fiber multifunctionality enabled by conductivity, dielectricity and inductance"; Hunan University, Changsha, China, 3 lectures: (i) "Structural self-sensing provided by measuring the resistance, capacitance or inductance of the structural material, without sensor incorporation," (ii) "Carbon fiber multifunctionality enabled by conductivity, dielectricity and inductance," and (iii) "My 50-year journey in science"; Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China, "Carbon fiber multifunctionality enabled by conductivity, dielectricity and inductance." In February 2025, with Office of International

Education funding, Chung hosted a research collaborator from Poland: **Elzbieta Frackowiak** of Poznan University of Technology, who gave two talks during her visit for faculty and students in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences: (i) "Electrode/Electrolyte Interplay in Electrochemical Capacitor," and (ii) "Carbon Materials for Energy Storage Systems."

#### SCHOOL OF LAW

**Jorge Luis Fabra-Zamora**, associate professor, is the organizer of an international conference in June 2025, *The Human Right to Truth and Truth Commissions*, sponsored by the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, the School of Law, the Center for Information Integrity, the Department of History and the Office of International Education. The conference aims to evaluate whether this new right has led to positive changes in the political processes of transitional societies and the protection of victims' rights, while charting pathways for future research.

#### SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

*Department of Organization and Human Resources*

**Scott Seibert**, professor, and **Maria Krammer**, Donald S. Carmichael Professor of Organizational Behavior and chair, were invited Keynote Speakers at the 2024 Chilean Scientific Society of Psychology and Organizational Behavior, University of Santiago, Chile, October 10, 2024. Their talk was titled "The Role of Replication Studies in Addressing the Credibility Crisis in Organizational Research." Seibert and Krammer will also co-present at the 22<sup>nd</sup> European Congress of Work and Organization Psychology May 21, 2025 in Prague, Czech Republic: one research paper titled "A Psychological Theory of Career Shocks: A Research Agenda", and a second symposium on "Advancing Science through Replication Studies: The Why and How of Conducting and Publishing Replications." In February 2025, Seibert also hosted a research visit by Domingo Valero, lecturer in Psychology and Statistics at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Lucerne, Switzerland. His visit was partially supported by a Medicus Exchange Program grant from the Swiss Benevolent Society of New York.

#### JACOBS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

*Department of Medicine*

**John K. Crane**, professor, Division of Infectious Diseases, participated in his twelfth medical mission trip to Honduras in February 2025. This was his first time back in Honduras since the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the highlights of the trip was a "passing of the baton" ceremony in which Crane presented his otoscope-ophthalmoscope kit to Lupita Carrette, one of the Hope Center children who is now an adult studying to be a nurse practitioner. The two have known one another since Crane's first visit more than twenty years ago.

In March 2024 and November 2024, **Supriya D Mahajan**, research associate professor, Division of Allergy, Immunology & Rheumatology, was part of UB delegation to establish an International Research Partnership with Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT Bombay/IIT Delhi/IIT Kanpur/IIT BHU/IIT Goa) and Birla Institute of Technology (BITS) Goa to facilitate research and educational exchange to promote multidisciplinary research in the domain of biomedical applications relevant to global health. Mahajan was an invited speaker at ICFNA 2024 at Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani in Goa, India in Nov 2024, presenting on "Nano Neurotherapeutics for CNS Diseases." She was also an invited speaker at IIT-Bombay Nanostructures Engineering and Modelling (NEMO) Lab, Dept. of Metallurgical Engineering and Materials Science, IIT Bombay in November 2024, presenting on "CNS Drug Delivery—A Clinical Translational Approach." In March 2025, Mahajan participated in the UB-Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Berhampur workshop on "Convergence of Multifunctional Materials, Photonics, Bioscience and Artificial Intelligence (MPBA 2025)" at IISER Berhampur, Odisha, India. The topic of her presentation was "Artificial intelligence tools for Blood-Brain Barrier Theranostics."

*Department of Microbiology and Immunology*

**Chelsie Armbruster**, associate professor, has been elected vice president of the Urinary Tract Infection Global Alliance (UTIGA). UTIGA was founded in 2019 to bring together medical professionals, biomedical scientists, government agencies, and industrial partners across the globe that are dedicated to understanding and eradicating urinary tract infections. Founder Sheryl Justice had a longstanding goal of bringing together the UTI research community and patient advocacy groups, promoting collaboration, and recruiting and supporting early career researchers in



this field. She initially worked towards this goal by organizing a conference in 2013, which evolved into a well-attended biennial meeting. She then formed the society and established the board of directors in 2019, and they decided to expand to a full executive committee this year. Armbruster has been involved with the UTI conference and society since the very beginning. She attended the first two conferences in 2013 and 2016 when she was a postdoctoral fellow and was invited to speak at the 2019 conference as a new assistant professor. She then co-organized the 2022 conference and gave an opening keynote at the 2024 conference. During her three-year tenure as vice president, Armbruster will propose future directions and assist with new initiatives to better serve the UTIGA membership as well as patient populations. She will also coordinate with and provide oversight for internal communications between the executive committee, the board of directors, and other society committees. Armbruster will then transition to the role of president for an additional three years, during which time she will supervise the day-to-day operations of the society, chair all meetings of the Members, the Board, and the executive committee, oversee the biennial conference, execute new initiatives, and plan future directions.

#### Department of Neurology

**Gil Wolfe**, SUNY Distinguished Professor, served as a cochair for the International Congress of Neuromuscular Diseases held in Perth, Australia in late October 2024. He directed and gave a presentation during the conference's plenary session on disorders of neuromuscular transmission.

#### Department of Ophthalmology

**Steven J. Fliesler**, SUNY Distinguished Professor and vice-chair for research, co-chaired a platform session on "Lipids and Lipid-soluble Molecules in Retinal Health and Disease" and delivered a lecture, "A detour on the mevalonate pathway: Dolichol metabolism and the curious case of RP59" at the XXVI Biennial Meeting of the International Society for Eye Research. Buenos Aires, Argentina, in October 2024.

#### Department of Structural Biology

The laboratory of **Alex J. Vecchio**, assistant professor, in collaboration with researchers at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Lausanne, Switzerland published two papers in the field of *in silico* protein design using artificial intelligence and machine learning. "Computational design of soluble and functional membrane protein analogues" was published in *Nature* and "BindCraft: one-shot design of functional protein binders" can be found on bioRxiv. These works advance the field of *in silico* protein design and specifically the application of these methods to develop non-natural proteins with biological and potentially therapeutic activities.

#### SCHOOL OF NURSING

**Molli Oldenburg**, clinical associate professor and global initiatives coordinator, has received the 2025 IDEA award from Buffalo Business First. The annual IDEA Awards highlight champions of diversity and inclusion in their workplaces and in the community. As global initiatives coordinator, Oldenburg integrates culturally inclusive and mindful clinical practices in her approach to training future nurses and nurse practitioners. She was recently awarded a grant from the Elsie P. and Lucius B. McCowan Private Charitable Foundation to support the School of Nursing's Global Health Initiative, a program that immerses nursing students in cultural and clinical experiences. In January 2025, Oldenburg led a group of undergraduate and graduate nursing students on a trip to Belize. Working alongside Belizean nurses, community health workers, pharmacists and doctors, students gained firsthand insight into the challenges of public health and deepened their understanding of global health disparities. This experience not only enhanced their clinical skills but also broadened their perspectives on culturally responsive care. Oldenburg's paper, "The Experience of Participating in a Rural Two-Day Interprofessional Remote Area Medical Clinic Among Senior Undergraduate Nursing Students," was recently accepted publication in the *Journal of the American Nurses Association* - New York. Oldenburg also accompanied a Doctor of Nursing Practice student, **Rena Kessel**, to the AACN Doctoral Education Conference in January 2025 to present their collaborative research, "Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, Beliefs, and Barriers about Emergency Contraception Use Among Healthcare Providers Who Partake in Global Immersion Experiences for the Medically Underserved Women of Reproductive Age." The conference brought together faculty from across the country to discuss national trends in doctoral nursing education.

#### SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

##### Department of Epidemiology and Environmental Health

**Gloria A. Aidoo-Frimpong**, assistant professor, served as a co-investigator on an NIH Fogarty International Center-funded project through the Adolescent HIV Prevention and Treatment Implementation Science Alliance (AHISA) Small Collaborative Contracts. The project supported the creation of the Kumasi & Accra Partnership to Prevent Adolescent HIV (KAPPAH), a Ghana-based alliance focused on adolescent HIV prevention and treatment. As part of this initiative, Aidoo-Frimpong led training sessions on implementation science and client-centered care coordination (C4™), and co-facilitated stakeholder discussions to identify national priorities for adolescent HIV prevention. She is also preparing to launch a nationwide Youth HIV Social Innovation Challenge to support the development of youth-led strategies to help end HIV in Ghana.

**Kelly K. Baker**, associate professor and director of the Center for Climate Change and Health Equity, holds two National Institutes of Health research grants with a bioengineering company called GoDiagnostic to develop and test rapid point-of-care diagnostics and point-of-need surveillance tools that detect enteric bacteria that cause almost two billion cases of diarrhea and over one million deaths each year globally. The bacteria targeted by these diagnostics include the bacteria that causes cholera outbreaks, as well as bacteria that cause typhoid fever outbreaks, dysentery, and persistent watery diarrhea. Due to the severe risks from infection, the World Health Organization provides guidelines recommending antibiotic treatment of these types of infections, so diagnostic confirmation of infection is a critical step to improve efficacy of patient care as well as avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics for other types of diarrhea. The diagnostics Baker evaluates produce results in less than an hour and are designed for use in the most rudimentary of clinical and laboratory settings to ensure these tools meet the needs of the front-line workforce that needs them the most. Since joining UB in July 2024, Baker has traveled to Bangladesh and Kenya to work with partners at the International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh and the African Population Health Research Center on study implementation. These ongoing projects build on over 15 years of collaboration with these colleagues focused upon identifying interventions that prevent and control the spread of diarrheal disease."

**Kasia Kordas**, associate professor, was elected to the council of the International Society for Children's Health and the Environment. Her election reflects her "deep commitment to advancing children's environmental health," according to an organization representative. The society is made up of environmental health professionals who use research, training, policy, clinical care, community outreach and education to reduce the impact of adverse chemical, physical, biological and social influences on children's health.

#### Office of Global Health Initiatives

The **Office of Global Health Initiatives** (OGHI), the UB CoLab and the Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Data Science hosted the "Climate Communication Innovation Sprint" final competition on February 7, 2025. Teams comprised of undergraduate and graduate students from five different schools and colleges at UB came up with ideas about how to use AI to evaluate health risks and facilitate communication during climate-driven extreme weather events, such as wildfires and blizzards. The teams "pitched" their ideas to a panel of judges during the event, with winning teams earning prizes. The first-place team pitched developing an emergency alert app in partnership with local agencies and state government that would provide information on weather, travel bans, closings and other essential details in real time and in multiple languages. OGHI hosted their Global Health Research Roundtable for graduate students and faculty in the School of Public Health and Health Professions (SPHP) on Feb. 6, 2025. The event provided a setting for the faculty to learn about each other's work, network, and explore opportunities for collaboration. Student attendees learned about the faculty's past and ongoing initiatives in Kenya, China, India, Ethiopia, Costa Rica, and Bangladesh, as well as local work focused on refugee and immigrant populations. Additionally, students were able to connect with the faculty and explore potential future project opportunities. OGHI staff also presented information on funding opportunities, including the Art Goshin Global Health Fieldwork Awards which provides funding to SPHP graduate students to support research and service projects in low-resource settings both locally and internationally. OGHI, along with leadership from the Office of International Educa-

tion, the School of Public Health and Health Professions and the School of Nursing, have been meeting virtually with faculty and staff from the Red Cross College of Nursing, Department of Applied Statistics, and Office of International Affairs from Chung-Ang University, South Korea, to develop collaborative research initiatives. The faculty explored shared research interests and areas of expertise and are moving forward with developing collaborative work and programming. The engagement in collaborative work follows the recent signing of a MOU between the UB and Chung-Ang University and visits by delegates to each other's institutions.

#### SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

**Enock Azasu**, assistant professor, received \$50,000 from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, to conduct the study *Empowering Marginalized Youth in Ghana's Slums: A Participatory Video Intervention to Destigmatize Suicide and Enhance Help-Seeking Behavior* from 11/1/2025 – 10/31/2026. In addition, Azasu recently concluded the Ghana Youth Mental Health Survey 2024, an impactful project aimed at capturing a comprehensive understanding of adolescent mental health across Ghana. Modeled after the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in the U.S. but with an expanded focus on mental health, this project provides valuable data on the psychological well-being, risk factors, and protective influences among Ghanaian youth. Supported by a Rapid Grant for Global and International Research, Azasu and his team conducted surveys with nearly 2,000 junior high school students from diverse regions, including Greater Accra, Volta, Ashanti, Eastern, and Northern Ghana. The study revealed significant levels of anxiety, depression, and suicide ideation, while also identifying critical social determinants, such as family dynamics, socioeconomic challenges, and peer relationships, that impact mental health. Findings from the survey will guide the development of targeted mental health programs and policy recommendations that address the unique needs of Ghanaian adolescents. Azasu is collaborating with local schools, mental health organizations, and community leaders to ensure that these insights translate into culturally relevant, sustainable interventions. This project exemplifies UB's commitment to global engagement and evidence-based solutions, fostering wellness and resilience in underserved communities around the world.

**Betsy Bowen**, associate professor, had two invited international presentations in November 2024: "Measuring and addressing recovery capital. A Curiae Court Speaker Series" (virtual); and "An introduction to recovery capital and the MIRC." at Klub Absolut and Palacky University Olomouc, Olomouc, Czech Republic (virtual).

**Clara M. Bradizza**, professor; **Paul R. Stasiewicz**, professor and Janet B. Wattles Endowed Chair; **Brad K. Linn**, doctoral alum; and colleague **J. Zhao** presented the poster, *Cognitive behavioral therapy for alcohol use disorder results in significant reduction in World Health Organization drinking risk levels* at the World Psychiatric Association 2025 Regional Congress: Embracing the complexity of mental health: Neuroscientific foundations and novel interventions, in Alexandria, Egypt.

**Filomena Critelli**, associate professor and associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion, and director of undergraduate studies, directed an education abroad program over the spring break titled "Costa Rica: UN SDGs, Human Rights and Global Action." Students visited a range of sites such as an agroforestry farm, an indigenous community, an Afro-Costa Rican Cultural Center, and a women's organization and engaged in service at a child serving NGO. A highlight of the trip was a visit to the School of Social Work at the Universidad Latina in San Jose where students engaged in an exchange about social work in their respective countries.

**Susan A. Green**, clinical associate professor, gave an invited presentation on *Creating trauma-informed organizations: What does it take?* at the Trauma-Informed Care Policy Forum in Continuing Care Homes in Edmonton, Canada in October 2024.

**Ogechi Kalu**, doctoral student, was invited by the Sexual Violence and Research Initiative to be a course contributor for African Clergy: *Faith and GBV Community of Practice*, focusing on faith and violence against children, and a webinar panelist addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and connections with faith-based institutions as informal support in February 2025.

**Isok Kim**, associate professor, received \$7902 from the Karen Society of Buffalo (lead)/Asian American Federation (prime) to conduct the study, *Combating substance abuse problems in Karen Community using the Transforming Impossible into Possible (TIP®) Program*, from Nov. 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025.

**Laura Lewis**, clinical associate professor and assistant dean for global partnerships, gave a webinar on February 27, 2025, at Columbia University with her colleague M. Akilova. The webinar, *Decolonizing International Social Work*, brought together educators, practitioners, and scholars for a collaborative discussion on the integration of global approaches and the urgent need to decolonize international social work education.

**Nadine Shaanta Murshid**, associate professor, has participated in discussions of her recent book *Intimacies of Violence: Reading Transnational Middle Class Women in Bangladeshi America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2024). In November 2024, Murshid engaged in a book talk at the Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, USA, discussing the themes of transnational feminism, gendered violence, and class dynamics explored in *Intimacies of Violence*. This was followed by a series of book talks in Bangladesh in January 2025, beginning with an event hosted by Bookwork on January 3, 2025, which brought together local readers and scholars. On January 9, 2025, Murshid presented at Brac University in Dhaka, engaging in an academic dialogue on the intersections of class, gender, and violence in transnational contexts. The final academic book talk in Bangladesh took place on January 16, 2025, at Jahangirnagar University in Savar, where the author further explored the book's themes with students and faculty. Drik Bangladesh hosted the last book talk on January 22, 2025, where Murshid discussed how certain bodies become "unrapeable." In addition to these book talks, Murshid participated as a panelist at the event *Rape and Sexual Violence in Bangladesh*, organized by the Feminist Alliance of Bangladesh. This panel provided a platform to discuss the systemic issues of rape and sexual violence in Bangladesh, drawing on insights from *Intimacies of Violence* to analyze gendered power dynamics and their transnational implications. Murshid presented their work *Biplob in Bangladesh: The July 2024 Uprising and its Afterlives* at the Association for Asian Studies Conference in Columbus, Ohio in March 2025. This presentation examined the student led movement that led to the fall of the government in August 2024, socio-political upheaval in Bangladesh and its lasting impacts, contributing to broader conversations on South Asian politics and social movements.

**Yunju Nam**, associate professor, received \$3,000 from the UB Asia Research Institute, for "Are we ready for the next disaster?": *Perspectives of Korean American Community Leaders and Service Providers in the New York Metropolitan Area*, November 1, 2024 – October 31, 2026. She also had two presentations at the 29th Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR), Seattle, WA, in January 2025: an oral presentation with a colleague (M. Hu) on *Financial capability and asset building among refugees in the United States: Qualitative evidence from refugees resettled in a Northeastern city*, and a poster session on *Access to the COVID-19 relief programs among Korean small business owners in the New York Metropolitan Area*, with several colleagues (S.M Kim, E.J. Lee, and Nancy J. Smyth, professor).

**Nancy J. Smyth**, professor, and **Svetlana Blitshteyn**, clinical associate professor of neurology in the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, published "Language Matters: What Not to Say to Patients with Long COVID, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and Other Complex Chronic Disorders" in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22(2).

#### UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

**Christopher Hollister**, librarian, presented a paper at the Second Global Summit on Diamond Open Access in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2024. His presentation, "Aligning Diamond Open Access and a Scholarly Community's Values," was featured in the summit's Open Science in the South program. The paper detailed actions taken by the editors of the journal *Communications in Information Literacy* to embrace the principles of diamond open access and to bring information literacy scholarship into greater alignment with the field's core values. ♦

## IN MEMORIAM

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In 2002, Wölck was named the first honorary member of the European Research Center for Multilingualism.

A recipient of multiple grants and fellowships from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Wölck served as institutional liaison for UB with DAAD and later was among the first to be named a DAAD Research Ambassador to promote research collaborations between the US and Germany.

Wolfgang Hans-Joachim "Wolf" Wölck was born September 19, 1932, in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia). He received a PhD from Goethe University Frankfurt in English and linguistics in 1963.



Wölck held appointments at Albert Ludwig University Freiburg, 1964-1965, and Indiana University Bloomington, 1966-1969, before joining the Linguistics Department at UB as an associate professor in 1970. The department had been founded a year earlier after a gestation period of thirteen years as a program within UB's Anthropology Department.

Wölck was promoted to full professor in 1975 and SUNY Distinguished Service Professor in 1997. He chaired the UB Linguistics Department from 1977 through 1987 and again from 1989 through 1991.

He also served as director of UB's Latin American Studies Program from 1972 through 1976. After retiring in 2001, Wölck continued teaching and advising students until 2012.

Professor Emeritus Stephen C. Dun-

nett, who founded the English Language Institute (ELI) and served as UB's first Vice Provost for International Education, said that Wölck was an early and strong advocate for internationalizing UB.

"A powerful voice for international engagement, Wolf helped us establish the ELI in 1971 and advocate for its role in attracting international students to UB," Dunnett said.

"Wolf's innovative research in sociolinguistics in South America and Europe helped attract many excellent international graduate students to UB and fostered important institutional connections around the world," he recalled.

"In the ELI's early days, Wolf played a key role in our winning a State Department contract for the Soviet Teachers Program (1975-1977), involving the exchange of language teachers between the USSR and US over three summers—at a high point in US-Soviet relations that unfortunately did not last," Dunnett said.

"A charismatic and compelling teacher, Wolf was also an extremely generous mentor and friend to countless students over the years, frequently inviting them to his home for a meal and festive hospitality," Dunnett added. "It was at such a meal at Wolf's home that I got to know him and his lovely wife Carolyn back in 1971; from that day, we were great friends."

A campus memorial service for Wolfgang Wölck is being planned for September. ♦

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## IN MEMORIAM: WOLFGANG WÖLCK

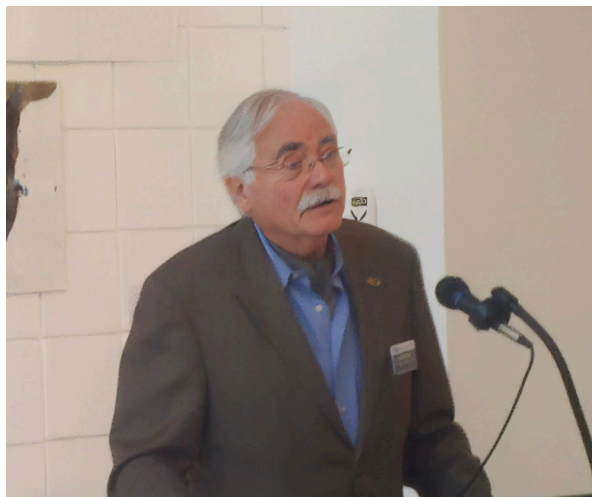
**W**olfgang “Wolf” Wölck, SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in the Department of Linguistics, died on April 11, 2025. He was 92.

A pioneering sociolinguist with a specialization in contact linguistics, Wölck is credited with a series of landmark innovations in the field; in addition, he made important contributions to UB’s internationalization.

His dissertation examined the sociophonetics of the Scots dialect of Buchan, Aberdeenshire, based on field research carried out in the early 1960s during a time when neither sociolinguistics nor sociolinguistic fieldwork were established concepts.

He introduced the community profile, a method for determining the composition of samples for sociolinguistic studies of primarily geographically defined communities.

His innovative work also included



the discovery of the phenomenon of ethnolects, neighborhood-level varieties that were perceived well into the 1980s by Buffalonians as phonetic traces of the varieties of English spoken by the various immigrant communities of the 19th century.

Wölck led a longitudinal survey of Quechua-Spanish bilingualism from 1968-96 that was funded by the Peruvian government. This research resulted in policy recommendations for the standardization of Peruvian Quec-

hua, for which Wölck developed an original grammar, and the language received official status in 1975.

With his collaborator Peter Nelde, a prominent Belgian linguist, Wölck was commissioned by the European Union to study the effects of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages throughout the EU membership countries.

Their extensive work to document minority languages in isolated parts of the continent—for example, Basque and Romani—was influential on EU policy.

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John J. Wood, Editor