

Magazine

SUMMER 2025

BEYOND THE CLINIC:

WNE Students Bring Compassion and Care to Ghana



Summer '25

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WNE

Magazine

WNE: The Magazine is published for alumni, parents, and friends of Western New England University.

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Build a Brighter Tomorrow

Your time at Western New England University (WNE) shaped your future. Now, you have the opportunity to shape the future for generations of students to come.

Imagine the impact of your legacy: a student who receives a scholarship because of your generosity, a breakthrough innovation made possible by your support, or an academic program that thrives because you chose to give back.

By including WNE in your estate plans, you can make a lasting difference—one that ensures future students have access to the same transformative education you experienced.

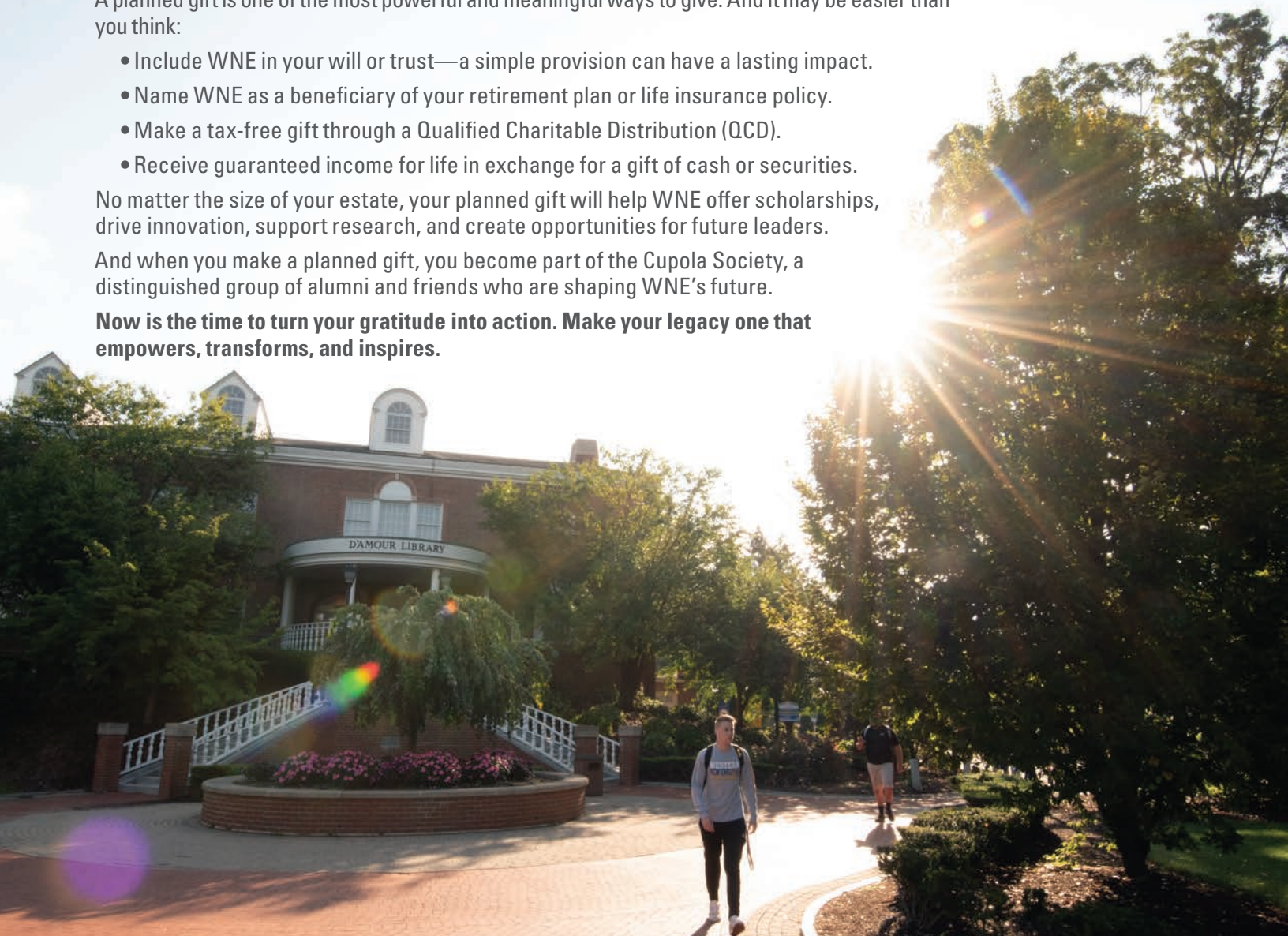
A planned gift is one of the most powerful and meaningful ways to give. And it may be easier than you think:

- Include WNE in your will or trust—a simple provision can have a lasting impact.
- Name WNE as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy.
- Make a tax-free gift through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).
- Receive guaranteed income for life in exchange for a gift of cash or securities.

No matter the size of your estate, your planned gift will help WNE offer scholarships, drive innovation, support research, and create opportunities for future leaders.

And when you make a planned gift, you become part of the Cupola Society, a distinguished group of alumni and friends who are shaping WNE's future.

Now is the time to turn your gratitude into action. Make your legacy one that empowers, transforms, and inspires.



Contact Dean Hickey, Vice President for University Advancement, at **413-796-2210** or dean.hickey@wne.edu to discuss your options.

Your legacy starts today. *Let's build the future together.*

Download your **FREE** Estate Planning Guide



Message from the Chair of the Board of Trustees

BY NICHOLAS LAPIER '90



Dear Golden Bear Alumni,

As the academic year comes to a close, Western New England University (WNE) stands at a meaningful moment of reflection and renewal. This summer, we celebrate both the achievements of the Class of 2025 and the conclusion of President Robert E. Johnson's tenure, which will end on August 1. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I offer our sincere appreciation to Dr. Johnson for his visionary leadership and lasting contributions to our University community.

When I stood before our newest graduates at Commencement this May, I could not help but recall sitting in those very same seats years ago as a graduating senior—hopeful, proud, and filled with anticipation for what was to come. I had no way of knowing then just how much Western New England would shape my path, or how often the Golden Bear would find its way back into my life.

That is the power of this community. Whether you graduated this spring or

decades ago, WNE is a part of you—and you are forever a part of WNE.

President Johnson understood this deeply. During his five years at the helm, he positioned Western New England at the forefront of innovation, launching new academic centers and strategic partnerships that prepare students not just for their first job, but for a lifetime of change. He led the University through the COVID-19 pandemic with resilience and clarity, expanded access to mental health training, reimagined our general education curriculum, and helped usher in the largest incoming class in our history. His focus on adaptability, inclusion, and purpose has left a meaningful and enduring legacy.

As we look to the future, the Board of Trustees is actively engaged in ensuring a seamless leadership transition. We recently appointed Michael B. Alexander as our interim president and a national search for Dr. Johnson's successor will soon be underway. The Board has the utmost

confidence in the strength of our mission, the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the ongoing support of alumni like you.

To our more than 47,000 Golden Bear alumni: you are our greatest ambassadors. Your successes, your stories, and your continued engagement are the heartbeat of this institution. Thank you for all you do to uplift Western New England—and each other.

Go Bears!

Warmly,
Nicholas LaPier

Chair, Board of Trustees
Western New England University

CAMPUS NEWS

For the latest news from Western New England University, visit wne.edu/news.



COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING RECEIVES \$850,000 TO LAUNCH CENTER FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING SYSTEMS

Western New England University's (WNE) College of Engineering has received an \$850,000 federal earmark, secured by Congressman Richard E. Neal, to establish the Center for Advanced Manufacturing Systems (CAMS). The center will serve as a regional hub for advanced manufacturing training and innovation, positioning WNE as a leader in industry-university collaboration.

"We are incredibly grateful to Congressman Neal for his support in securing this funding," said President Robert E. Johnson. "CAMS will enhance our students' educational experience, equipping them with in-demand skills while keeping WNE at the forefront of innovation."

CAMS will offer students hands-on experience with state-of-the-art equipment and expand the college's educational offerings, preparing graduates for immediate job placement. It becomes the third innovation hub within the

College of Engineering, joining Photonics and Quantum Technologies.

The center will also foster partnerships with local manufacturers—such as Advance Welding, Nitor Corporation, American Steel and Aluminum Corporation, and Mestek, Inc.—to provide internships, research, and workforce development opportunities. Outreach to K-12 students will also help spark early interest in STEM careers.

"This investment will provide critical skills and certifications that meet today's workforce demands," said Dean S. Hossein Cheraghi. "We'll be able to offer additional programs and experiential learning for students and professionals alike."

The funding was included in the 2024 fiscal year federal spending bill, as part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Congressionally Directed Spending.



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY EXPANDS PATHWAYS TO A DOCTORATE THROUGH FLEXIBILITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

The WNE Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program is meeting the evolving needs of today's students through expanded access and innovative delivery models designed to remove traditional barriers to advance healthcare education.

In November 2024, the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences launched a Distance Learning Cohort (DLC), providing a hybrid model that allows students to complete most coursework online while still engaging in essential, hands-on learning experiences. With synchronous virtual classes held during standard weekday hours and local Level 1 fieldwork placements, students can remain in their communities while pursuing a doctoral education. The program also includes periodic on-campus immersions at WNE's Springfield campus, ensuring students benefit from face-to-face instruction and state-of-the-art facilities.

Building on this momentum, in January 2025, WNE partnered with both Greenfield Community College (GCC) and Berkshire Community College (BCC) to create a streamlined 3+3 dual-degree pathway. Qualified GCC and BCC Allied Health graduates will have direct admission into WNE's OTD program. Students who complete their associate degree can then transfer to WNE to finish a bachelor's degree in health studies or psychology. They can then transition directly into the three-year doctoral program—earning a doctorate in just six years.

Together, these initiatives reflect WNE's commitment to developing occupational therapy professionals by offering more flexible, affordable, and accessible routes to doctoral education while maintaining the academic rigor and experiential training required to prepare students for meaningful careers in healthcare.

LAW PROFESSOR NICOLE BELBIN HONORED WITH 2024 AALS PRO BONO & ACCESS TO JUSTICE AWARD



The WNE University School of Law proudly announces that Associate Professor Nicole Belbin '09/L'20 has received the 2024 Association of American Law Schools (AALS) Pro Bono & Access to Justice Section

Emerging Leader Award. The honor was presented on January 9, 2025, at the Association of American Law Schools' Annual Meeting in San Francisco, Calif.

Professor Belbin, who also serves as associate dean for library and information resources, has led numerous impactful community programs since 2022, including *Intro to Law*, *Law School for a Day*, *Future Lawyers of Springfield*, and the *Judicial Youth Corps*. These initiatives provide transformative opportunities for middle and high school students, encouraging interest in legal careers and promoting diversity in the profession.

She has also helped forge strong ties between the University and the local legal community, strengthening support systems and expanding

pro bono efforts. In 2023, the School of Law was named a finalist in Bloomberg Law's Law School Innovation Program thanks in part to her work.

Professor Belbin began her career at WNE University School of Law nearly two decades ago as a library assistant. Balancing work and family, she earned her law degree in 2020. Her dedication continues through volunteer work with the Massachusetts Bar's Dial-A-Lawyer program and advocacy for veterans.

Her forthcoming article, *Aln't Nothing Like the Real Thing*, on artificial intelligence (AI) use by pro se litigants, will be published in the *Charleston Law Review*.

"Opening doors for others is at the heart of this work," Belbin said. "It's about building a more inclusive and just community."

RAY MCCARTHY RETURNS TO WNE AS VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

WNE is proud to announce the appointment of Raymond (Ray) McCarthy, CPA, as vice president for finance and administration, effective July 7, 2025. A two-time Golden Bear with a BSBA in Accounting (1986) and an MBA in Healthcare (1998), McCarthy brings more than 30 years of financial leadership experience and a lifelong connection to the University.

McCarthy spent nearly three decades at Baystate Health, most recently serving as senior vice president, chief financial officer, and treasurer. There, he oversaw a \$2.4 billion integrated health system and led financial operations for multiple hospitals, healthcare services, and insurance entities. His expertise spans strategic planning, capital financing, treasury and investments, and cost management.

McCarthy has also held leadership roles at Yale New Haven Health, CIGNA Healthcare, and KPMG. A former WNE trustee and chair of the Audit Committee, he has long been a trusted advisor to the University.

During his student years, McCarthy served as a resident advisor and captain of the men's soccer team. He met his wife, Sarah '88, on campus in 1986. They have lived in Longmeadow for 30 years and have two daughters.

"Returning to WNE feels like coming full circle," McCarthy said. "I'm honored to help lead the University toward a financially sustainable and student-centered future."



TARA GREALIS HONORED WITH 2025 TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD



Tara Grealis '01/G'09, professional educator of accounting, has been named the 2025 recipient of the Teaching Excellence Award, recognizing a full-time faculty member who models instructional

excellence, employs innovative teaching methods, and makes significant contributions through cocurricular engagement and mentorship. The winner is selected through a process that includes nominations, community support statements, and review by a committee of faculty, students, and alumni.

A full-time faculty member in the College of Business since 2015, Professor Grealis brings more than 15 years of industry experience—including service as CFO of a publicly traded bank—to her teaching. She is known for blending real-world insight with classroom instruction, preparing students to thrive in a competitive job market.

Beyond the classroom, Grealis is an active mentor and advisor, working closely with students in academic competitions, the accounting association, Beta Alpha Psi, and various career-focused initiatives. Her students and colleagues praise her for creating an engaging, supportive learning environment that inspires confidence and critical thinking.

"I am truly honored to receive this award," said Grealis. "Supporting our students as they grow into confident professionals is the most rewarding part of my role."

Grealis was formally honored at the 2025 Commencement ceremony.



What if students could step into a historic battlefield, practice life-saving medical procedures, or master engineering skills without ever leaving campus? Thanks to the launch of Western New England University's (WNE) XR Lab, these immersive experiences are now a reality.

Housed in the D'Amour Library, the XR Lab is designed to bring Extended Reality (XR)—an umbrella term for virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR)—into the classroom. The lab equips students and faculty with innovative tools that are transforming industries worldwide, from healthcare and education to business and engineering.

A Legacy of Visual Storytelling

Link To VR, co-founded by WNE alumnus Edward (Ed) Zemba '08 and his brother Giuseppe Zemba with the support of Ed's son, Kyle Zemba '24, represents the evolution of a family legacy in visual media that spans over half a century and three generations. The story began with Robert Charles Photography, a pioneering analog photography business established by Ed's father, Robert Charles Zemba. The company earned a reputation for innovation and excellence in capturing visual narratives,

transitioning seamlessly into the digital era with award-winning photography and videography.

This heritage of adapting to the newest technology and redefining industry standards has laid the groundwork for Link To VR's bold leap into spatial computing, VR, and artificial intelligence (AI).

Forging Innovation Together: WNE and Link To VR Unite

Building on its foundational expertise, WNE and Link To VR's work is directly responding to Governor Maura Healey's call to establish Massachusetts as a leader in AI. Link To VR's leadership in immersive media, collaborating with top-tier industry giants like Dell Technologies, NVIDIA, Intel, and Microsoft, fuels the company's ongoing mission to "Reimagine the Possible," aligning perfectly with WNE's commitment to fostering innovation and preparing students for future-forward industries.

This shared vision has culminated in the creation of the XR Lab at the University. The lab serves as a hub for experiential learning and innovation, offering students access to and training with the latest advancements in extended reality technology.

A Competitive Edge in the Digital Era

"Learning through extended reality gives students a competitive edge in a world where these immersive technologies are transforming industries," said Marcus Davis, Ph.D., dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and director of the XR Lab. "Whether it's healthcare, education, engineering, or business, XR equips students with the tools to innovate, solve real-world problems, and shape the future of digital interaction."

In its initial phase, the XR Lab will serve two key functions:

- **Enhancing Education**—Faculty can use XR to create interactive simulations that transport students beyond the classroom, whether it is exploring world-famous museums, analyzing distant planets, or stepping into historical moments.
- **Training for Real-World Applications**—Students can practice job interviews through soft skills training platforms, fly drones in virtual construction site visits, or develop skills in AI and spatial computing—abilities increasingly in demand across industries.

Expanding Horizons for Future Creators

The XR Lab exemplifies the transformative potential of the University's partnership with Link To VR, equipping the next generation of creators and innovators with tools to lead in the fields of immersive media and spatial computing. This collaboration bridges WNE's dedication to academic excellence with Link To VR's expertise, continuing a legacy of visual storytelling while forging new pathways in technology and education.

**"With XR,
students don't
just study
concepts—they
live them."**

"Extended reality is revolutionizing education by immersing students in hands-on, experiential learning," said Zemba. "With XR, students don't just study concepts—they live them. This technology turns abstract ideas into interactive, real-world experiences, fostering deeper understanding and engagement. It is a game-changer for how we prepare the next generation for tomorrow's challenges." Zemba's company, founded in 2016, assists organizations in adopting XR solutions for marketing, corporate events, and workforce training. He sees WNE's XR Lab as a pivotal hub not just for students, but for industries across the region.

"I am beyond excited to partner with my alma mater to establish the XR Lab at WNE," Zemba added. "But I am even more excited about how the lab will serve as a hub where industries in our region can come together, learn from each other, and position western Massachusetts as a destination for innovation and business growth."

The Future of XR at WNE

With its launch, the XR Lab marks a major milestone in WNE's commitment to blending academic excellence with real-world impact. The space will foster new research, hands-on learning, and industry



collaborations, ensuring that WNE students are at the forefront of the digital revolution.

Together, Link To VR and Western New England University are not just imagining the future—they are building it.

Alumni and industry partners are invited to visit the XR Lab and explore opportunities

for collaboration. Whether you are an entrepreneur, educator, or professional interested in XR's potential, there is a place for you in this evolving ecosystem.

For more information, visit wne.edu/xr-lab or stop by D'Amour Library, Room 219. 🐾



CUB CLOSE-UP

Simon Banas

Briana K. Strobel '17/G'23

A senior civil engineering student and captain of the Steel Bridge Team, Simon Banas grew up in Somers, Conn., with a love for building things and playing hockey. He used both those interests to excel as a student at WNE.

Tell us why you chose Western New England University (WNE)...

I've always been interested in building things—structures, bridges, you name it. As a kid, I was always curious about how things were built and how they held up. As I got older, I developed a strong interest in how things were designed, particularly big structures like bridges and buildings. I've always been the type to look at something and wonder, how was this put together? It always sparked my curiosity. So, when it was time to start looking at schools, I was searching for somewhere that I could pursue a degree in civil engineering, and WNE felt like the right fit. It was close to home, and the engineering program was solid, so I felt that coming here would provide the foundation I needed to dive into the career I was looking for.

What is the Steel Bridge Team, and what does competition look like?

The Steel Bridge Team is a group of students with the collective goal of designing and

building a bridge that can face the rigors and rules of the American Society of Civil Engineers' (ASCE) annual competition. It's not just about making the bridge look good—it's about ensuring it's structurally sound and capable of withstanding the weighted load tests. This process kicks off every fall when we create the initial design of the bridge on the computer. Throughout the first semester we work diligently to fundraise and collect parts because we begin the building process as soon as we get back from winter break.

We create detailed plans and drawings for each part of the bridge, which we send to the machine shop here on campus. We work closely with them as they help prepare the pieces for us to weld. As a team, this process requires a lot of coordination because we spend the bulk of our time carefully assembling the parts, making sure everything fits precisely, just like a big puzzle.

For the competition this year, we went to UMass Amherst in April for the regional

round. Per regulations, all components are required to fit into a modular box, where the bigger parts of the bridge are pre-assembled and welded together. The goal is to finish assembling the bridge at the event within the 30-minute time frame. As a team, we must remain focused on what we're doing because even small mistakes—like dropping a bolt—can cost our team points. It's the perfect blend of engineering, competition, and teamwork.

How did you get involved with the team?

I had grown up playing hockey at a competitive level my whole life, and when I first got to WNE, that's what I was focused on doing. When that didn't work out, I felt lost. I quickly realized that life at WNE wasn't just about one thing—it was about exploring new opportunities and stepping outside my comfort zone.

It was the start of my sophomore year, and I wasn't sure where I fit in, so I made it my goal to join a club. At the time, a classmate



of mine who was the president of the Steel Bridge Team invited me to a meeting, and although I was hesitant at first, I quickly realized I could learn something there. The more time I spent with the team, the more I connected with the people and the work.

A lot of members of the team come from sport backgrounds. For me, it fused the two things I love the most together. Joining the Steel Bridge Team made engineering a competition. It's a fast-paced environment where you're working with a team while racing against the clock—it felt like hockey in that way.

As captain of the team, how would you describe this experience?

Rewarding. Engineering was no longer about sitting at a desk drawing designs; it was about getting your hands dirty and learning through experience. It wasn't about the grades anymore; it became about understanding the material and applying it to real-world problems.

Through this experience, I've learned how to manage not only the technical side of a project but also the interpersonal aspect of leadership—how to motivate people, be patient, and build a team that works together under pressure. It's not only about the competition—it's bigger—it's about building something together, learning how to be leaders, and working as a team. The process has taught us so much about

problem-solving, responsibility, and communication. Those lessons go beyond engineering; they apply to everything we will do in the future.

Being captain was a balancing act that taught me crucial leadership and teamwork skills that will serve me in the professional world. In this role, I was responsible for guiding the team through challenges, making decisions under pressure, and ensuring everyone's safety. I taught my teammates how to use saws, grinders, and even welding equipment, all of which can be dangerous if not overseen properly, so I made sure everyone knew exactly how to use them.

I've also learned that being a leader can be overwhelming at times, especially when things get stressful, but I genuinely enjoyed it because it pushed me to improve. In the end, even when it got to be a lot, I was always able to reflect on how the team came together. We all shared the experiences of late nights building, drilling, welding, and testing, and because of that, the team became a close-knit group. Those memories of working together—especially the tough ones—no doubt will be what sticks with us the most.

Outside the Steel Bridge Team, how has WNE helped you to prepare for life after college?

When I think about where I started as a first-year student and where I am now, it's a huge transformation. While I've certainly grown a lot during my time here, I still have a lot of learning to do, especially

with how quickly things evolve within the engineering field—I think WNE helped me realize this. The small, close-knit environment made it easy to find mentors and connect with people who wanted to help me succeed.

Having graduated in May, I feel as though I have a solid foundation in engineering principles but have also developed my leadership skills, communication abilities, and problem-solving mindset. I feel ready to step into the workforce, and I'm confident that I can take on leadership roles while relying on my technical expertise to help make an impact. WNE's hands-on learning approach, coupled with the dedicated support from professors and peers, has set me up for success in whatever comes next. I'm excited to continue learning and growing as I go.

What are your plans after graduation?

My junior year, I interned at Allied Testing Laboratories in Springfield, Mass., where I learned a lot of firsthand elements of civil engineering like soil testing, concrete testing, and structure inspections. I've also learned about different areas of civil engineering during this time, which I think makes me valuable.

I'm excited to continue working there post-graduation in a full-time capacity, with the hopes of expanding into new avenues, like steel inspections, taking what I learned at WNE and the Steel Bridge Team into my profession. 🐾



SECURING OUR DIGITAL WORLD: UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ICT

Paul-Marie Moulema Douala, DSc.



In an increasingly connected world, the rise of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and social media offers numerous benefits but also significant security risks. Explore key challenges and strategies to safeguard against digital threats and the evolution of the ever-present online environment that connects us all.

Navigating the security risks of ICT and Social Media

The exponential growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), ubiquitous connectivity, and the rise of always-on smart devices have profoundly transformed all aspects of our lives. With the internet at our fingertips, we can communicate, share, collaborate, entertain, and access information at an unseen accelerated rate. With nearly five billion social media users—over 60% of the world's population and 92% of them internet users—our world has truly become a global village.

Thanks to their low cost, accessibility, and convenience, social media platforms have become the preferred choice for businesses and personal connectivity. They act as the primary hub for news consumption and rapid information dissemination worldwide. Nevertheless, internet technologies and social media platforms are a double-edged sword. Along with the many benefits they provide, internet technologies also contain inherent vulnerabilities and security issues that can offset these benefits if not properly addressed.

Security issues and challenges include malware proliferation, social engineering and phishing attacks, account takeovers, information overload, unchecked and fake information dissemination, and consumers' privacy rights. So how can we arm ourselves with the necessary tools to stay protected on the internet? Here are the top three elements to consider:

Information Overload

In this smart device era, internet users are overwhelmed by the tremendous volume of information available that can hinder our ability to process and digest it. According to the data extraction platform, SOAX's February 2025 report, 402.89 million terabytes of data are created, captured, copied, or consumed daily, with 5,381 data centers in the United States (U.S.) alone. This overwhelming and endless stream of information has been termed by researchers as "information overload" or "infobesity."

Information overload occurs when the volume and constant streams of relevant and potentially useful information exceed the brain's capacity to process it. Katie Malatino,

a senior communications specialist at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), identifies information overload as a new environmental pollutant, as well as a personal and societal danger. This phenomenon can have severe implications, such as anxiety, confusion, reduced productivity, distortion of people's perceptions, and difficulty concentrating and making decisions. Here are a few tips that can help to cultivate healthier information consumption habits:

- 1. Practice mindfulness and awareness.** Be conscious of your digital consumption patterns to avoid getting lost in the flow of information.
- 2. Establish clear boundaries between work and personal time, and avoid multitasking.**
- 3. Practice digital minimalism.** Reduce your reliance on technology, allocate specific times for information gathering and consumption, turn off notifications, and take breaks from screens.
- 4. Filter your sources of information and set priorities.** Choose a few reliable sources and identify what is important and what is not.

Fake Information Dissemination

The second major challenge we face as internet users is the fast dissemination of unchecked, biased, and fake news. The internet's open structure and limitless nature allow misinformation and biased content to thrive easily. It is quite easy for anyone to use tools and technologies such as deepfakes, bots, and trolls to launch a misinformation campaign and disseminate an inflammatory story within minutes. Without a fact-checked mechanism, anyone can publish, alter, or manipulate information according to their beliefs and perspectives.

With the proliferation of falsehoods, it is harder for the everyday person to separate the weed from the chaff. Social media algorithms are designed to feed users content that aligns with their beliefs, opinions, and perspectives. However, these algorithms lack the ability to assess the accuracy of the content they recommend. They are not designed to propose balanced views or verified facts. As a result, social media algorithms shape our worldview, create confirmation biases, and foster polarization by reinforcing our existing beliefs and opinions. To break free from echo chambers in social media, you are encouraged to do the following:

1. **Diversify views, sources of information, and content consumption.**
2. **Practice critical thinking and always consider alternative perspectives.**
3. **Promote respectful and constructive discussions.**
4. **Check the reliability, source, relevance, and authenticity of the information you consume.**

Social Media Privacy Issues

Somewhat unavoidable, social media has become an integral part of our daily lives. Popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok allow billions of users to connect worldwide. The use of social media now goes beyond the initial goal of connecting with friends and family—government, academic institutions, businesses, and activism groups are leveraging the power and ubiquity of social media to promote their agenda, broaden audience access, conduct targeted advertising, increase brand awareness, and engage with customers. At a personal level, the social media experience inherently involves sharing personal information and

intimate details of your life through direct messages, public posts, or app tracking. To create a social media account today, one is required to give up personal information such as full name, date of birth, academic and professional background, and other information that builds your profile. Additionally, most users barely pay attention to the terms and conditions set by these platforms, leading to an increasingly high risk of privacy violations.

Social media algorithms rely heavily on collecting consumers' data for targeted advertising and other purposes. According to Elea Feit, a senior fellow at Wharton Customer Analytics and a Drexel marketing professor, "Most companies are collecting data these days on all the interactions and all the places that they touch customers in the normal course of doing business."

"Data brokers collect, compile, buy, and sell personally identifiable information about who we are and what we do."

Based on the nature of the collected data, social media can then suggest content and advertising based on users' demographics, geographic location, search history, etc. To worsen the situation, personal data is a commodity that can now be sold to third parties, leading to the emergence of a data broker industry, where the collection and sale of consumers' data is up for grabs to the highest bidder. Data brokers collect, compile, buy, and sell personally identifiable information about who we are and what we do.

One striking example of the impact of data brokerages is the Cambridge Analytica scandal, where Facebook-derived marketing data was used to influence voter behavior in swing states during the 2016 U.S. election. Pam Dixon, the founder and executive director of the World Privacy Forum, revealed during his testimony to Congress in 2013 that there were about 4,000 data brokers in the U.S. Dixon reported that there were commercially available databases of police officers, home addresses, rape victims, genetic disease patients, and people suffering from

addictions for as cheap as 7.9 cents a name. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of consumer data brokers offer a voluntary opt-out, and there are no U.S. laws or regulations that restrain their activities.

The main cause of the inability to address privacy violations on the internet stems from the persistent gap between the speed at which technology advances and the speed at which laws and regulations are developed to address technology. As of now, there is no comprehensive federal social media law. If one exists, federal privacy laws lack specificity and focus more on consumer protection and health insurance. Hence, laws regarding credit bureaus and healthcare providers do not apply to the data brokers industry.

However, without federal laws and regulations to protect consumers' privacy, we must take our own measures to mitigate privacy risks. Here are some helpful tips to protect your privacy while browsing on social media:

1. **Create a strong password and enable two-factor authentication—strengthening security and preventing account takeover.**
2. **Read the privacy policies carefully—know what you are agreeing to.**
3. **Check your privacy settings—adjust privacy settings to protect your data.**
4. **Avoid sharing too much—cybercriminals can exploit whatever you share for social engineering attacks, impersonation, etc.**
5. **Avoid unwanted location sharing.**
6. **Be cautious of phishing attempts—avoid clicking suspicious links.**
7. **Use privacy-focused browsers and search engines—like Firefox, private windows, or VPNs.**
8. **Regularly clear your browser history and cookies.**
9. **Keep your browser and antivirus software up to date.**

Internet technologies have significantly improved the quality of our lives. Nowadays, it is easy to communicate, share, entertain, and access information and services. While we harvest and enjoy the benefits of these technologies, it is paramount to be mindful of their inherent security risks. As we await the implementation of effective laws and regulations, let us be vigilant in cultivating healthier information consumption habits and adopting best practices to better preserve our privacy. 🐼



WNE Class of 2025: Ready to Lead

Western New England University (WNE) celebrated its Class of 2025 across two commencement ceremonies held on Thursday, May 15—one for undergraduate students and one for graduate and professional degree recipients. These events recognized the achievements of 894 graduates who earned degrees across various disciplines.

The ceremony was attended by the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, families, and friends, all gathered to honor the graduates' hard work and dedication. The air was filled with excitement as the graduates, adorned in their caps and gowns, prepared to embark on the next chapter of their lives.

University President Robert E. Johnson, while addressing the Class of 2025, highlighted their resilience and adaptability, noting the unique challenges they faced and overcame during their academic journey. The President also acknowledged the support of faculty, staff, and families in helping the graduates reach this significant milestone.

"You are the Class of Agility," said President Johnson. "From your first semester on, you had to adapt not once, but again and again. You learned to stay flexible, to face unfamiliar circumstances calmly, and to keep striving when others might have paused. That is not just a skill—it is a strength. And it will serve you well for the rest of your lives."

Serving as commencement speaker for both ceremonies was Amy Fliegelman Olli L'88/H'25, a distinguished alumna of the School of Law and a leader in the global technology sector. Olli inspired graduates with insights drawn from her decades of executive leadership, emphasizing the importance of integrity, lifelong learning, and resiliency in navigating a rapidly changing world. "What our world needs most from you is not perfection... it's persistence. We need people who have the guts to keep going, even when they don't have it figured out."

Her remarks resonated with students across all disciplines, reminding them of the power of their WNE education and the values that will guide them forward.

A highlight of the undergraduate commencement was the keynote address by student Elizabeth Heiney, who acknowledged commencement as a "mountain top moment" and who reminded her fellow graduates that their journey was about more than just a diploma. Heiney emphasized the "Golden Bear Spirit" and the importance of community, growth, and perseverance. "We became leaders, teammates, artists, researchers, and changemakers," Heiney said, reflecting on her class's journey. Heiney will begin her professional journey as a rotational analyst at Värde Partners, a global private equity firm, where she looks forward to continuing her growth and making a meaningful impact in her new community.

As the ceremony concluded, graduates celebrated with their families and friends, taking photos and sharing their excitement for the future. The WNE Class of 2025 now joins the ranks of Golden Bear alumni, ready to make their mark on the world.

Visit the wne.edu/commencement to view both recorded ceremonies. 🐻





BEYOND THE CLINIC:

WNE Students Bring Compassion and Care to Ghana

Dr. Melissa Mattison

Imagine sitting in 95-degree heat, waiting to see a healthcare provider in an exam room that was set up in a church storage space or behind a modest partition that is equipped with borrowed exam tables from a nearby clinic. Keep in mind, you are not alone. More than one hundred others are also waiting patiently without a number system, simply taking a seat in chairs rented from a local facility.

It may not sound ideal by American healthcare standards, but in Ghana, there is little frustration or impatience. People chat with neighbors, laugh together, and enjoy the rhythm of background music played by a local DJ. There is a shared sense of community and gratitude.

This is the type of environment that Western New England University (WNE) students and preceptors found themselves experiencing during an elective interprofessional Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) in Ghana, West Africa earlier this year.

During three transformative weeks, students participated in three hosted community events, immersed themselves in the Ghanaian culture, learned beside fellow practitioners, and experienced a healthcare system very different from their own.

In January 2025, four WNE pharmacy students participated in home visits, school health education, and mobile health clinics offering screenings for hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They also worked alongside midwives from the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) to provide cervical cancer screenings—serving hundreds of patients in rural and remote villages.

Why Travel Across the World?

Pharmacy students nationwide are required to complete 1,440 hours of experiential education during their final year of pharmacy school, encompassing various practice settings. At WNE, this means completing six six-week rotations, which includes ambulatory care, acute care, institutional, and a community rotation. While two elective rotations give students flexibility to explore more specialized interests.

To fill those electives, students may apply for an international experience in Ghana working alongside fellow students from multiple healthcare professions, experienced preceptors, and Ghanaian healthcare workers. The WNE College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Office of Experiential Affairs oversees the application process, collaborating with the interprofessional teams to select participants.

WNE partnered with the University of Massachusetts (UMass) School of Public Health several years ago to build this program. This project has allowed WNE to team up with students in pharmacy, public health, and physician assistant (PA) studies, as well as practicing healthcare professionals from across the United States (U.S.). The result is a deeply collaborative three-week immersive experience that continues to grow in size, scope, and impact, engaging students from a broader range of disciplines like occupational therapy (OT), PA studies, and laboratory sciences.

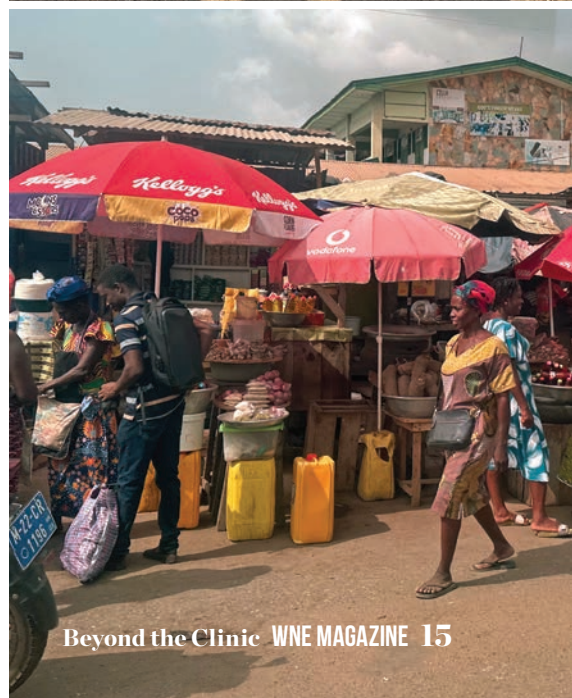
Once accepted into the program, students begin checking off a lengthy to-do list starting with securing a passport and receiving an extensive list of immunizations: yellow fever, typhoid, polio, hepatitis A and B, and Tdap. Preparation also includes six months of bi-weekly virtual meetings with preceptors from the U.S. and Ghana, as well as fellow students. These sessions help participants build rapport, align goals, and construct their projects before stepping foot overseas.

One of the key goals of this experience is for students to view healthcare through the lens of both public health and international practice. Participants are asked to compare systems in Ghana with healthcare in the U.S.—despite being separated by over 5,000 miles, many of the challenges they face are the same.

Immersed in the Culture

While in Ghana, students are accompanied by a cultural liaison who handles transportation, facilitates local planning, and shares insight that enhances both safety and cultural engagement. This year, the liaison's sister hosted the team at her home for several meals under mango trees, where students enjoyed spicy goat dishes, jollof rice, nut soup, and sobolo—a traditional hibiscus drink.

This trip is not run by a large organization—rather a grassroots initiative that thrives on connection and community. Throughout their stay, students explore and engage with Ghanaian culture through visits to Elmina Castle, a pineapple farm, nature reserve, and Fairafric Farm, a cocoa orchard and chocolatier. They shop in vibrant local markets, have tailored clothing and bags made from bold African fabrics, taste local cuisine by trying their hand at cooking over open fires, and traverse miles of red dirt roads to reach rural villages.





Making an Impact on Healthcare

In Aburi, Ghana, the program's partners help shape the projects and the work that is done while abroad. In order to be prepared before the trip, students are grouped with Ghanaian practitioners to design health-focused projects based on the identified community needs. This year's projects addressed infectious diseases like scabies, mental health, chronic disease, and women's health. These efforts included education for local practitioners and guidelines for community members such as training residents in blood glucose monitoring.

Last year, one public health student raised funds to purchase reusable, washable period pads from Days for Girls, distributing them at a local high school after leading a health education session. While, another group of students continued supporting a 16-year-old patient with type 1 diabetes, who first received consultation during last year's inaugural trip. For the second year

in a row, students helped her with insulin and essential supplies, witnessing firsthand the power of sustained outreach.

Students also tour Ghana's healthcare infrastructure, from community pharmacies to hospitals, learning which medications are available and how distribution works in low-resource settings. Often discovering that rural clinics have only a few medications at a time. These eye-opening experiences prompt students to question healthcare disparities and think creatively about solutions.

Outreach That Reaches Further

Clinical experiences are at the heart of this trip. Students take part in routine home visits led by Ghanaian public health nurses—greeting each patient with “Akwaaba,” a respectful request to enter someone's home. These visits, often held just outside the front door under mango trees and observed by neighbors, reveals clues about a patient's

personal environment and the importance of healthcare within these rural communities.

The team sees a full range of patients from newborns to pregnant women to individuals managing mental health or chronic disease. Follow-up care is consistent, with nurses conducting home visits several days a week.

In addition to these visits, WNE students engage in school-based health outreach. This year, they visited a fifth-grade classroom to teach the importance of dental hygiene and distributed toothbrushes. Last year, they measured and assessed primary school students for malnutrition, only to discover that the equipment—scales and stadiometers—had warped in the heat and dust, compromising accuracy.

When this challenge was brought back to campus, Professor of Biomedical Engineering Dr. Mike Rust, enlisted a group of seniors to develop a prototype suited to Ghana's challenging environment. The innovation is currently





underway—a perfect example of how one observation abroad can inspire change at home.

The Long-Term Vision

This project aims to engage students outside the classroom, allowing them to apply their education firsthand while navigating cultural differences and low-resource environments. Working side by side with healthcare workers and patients, students learn that even limited resources can yield meaningful care when paired with creativity and compassion.

The ultimate goal is to establish a longitudinal program moving beyond an annual visit to a sustained presence, ensuring follow-through and a community-driven approach. The College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Office of Experiential Affairs is now also partnering with Bay Path University as they work towards launching a second visit each year, beginning in August. With interprofessional biannual visits to the Akuapem South District, the program

"...the Ghana APPE becomes more than a rotation—it becomes a model for how to care, learn, and lead."

can move away from short-term outreach and towards long-term partnership.

In this way, the Ghana APPE becomes more than a rotation—it becomes a model for how to care, learn, and lead. 🐾



Student Testimonials

"...I was determined to dive into this rotation with an open mind. My goal was to be adventurous and to try new things when the opportunity arose. Although some dishes may have been too spicy for my palate, overall, the food far exceeded my expectations. This was my first time trying jollof rice, chicken basquaise, papaya, and even goat which was surprisingly delicious."

"[reflecting on the labor and delivery process] Getting to walk through the centers and hear them say the women had to walk home within six hours of giving birth was very eye-opening. In the U.S., they give epidurals during delivery and offer a wide variety of prenatal medications before and during pregnancy, whereas in Ghana they get a bucket with supplies during pregnancy and only use Tylenol® as their medication during delivery. Overall, it was an amazing experience to get to work with the healthcare providers there, and help make care more accessible for a number of people amongst the different villages during our community outreach events. This is an experience I will never forget, and I hope to return over the years and see what changes are made in their healthcare systems."





Golden Bear Athletics Recap: Championship Moments and Historic Milestones

Men's Basketball Caps Historic Season with NCAA Sweet 16 Run

After a modest 4–3 start to the season, the Western New England University (WNE) men's basketball team surged with eight straight Conference of New England (CNE) wins, gaining momentum heading into the final week of regular-season play. WNE closed the season strong, defeating Gordon College on the road, 85–74, and securing a critical 77–61 victory over Endicott College—both teams vying for top conference positions.

With a 19–6 overall record and a 15–3 mark in conference play, the Golden Bears entered the postseason as the No. 1 seed. They cruised past Roger Williams University in the semifinals, 97–65, before edging Suffolk University in a nail-biting 75–74 CNE Championship win. The victory earned WNE its first NCAA Tournament berth since the 2000–2001 season.

In the NCAA opener, WNE drew Hamilton College and delivered a historic performance, earning the

program's first-ever NCAA Tournament win. Four players hit double figures: Cody Palazzesi (14), Brian Geitner (17), Tim Restall (17), and Jake Harrison (13). Riding that momentum, the team advanced to the Round of 32, where Restall exploded for 30 points in a 79–61 win over Montclair State University—punching the Golden Bears' ticket to the Sweet 16.

WNE's impressive run came to a close in the national tournament with a final season record of 23–7.

The accolades continued after the season however, as Head Coach Colin Tabb, in his tenth year leading the program, was named CNE Coach of the Year and Region II Coach of the Year by D3hoops.com. Tim Restall earned CNE First Team All-Conference and National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) All-District Second Team honors. Teammates Jake Harrison and Brian Geitner were also recognized with All-Conference Second and Third Team selections, respectively.



Hines Leads WNE Wrestling to 25th NCAA Appearance

The WNE men's wrestling team celebrated its historic 50th anniversary this season and marked its 25th appearance in the NCAA Division III Tournament. Senior Cameron Hines represented the Golden Bears at the NCAA Championships in the 174 lb. weight class after earning a first-place finish at the NCAA Northeast Regional. With that victory, Hines became the 31st Golden Bear to be crowned a regional champion. He went on to win one match on the national stage—held in Providence, RI—and concluded his senior season in blue and gold with an impressive 27–6 record.

The team also enjoyed one of its most successful seasons to date, finishing with a 13–5 overall dual record—their highest win total and best winning percentage since 1998.





First NCAA Win Highlights Unforgettable Season for Women's Basketball

The WNE women's basketball team returned to the NCAA Tournament for the second consecutive year and completed the most successful season in program history with a 25–4 overall record.

The Golden Bears opened the year strong with road wins over nationally ranked Springfield College and Rhode Island College. They went on to win their first 10 games, then added another 13-game winning streak to enter the final game of the regular season at 23-1. Although WNE fell in two of their final three games—including a heartbreaking loss in the Conference of New England (CNE) Championship—they earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament thanks to their dominant regular-season performance.

In the opening round, WNE faced perennial Division III powerhouse Tufts University. On the road, the Golden Bears delivered a historic 61–52 win—the program's first-ever NCAA Tournament victory. Their season concluded in the NCAA Round of 32, cementing a record-setting year. The team was also ranked in the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA) national top 25 poll for the first time in program history.

Senior Lilly Hedge led the team on and off the court, earning multiple postseason honors. She was named CNE Player of the Year—the first Golden Bear to receive the award since 2016—and earned First Team All-Conference honors. She was also named to the New England Women's Basketball Association (NEWBA) All-Region Second Team, D3hoops.com Region II First Team, and received WBCA NCAA Division III All-America Honorable Mention. Hedge capped her collegiate career by competing in both the WBCA Senior All-Star Game and the NEWBA All-Star Game.

Additionally, senior Shaina Cooney earned All-Conference recognition for the third straight season, further highlighting the depth and talent of this record-breaking squad.



Softball Secures Second Straight CNE Title, Returns to NCAA Tournament

The WNE softball team captured its second consecutive Conference of New England (CNE) title this spring—its ninth in program history. Entering the tournament as the No. 3 seed, the Golden Bears upset No. 2 seed Nichols College twice, including in the championship game, to earn an automatic bid to the NCAA Championships.

The season began with a 6–6 showing at THE Spring Games in Clermont, Fla. Upon returning home, WNE found momentum, winning six of their next eight games to start conference play strong. Riley Kane led the team both offensively and in the pitching circle. After closing the regular season with three straight CNE wins, the Golden Bears secured the No. 3 seed in the conference tournament.

Outdoor Track & Field Launches Inaugural Season with Record-Breaking Performances

The WNE men's and women's outdoor track and field teams launched their inaugural season in spring 2025, achieving immediate success under Head Coach Jon Harris '04. In their debut campaign, the Golden Bears set numerous personal bests and established several school records.

Four student-athletes and two relay teams became the first in program history to represent WNE at the New England Division III Championships. Springfield native Kayla Kyles competed in the long jump, finishing 20th with a 5.02m mark. Graduate student Matt Provost placed 25th in the 10,000m, while Nolan Palmer ran the 400m hurdles in 57.41, finishing

WNE's path to the championship featured four tightly contested games. In the opener against Wentworth Institute of Technology, the Golden Bears walked off with an 8–7 win after a three-run seventh inning capped by Ava Barnhart's game-winning hit. Barnhart struck again in the next game with a clutch single in the seventh to upset Nichols. A victory over top-seeded Endicott College sent WNE to the finals, where Barnhart delivered once more—this time with a walk-off single in the eighth inning of a 1–0 win over Nichols, securing the championship.

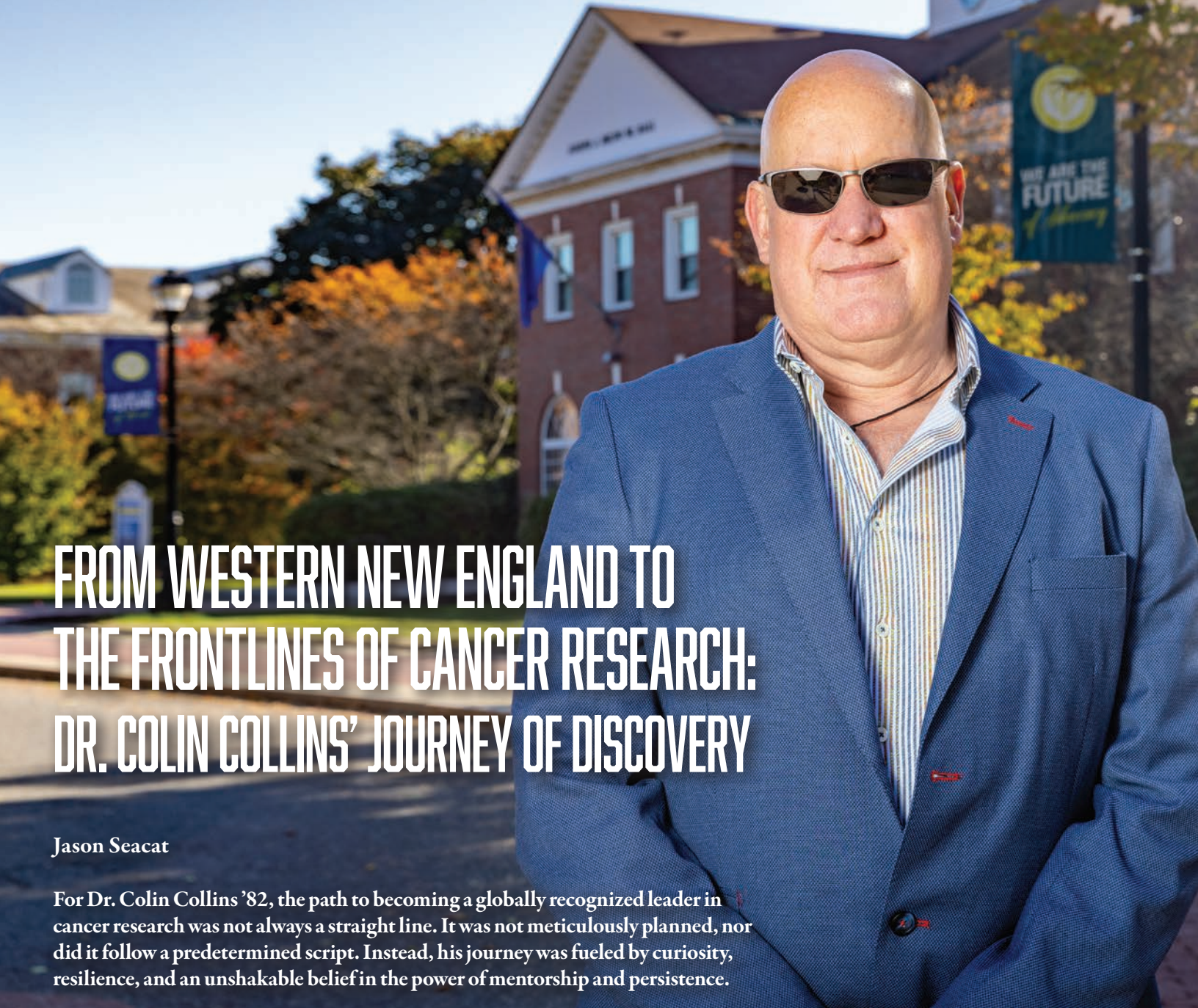
The Golden Bears advanced to the NCAA Division III Championships for the second straight year, competing in the regional round in Virginia Beach, VA. There, they faced national powerhouses Virginia Wesleyan and Messiah University. WNE concluded its season with a 26–17–1 record.

23rd. Ike Ogbonnanze qualified in both the shot put and discus, placing 12th (13.89m) and an impressive 7th in discus (44.38m) out of 29 competitors.

The women's 4x100m relay team—Imani Brown-Taylor, Fallon Lynch, Gabrielle Minuti, and Kyles—clocked a school-best 51.29 to finish 18th. On the men's side, the 4x400m team of Palmer, Nick Smith, Jerzyon Harrison-Durley, and Jordie Morgan recorded a program-best 3:27.20, placing 14th overall.

Western New England's outdoor track and field program will return for an exciting second season in spring 2026.





FROM WESTERN NEW ENGLAND TO THE FRONTLINES OF CANCER RESEARCH: DR. COLIN COLLINS' JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Jason Seacat

For Dr. Colin Collins '82, the path to becoming a globally recognized leader in cancer research was not always a straight line. It was not meticulously planned, nor did it follow a predetermined script. Instead, his journey was fueled by curiosity, resilience, and an unshakable belief in the power of mentorship and persistence.

Collins did not arrive at Western New England University (WNE) with a clear vision of his future. In fact, he had not initially planned to go to college at all. He intended to take a year off after high school, but after seeing friends embark on their university journeys while he worked in a factory and at a gas station, he decided to apply initially as a business major. However, one visit to a biology lab on campus changed everything. During this visit, he tapped into his childhood fascination with science and knew immediately that biology, not business, was his true calling.

During his time at WNE, Collins found more than just a major; he discovered an

academic community that would profoundly shape his future. Living on campus exposed him to students from diverse backgrounds, opening his eyes to new perspectives and possibilities. Within the Department of Biology, he found a mentor in Dr. Robert Holdsworth, who inspired him to think critically and approach science with curiosity. Dr. Earl Chapman in the Department of Chemistry helped him sharpen his skills in chemistry, an area he would later rely on heavily in his research. Philosophy courses with Dr. Emmett Barcalow expanded his intellectual horizons, fostering independence in his thinking. Each of these experiences laid a foundation that would propel him forward in his career.

After graduation, Collins set his sights on California, determined to break into the emerging field of genetic engineering. At the time, only a handful of companies worldwide were engaged in the work he aspired to do. What he had not anticipated was the level of competition he found himself up against, with graduates from Stanford, Berkeley, and other elite institutions. Unable to land a job in this field right away, he worked in restaurants to make ends meet—refusing to be deterred.

A turning point came when he sought to enroll in San Francisco State University's newly established genetic engineering program; the first of its kind in the world. However, Collins

was first told his undergraduate grades were not strong enough to gain admission to the program. Instead of accepting rejection, he convinced Dr. John Stubbs to let him audit courses. Dr. Stubbs made him a deal: if he earned straight A's, he would be allowed to enroll. True to form, Collins not only met, but exceeded expectations, earning a near-perfect 3.97 GPA. Under the guidance of Dr. Frank Bayliss, he learned genetic engineering and secured a summer internship at Genentech, which led to a full-time position at the prestigious Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. It was there, surrounded by some of the most brilliant scientific minds in the world, that he realized he wanted to do more than conduct experiments at the bench; he wanted to lead scientific discovery. That realization led him to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia (UBC), a decision that would define the rest of his career.

Today, Dr. Collins is a tenured professor at UBC and a leader in translational cancer genomics. His groundbreaking research has reshaped our understanding of tumor progression and resistance to therapy, leading to advances in precision oncology. While at the University of California, San Francisco, he was the first to recognize the importance of amplifications and deletions in genetic sequences as predictors of prostate cancer metastasis, an idea initially dismissed by many of his peers as irrelevant "noise." Next, he pioneered the development of paired-end sequencing, a method that revolutionized genome sequencing. At UBC, he has been at the forefront of the application of liquid biopsies for monitoring prostate cancer progression and drug response from noninvasive blood draws.

Despite his many achievements, Collins remains keenly aware of the challenges that come with pushing the boundaries of science. Even now, as he explores new frontiers in artificial intelligence (AI)-driven cancer detection and personalized medicine, he encounters skepticism from those who doubt unconventional approaches. His advice to aspiring scientists? "If you really believe you are right, and it is based on solid evidence, pursue it doggedly. If you are doing something original, there will always be doubters. Persist."

Looking ahead, Dr. Collins sees AI playing an increasingly vital role in cancer research. Currently, scientists can generate vast

amounts of data but analyzing that data remains a challenge. AI will be a game-changer, helping researchers process complex datasets to develop better diagnostic tools and personalized treatments.

"If you really believe you are right, and it is based on solid evidence, pursue it doggedly. If you are doing something original, there will always be doubters. Persist."

For students embarking on their own journeys, Collins' message is clear: "Find really good mentors and listen to them. Find people who believe in you and take their advice seriously. If you want to be at the top of your field, you need mentors who will push you, challenge you, and support you."

Dr. Colin Collins' journey from a first-year biology student at Western New England University to a leader in cancer genomics is a testament to the power of mentorship, perseverance, and following one's passion. His path was not always linear, but his determination to push boundaries and challenge conventional thinking has led to breakthroughs that have reshaped the way scientists approach cancer research. His story is an inspiration to students and professionals alike, proving that with the right guidance and an unwavering commitment to one's vision, extraordinary achievements are possible. 🐾



ALUMNI NEWS

For the latest alumni news from Western New England University, visit alumni.wne.edu/news.

GET READY TO ROAR AT GOLDEN BEAR WEEKEND 2025!

Golden leaves, golden memories, Golden Bear Weekend 2025! Dust off your blue and gold, and save the date for **Friday, October 3 – Sunday, October 5**, for a beary special weekend of everything that makes our community golden!



LOVE LIFTED US HIGHER: #WNEGIVES 2025 SMASHES GOALS

In an unforgettable celebration of love and Golden Bear spirit, the Western New England University (WNE) community united on Wednesday, February 12, to make #WNEgives 2025 the most incredible day of giving yet! Thanks to over 2,000 amazing donors from 34 states, an incredible \$360,000+ was raised to transform the WNE student experience. With support from alumni, parents, students, faculty, staff, and friends from across the nation, members of the WNE community made a huge impact, contributing to more than 40 funds that directly support current and future students.

While donors near and far participated through wnegives.com, those on campus joined in on the excitement. Members of the community gathered in the University Commons for a celebration full of fun and energy. Students were found at the thank you card station, where they expressed their

gratitude to donors who have made a difference in their WNE journey.

Adding to the emotion of the day, alumnus and coach of the WNE cross country and track and field teams, Jon Harris '04, put his own comfortability on the line to inspire something greater. Harris challenged his teams to raise \$10,000, and if achieved, he would shave his signature long hair and full beard. Having raised over \$11,000, Harris held true to his end of the bargain, allowing his student-athletes to participate in giving him a fresh shave. Furthering the message to his teams on the power of giving back, he donated all his hair to the Locks of Love foundation.

Don't miss out; mark your calendars for the 10th Annual **#WNEgives**, which will be held on **Wednesday, February 18, 2026!**

CELEBRATING GOLDEN BEAR EXCELLENCE AT THE 2025 ALUMNI AWARDS



Michael A. Serafino '77 Alumnus of the Year Award

Jim Bedard '83/G'87

With warmth, integrity, and lifelong dedication, Jim Bedard '83/G'87 embodies the spirit of the Michael A. Serafino Alumnus of the Year Award. A respected leader in the insurance industry and a tireless advocate for education and community, Jim's legacy of service and Golden Bear pride inspires all who know him.



Alumni Achievement Award
Brittany Decker '11

Bringing passion, purpose, and heart to everything she does—on screen as a trusted evening news anchor and off screen as a tireless community advocate and mentor. A shining example of Golden Bear spirit and leadership, Decker is the proud recipient of the inaugural 2025 Alumni Achievement Award.



Young Alumni Outstanding Achievement Award
Dr. Allissa Long '17/PharmD'19

A dedicated educator and clinical pharmacist whose leadership, service, and scholarship continue to inspire, Long was honored as Connecticut's Young Distinguished Pharmacist and now receives WNE's 2025 Outstanding Young Alumna of the Year Award for her remarkable impact.

See more at wne.edu/news/2025-Alumni-Awards.



25 YEARS OF CELEBRATING WNE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW ALUMNI & STUDENTS OF COLOR

WNE hosted the 25th Annual Celebration of Law Alumni and Students of Color and Award Ceremony on Friday, April 4. Hosted by the WNE School of Law Alumni Association in conjunction with the Office of Alumni Relations, this event acts as a heartfelt tribute to the values that continue to shape the School of Law community: diversity, leadership, and unity.

Honoring the transformative impact of the School of Law, two alumnae helped share its legacy—the young alumni speaker, Attorney Michelle Tsang L'17, and the second annual Law Alumni Luminary Award recipient and keynote speaker, the Hon. Tina Page L'82. The evening also featured the astounding journey of the now graduate, Shreya Patel, who served as the Master of the Ceremony, and included remarks of gratitude from Dean of the School of Law Zelda Harris.

Highlighting a distinguished alumna who exemplifies a deep commitment to legal excellence, community service, and the mentorship of future legal professionals, particularly those from historically underrepresented backgrounds, this year's Law Alumni Luminary Award recipient was the Hon. Tina Page L'82. Recognized for her work on the Massachusetts Superior Court from 1999 until her retirement in 2018, Judge Page made history as the second African American woman appointed



to the Superior Court and the first in western Massachusetts. During her tenure, she was appointed to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court, serving on a three-judge panel reviewing state prison sentences. Additionally, she chaired the Bail Committee and served on both the Criminal and Probation Committees, demonstrating leadership and a commitment to fair and thoughtful justice.

With a heartfelt keynote address, Judge Page traced her remarkable journey to the bench while offering a candid and inspiring call to action to students, young attorneys, and community members—urging resilience, authenticity, and purpose for those just starting in their careers. She spoke with pride about giving back by way of mentorship to young women, helping them discover what kind of law they want to practice. Closing out her remarks, Judge Page expressed the importance of perseverance and civic responsibility, stating, “We are living in difficult and challenging times, but the cornerstone of our democracy is an independent judiciary. We must participate in the system in order to change it.”

The event stands as a testament to the strength of the School of Law community, its dedication to equity, and its enduring mission to uplift the next generation of leaders.

TEERING UP TRADITION AT THE 56TH ANNUAL ALUMNI GOLF TOURNAMENT

Hosted at the Country Club of Wilbraham, WNE alumni kicked off summer festivities on Friday, June 6, at the 56th Annual Alumni Golf Tournament. The event not only provided a day of friendly Golden Bear competition on the course but also contributed to the Alumni Association Golf Tournament Endowed Scholarship. With enthusiasm and camaraderie, participants helped raise over \$25,000 to support this scholarship, which has benefited deserving students for the past 19 years. By supporting the Alumni Golf Tournament, participants contribute to the growth of the scholarship fund, ensuring that WNE can continue its prideful tradition of offering crucial financial assistance to students in need. To learn more about this impactful event and to relive the experience, visit alumni.wne.edu/news.

Save the date for the 57th Annual Alumni Golf Tournament – Friday, May 22, 2026



JUDGES, JOURNEYS, AND JUSTICE—BRINGING TOGETHER THE WNE ALBANY LEGAL COMMUNITY

On Thursday, February 13, WNE University School of Law alumni enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and cocktails at the Fort Orange Club, at an event hosted by Kevin O'Brien L'87. The evening honored four alumni—Hon. Francisco Calderon L'97, Hon. Amy Fisher Quinn L'95, Hon. Samantha Miller-Herrera L'06, and Hon. Ryan Caponera L'09—for their legal contributions and most recent promotions to the bench in the Capital Region. Emceed by the Hon. Mark Powers L'84, many were in attendance for this uplifting evening, including beloved Professor Fred Royal and School of Law Dean Zelda Harris.

Dean Harris shared School of Law updates while each honoree reflected on their experiences at WNE, crediting the institution for shaping their careers and instilling values of justice, ethics, and service. Highlighting the transformative journeys they each encountered while at the University, while crediting the “wonderful people, professors, and fellow students” for their successes.

The evening concluded with alumni renewing connections, celebrating their shared achievements, and discussing ways to support future generations of WNE law students.



From Lab Coats to Legal Briefs

Briana K. Strobel '17/G'23

Michelle Bugbee G'92/L'00 has built a career that fuses science, strategy, and service. Her journey from chemical engineering to patent law is a powerful example of how a mid-career pivot can lead not only to professional fulfillment but to lasting impact on future generations.



Bugbee began her career as a chemical engineer, drawn by a passion for problem-solving and a practical eye for opportunity. From her early days in a traditionally male-dominated field to her current role as a distinguished patent attorney, she has consistently broken barriers—paving the way for others to follow.

After carving out a successful technical career, Bugbee made a bold mid-career pivot into the complex world of law. Today, she is a seasoned patent attorney whose unique combination of

technical expertise and legal acumen allows her to bridge innovation and intellectual property (IP) with remarkable insight.

A Foundation in Engineering

Growing up, Bugbee did not dream of becoming a lawyer. Her strengths lay in math and science, and after attending a Women in Engineering program at Stevens Institute of Technology, she chose Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) for its intimate class sizes and strong STEM focus.

“I liked the small class sizes and the focus on applied problem-solving,” she said. At WPI, she earned a degree in chemical engineering—driven by both a love for chemistry and the career opportunities it promised.

Following graduation, she thrived in her early career, holding roles such as quality manager and engineering supervisor. Yet, after a decade, she found herself at a professional crossroads. “I realized I didn’t enjoy managing people,” she shared. “And I couldn’t see myself doing the same thing for another 30 years.”

The Turning Point

During this period of reflection, law emerged as a new possibility. She had always been intrigued by the field, but like many mid-career professionals, she initially assumed it was out of reach—too expensive, too risky, too time-consuming. That changed once she began researching scholarships, student loans, and financial aid options.

She took the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and enrolled in the juris doctor (JD) program at Western New England University (WNE) School of Law, where she had previously completed her MBA. “Law was a whole new way of thinking—less about finding one right answer and more about building strong arguments from different perspectives,” she explained. Expressing the struggles she faced transitioning from a field that was so black and white to one surrounded in grey area, Bugbee credits WNE—and particularly Professor Amy Cohen—with helping her develop the intellectual flexibility to succeed.

It was during this time that she discovered patent law, a field that perfectly blended her engineering background with her growing legal skills. “I realized patent law was the perfect hybrid of my engineering experience and my interest in law,” she stated.

This newfound path allowed her to stay connected to science and innovation while contributing from a legal standpoint. Early roles as a patent agent and later as an attorney with companies like General Electric (GE) gave her invaluable, hands-on experience.

Today, Bugbee is U.S. patent counsel for Stamicarbon, a Netherlands-based company in the fertilizer and chemical industry. There, she collaborates with inventors and other IP professionals and handles the U.S. patent prosecution. “I still get to engage with science—but now I can also advocate for it,” she reflected.

Championing Mentorship in a Specialized Field

Bugbee’s journey has sparked a passion for mentorship and advocacy, particularly in the underrepresented world of patent law. Her experiences have deepened her commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in a field where women remain significantly underrepresented.

“Mentorship and philanthropy are how we change the pipeline. It’s not enough to succeed—we have to bring others with us.”

Through mentorship and philanthropy, Bugbee actively supports students at WNE University School of Law and beyond. She began by volunteering with Patent Pathways® which helps diverse candidates become patent agents, and contributes financially to ensure students are not held back by cost. “Many don’t even realize this career path exists. Awareness is key,” she noted.

She also collaborates with organizations like the Intellectual Property Owners (IPO) Association specifically participating on the Women in IP Committee, where she helps to develop tools that companies can use to increase diversity in innovation and leadership. Having served on both a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee and a leadership committee, her mentorship extends to law students, aspiring patent agents, and especially to women and candidates from underrepresented backgrounds.

Giving Back

Though Bugbee’s career is rooted in technical and legal expertise, her greatest impact may lie in her commitment to others. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without the support I received,” she stated. “Now that I’m in a position to give back, I feel it’s my responsibility to help others—especially students who may not know that careers like this exist.”

Her connection to WNE University School of Law runs deep. It was there that she found not only a rigorous education but a supportive community with mentors who helped shape her career. Today, she gives back—both financially and through service—so that future students can access the same transformative experience.

“Law school elevated my career and helped me find fulfillment. I want others to have that opportunity without being held back by financial barriers,” she said.

She also serves on the School of Law Dean’s Advisory Council, where she advocates for initiatives like the six-year law and engineering track. In her view, the program is a powerful but underutilized pipeline into patent law. “Mentorship and philanthropy are how we change the pipeline. It’s not enough to succeed—we have to bring others with us.”

Resilience, Boundaries, and Leadership

Bugbee’s path has not been without its obstacles. As a woman in male-dominated fields—first engineering, then patent law—she often found herself as the only one in the room.

She recalls having to assert herself repeatedly to be heard and respected. Over time, she learned the importance of boundaries and choosing the right environments for her. She recalls turning down a travel opportunity to a country where restrictions on mobility and independence didn’t align with her values. “It just wasn’t a good fit for me,” she said. “Sometimes, saying no is how you stand up for yourself.”

Now, leading by example, she has found her voice and speaks out about systemic issues, including gender disparities in both legal leadership and patent filings. “Early in your career, you worry about consequences,” she said. “But with experience comes confidence. I’ve learned to speak up.”

Her approach to leadership is grounded in principle, clarity, and courage.

A Legacy of Impact

Whether guiding a student through the patent bar, advocating for diversity, or mentoring young attorneys, Bugbee’s influence stretches far beyond job titles and courtrooms.

Through philanthropy, mentorship, and a quiet but powerful leadership style, she is shaping the future of patent law—making it more inclusive, more accessible, and more human.

Her advice to young professionals? “Your first job isn’t your last,” she said. “Be open to change. Be open to growth.”

Michelle Bugbee’s story is proof that reinvention is not only possible, but it can also be transformative. And when paired with a spirit of service, it becomes something even greater: a legacy. 🐾

Class Notes

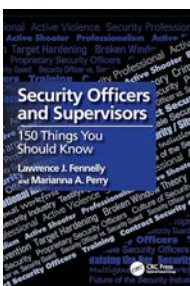
STAY CONNECTED

Your classmates want to know about the milestones in your life. Send your news, including weddings, career changes, accomplishments, and publications to the Office of Alumni Relations at alumwne@wne.edu, or visit alumni.wne.edu/classnotes to submit your note online.

1970s

Jeffrey Freedman L'76 (JD) opened a new office location in Boynton Beach, Fla. for his law firm, Jeffrey Freedman Attorneys, PLLC. This location will serve Social Security Disability (SSD) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claimants.

1980s



Lawrence Fennelly '89 (Law Enforcement) published a new book titled, *Security Officers and Supervisors: 150 Things You Should Know*, adding to his ongoing series.

1990s

Richard Szlosek L'91 (JD) has been honored by the Trustees of Forbes Library for his dedication and volunteer service to Forbes Library in Northampton, Mass.

Andrew Wolfe L'91 (JD) retired last year after over 30 years of service as principal law clerk in Oswego County, N.Y., Surrogates and Supreme Courts.

Kathryn (Greene) Wolfe L'91 (JD) entered retirement this year after nearly 15 years of service as principal law clerk and associate court attorney in Oswego County, N.Y. Supreme and County Courts.

Andrea Gaspardino Kovachy '92 (History) started a new position as director, generational alumni engagement at The George Washington University. She has been with the institution since 2017.

Michael Lescarbeau '93 (Mechanical Engineering) has been promoted to vice president of preconstruction at Harry Grodsky & Co., Inc. He has been with the company since 2013, first serving as a design manager and then as the director of preconstruction.

Kelli (Lawrence) Gunagan '95/L'98 (Criminal Justice/JD) was promoted to director of the municipal law unit within the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office. Since joining the office in 1999, she has been the point person for the city and town charter, and town bylaw reviews.

2000s

Cara Krysil L'00 (JD) has been nominated to the Massachusetts District Court by Governor Maura Healey. The District Court Department hears a wide range of criminal, civil, housing, juvenile, mental health, and other types of cases.

Todd McGee L'00 (JD) was appointed to the Holyoke Community College (HCC) board of trustees by Governor Maura Healey. He is a tax attorney and director of estate and business planning for MassMutual Insurance.

Jill Mackey '02/G'03 (Accounting/MSA) has been promoted to manager within the tax department at BST & Co. CPAs, LLP. Her focus is on individual and corporate tax preparation.

Sara Taylor L'02 (JD) was promoted to senior staff attorney at Pro Bono Partnership—an organization that provides business and transactional legal services to nonprofits. She has been with the company since 2022.

Jonathan Banas '03 (Computer Information Systems) started a new position as assistant vice president, data engineering at Distinguished Programs—a national insurance program manager.

Adam Moreau '03/G'09 (Marketing/MBA) has joined Springfield Rocks Media Group as a senior media advisor for Rock 102, Lazer 99.3/98.5 and their digital team. He brings over two decades of experience in multimedia sales with him to this new role.

Jody Lemoi '02/G'04 (Sport Management/ MBA) has started a new position as director of financial planning and analysis at Golden Gate University.

The Honorable Jason Bergevin L'05 (JD) was appointed by Governor Jim Pillen as an associate justice to the Nebraska Supreme Court, representing the Fifth Judicial District.

Anthony DiSanto '05 (Marketing Communications/Advertising) has been promoted to director of the decking business unit for OMG Inc.'s FastenMaster team.



Steven Giannini '05 (Law Enforcement) was appointed to chief of the Fitchburg, Mass. Police Department, and has been with the department for over 23 years. For nearly a decade, Giannini served as second-in-command captain, previously served as operations commander for four years, technical services commander for two years, and support services commander for four years.

Brian Romell '05/G'06 (Accounting/MSA) was promoted to senior internal controller at Legrand, North America. He has been with the company since 2017.

Lisa Denault-Viale L'07 (JD) was elected as the clerk of courts for Berkshire County, Mass. She had been the assistant clerk of Berkshire Superior Court since 2018. Previously serving as a probation officer since 2001 in the Berkshire Juvenile Court, Northern Berkshire District Court, and Berkshire Superior Court. Denault-Viale celebrates 24 years with the Massachusetts Trial Court.

Peter Kravetz G'07 (MSA) has been promoted to tax supervisor at Meyers Brothers Kalicka in Holyoke, Mass.



MaryBeth LeFevre L'07 (JD) received the Secretary of Homeland Security Champion of Equity Award. This award recognizes her commitment to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and specifically acknowledges her efforts to promote acceptance of various backgrounds at DHS through outstanding leadership and innovation.

George Reid-Perry '07 (Psychology) started a new position as board member at CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. Additionally, he was appointed as chief operating officer at Lumibility—a non-profit that provides early intervention birth to three services as well as day habilitation and employment support to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Christie Anglade '08 (Psychology) was named vice president of student affairs at Emerson College. She has been with the institution since 2019.

L. Alexandra Hogan L'08 (JD) joined Doherty, Wallace, Pillsbury and Murphy, P.C. (DWPM) as a shareholder. With a strong background in business law, civil litigation, and commercial real estate, she has built a reputation providing strategic, results-oriented advice in complex legal matters.

Duncan Markovich '09 (International Studies, European) owner and founder of Better Ways, LLC—a cannabis therapeutics education and consulting center—received first place in Connecticut's Best on the Shoreline for Alternative Health and Wellness/Hemp/CBD Stores for the fifth year in a row, since opening in 2019.

2010s

Whitney Abel L'11 (JD) joined the Multiple Sclerosis Association of America (MSAA) as their vice president of development.

Richard Annunciata '11 (Sport Management) started a new position as commercial lines account executive at Brown & Brown Insurance.



Juan "Jay" Latorre, III '11 (Engineering) has joined the executive boards of the Springfield Library Foundation and Revitalize CDC. Last June, Juan was recognized as a 40 Under Forty honoree by *BusinessWest*. Additionally in October, he was awarded a Latino Excellence Award by Massachusetts State Senator, Jake Oliveira.

Katilee Boisvert '12/L'16 (Criminal Justice/ JD) has been promoted to counsel at Shipman & Goodwin LLP. She represents companies in a variety of aspects of corporate and transactional law with a focus on commercial financing, provides advice on general corporate and business matters, as well as acts as outside general counsel for a variety of companies.

Laura Madaio '13 (Sport Management) has joined Apptio, an IBM company as the product marketing manager responsible for IBM Target process.

Matthew Manganello G'13 (MSA) has joined the board of directors for Holyoke Community College Foundation Inc., the nonprofit fundraising arm of Holyoke Community College (HCC). He also serves as the retail lending sales manager at Westfield Bank and is a member of the western Mass. mortgage review board for the Massachusetts Division of Banks.

Michael Salva '13 (Management) started a new position as senior advisory services consultant at Visier, Inc.

Bryan Murphy '14 (History) joined Berkshire Law Group of Lenox as a senior associate attorney.

Laura Fisher L'15 (JD) stepped back into the private practice of law, joining Sharp, Heyman, Dolven & Elkins, LLP in Northampton, Mass. She focuses her practice on civil litigation, small business, and nonprofit counseling, as well as land use and zoning.

Katherine Ferrari '16 (Forensic Biology) has been promoted to forensic scientist II at the New Hampshire State Forensic Laboratory in the controlled drug unit.

Melissa Humerick '16 (Electrical Engineering) started a new position as lead engineer in options solutions engineering at National Grid.

Teryn Maihiot '16 (Pharmaceutical Business) has started a new position as senior manager TMF operations at Ultragenyx, a biotechnology research company.

Kathryn Mullin L'16 (JD) has been promoted to counsel at Robinson+Cole law firm. Her practice focuses on representing lenders in multifamily housing transactions, and tax-exempt financing transactions.

Emma Norden '16/G'17 (Accounting/MSA) started a new position at Axon as a senior internal auditor.

Christopher Rousseau L'16 (JD) was promoted to member of Pullman & Comley, LLC. He joined the law firm's real estate, energy, environmental and land use practice in 2021, and concentrates on the areas of commercial real estate, zoning, and land use.

Klaire Bielonko '17 (Business Analytics and Information Management) was promoted to digital enablement section head at Moog Inc.—an aerospace, defense, and industrial manufacturing company.



Michael Lavoie L'17 (JD) has been elected as partner at Morrison Mahoney LLP, one of the 15 largest firms in the Commonwealth. His practice is primarily focused in the areas of professional malpractice, including the defense of physicians, hospitals, lawyers, and other professionals in state and federal courts.

Payton North '17/G'20 (Communications - Journalism/MAC) joined the Hampden County District Attorney's Office as its communications director, bringing eight years of media and communications experience to her new position.

Claudia Quintero L'17 (JD) has been named director of Central West Justice Center, an affiliate of Community Legal Aid. In her new role, she will oversee a team of lawyers, paralegals, and staff who assist low-income and elderly clients with immigration, housing, and employment benefits in central and western Massachusetts. She will supervise the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Project and continue as the co-lead of the Fairness for Farmworkers Coalition. She has been with the organization since 2017.

Isabella Brady-Prankus '18/G'20 (Management - Arts & Entertainment, Marketing/MBA) was promoted to executive director of The Gray House in Springfield, Mass. She was the former education director there for three years.

Katelyn (Bigelow) Connors '18/G'20 (Business/Organizational Leadership) has started a new role at Elms College as their communications and PR manager.

Thaddeus 'Tucker' France, IV '18 (Accounting) was promoted to senior associate, infrastructure & real assets product specialist at HarbourVest Partners.

Garrett Jones '18 (Criminal Justice) started a new position as director, business development at BSE Global.

Stefan Sjoberg L'18/G'18 (JD/MBA) joined Egan, Flanagan and Cohen, P.C. in downtown Springfield, Mass. as an attorney. He focuses his practice on mergers and acquisitions, real estate, and other transactional matters.

Corey Stillings '18 (Accounting) was promoted to senior manager at CFGI, a leading global accounting and business advisory firm.

2020s

Samuel Doffek '20 (History) started a new position as a first-year advisor/student success coach at the University of Hartford.

Emily Giuliani '20 (English) joined EMA Partners as a principal where she will be focused on supporting and growing the firm's technology & communications, financial services, consumer retail services, payments, fintech and digital practice groups for both their New York and Toronto offices.



Delmarina López L'20 (JD) joined the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA), Connecticut's largest business organization, as associate human resources counsel. She brings extensive experience in law, human resources, and public service to her role.

Meghan Orbann '20 (Sport Management) was promoted to manager, merchandising BPO operations at Wayfair.

Dr. Kaeli Serafino '20/G'23 (Psychology/OTD) started a new position as an occupational therapist at Embracing the Creative Child, LLC.

Lauren LeBlanc '21 (Business Administration) started a new position as healthcare recruiter, technology services at Walker Healthforce.

Natalie Moullette '21 (Marketing) started a new position as human resources coordinator at Payarc.



Sara Cafaro '22/L'24 (Business/JD) joined Bacon Wilson's commercial and residential real estate department as an associate attorney. She has been interning with the firm since 2022.

Ethan Kagno '22 (Sport Management) joined the Philadelphia Phillies as a major league data operator contributing to player and baseball development initiatives. He also joined Major League Baseball (MLB) as a data operations associate working directly with the Worcester Red Sox at Polar Park to digitally score games and provide real time updates for the MiLB app.

Alexander Lepage G'22 (MBA) started a new position as manager-F135 sustainment affordability at Pratt & Whitney.

Devon Sundquist '22 (Sport Management) started a new position as a minor league data tracking operator with the Milwaukee Brewers, Wisconsin's Major League Baseball (MLB) team.

Jacob Weber '22 (Sport Management) has joined the Pittsburgh Pirates (MLB) as a minor league operations assistant.

Farah Bayonova L'24 (JD) has joined Leech Tishman as an associate in the firm's litigation, trusts and estates practice groups. Based in their New York office, she advises a variety of clients as well as serves a wide range of trust and estate matters.

Marissa Fabbo L'24 (JD) joined Egan, Flanagan and Cohen law firm as an attorney. She focuses her practice on civil and commercial litigation.

Julia Lescarbeau '24 (Biomedical Engineering) was promoted to IPS design engineer I at KLS Martin Group - an international company for innovative medical technology in almost all surgical areas.

Amanda Madison '24 (Creative Writing) released her debut novel, *Program 38: Sparks*, in November. Shortly after its release, she began her national book tour in New York, and was a headliner at the Big Apple Comic Con.

Tyler Millerick '24 (Business) joined the New York Islanders Hockey Club (NHL) as an account executive, inside sales.

Patrick Riley '24 (Political Science) started a new position as assistant clerk for the Transportation Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly.

Daniel Steiner L'24 (JD) has joined Kahan Kerensky Capossela LLP (KKC Law) as an associate attorney in the firm's business department.

Matti Tacy L'24 (JD) joined Egan, Flanagan and Cohen law firm as an attorney. She focuses her practice on corporate governance and transactional matters.

Enrique Tirado L'24 (JD) joined Egan, Flanagan and Cohen law firm as an attorney. He focuses his practice on civil litigation, including personal injury, employment law, and business litigation.

SEE MORE ONLINE

For more Class Notes and our In Memoriam listing of alumni and community members who have recently passed away, view the online version of *WNE: The Magazine* at magazine.wne.edu.



Alexandre Pereira '21/L'24 (Finance/JD) joined Bacon Wilson's elder law and estate planning department as an associate attorney. He has been with the firm since 2023 previously serving as a law clerk.

Dr. Emily Scurka '21/PharmD'23 (Pharmacy Studies/PharmD) joined Hartford HealthCare Medical Group as a primary care pharmacy specialist.

Adrianna Barnett '22 (Management and Leadership) started a new position supporting the Flightsense Operations team at Collins Aerospace.

Nathan Boucher '22 (Finance) has been promoted to commercial loan officer at Westfield Bank. He is responsible for processing and closing approved loans, while also working with the middle-market lending team on business development in the western Mass. and northern Conn. territories. He has been with the company since 2021.

Marriages



Kelsi Mitchell '21 and Noah Brody '20,
October 15, 2023, in Sturbridge, Mass.



Dr. Lauren Barakian '17/PharmD'19 and Connor Ross '17, August 3, 2024, in Plymouth, Mass.



Nicole Bourgeois '22 and Daniel Buell '23,
September 23, 2024, in Vero Beach, Fla.



Emily Mastropaolo '15 and Colton Craig '14, September 27, 2024,
in Bristol, R.I.



Meghan Flaherty '18 and Nicholas Rancourt '18, October 18, 2024,
in South Berwick, Maine.



Rachel Bean '17 and Mathew Basile '17,
November 9, 2024, in Sand Lake, N.Y.



Allison Breen '11/G'15 and Ashley Luperchio, December 28, 2024, in
Sturbridge, Mass.



Kathryn Iwanicki '16 and Kenneth Vollaro '16/G'18,
March 8, 2025, in Hampstead, N.H.



Claire Marie, February 28, 2024, to **Traci (Gakenheimer) Cooley '17** and **Jeffrey Cooley '15**.



Lennyn Lisa-Michelle, October 17, 2024, to **Kayla Brown-Frye '15** and **Daniel Frye '15**.



Halle Josephine, November 6, 2024, to **Marisa (Harris) Anthonis '13** and **Matthew Anthonis '14**.



Cora Maureen, January 17, 2025, to **Dr. Christina (Andros) Hannon '15/G'17/PharmD'17** and Kevin Hannon.

UNLIMITED IMPACT

At Western New England University, we believe in empowering students to unlock their unlimited potential. We offer experiences that challenge students to think critically, collaborate effectively, and develop the skills they need to make an impact in the world. Students are encouraged to embrace their passions, push their boundaries, and seize opportunities to create meaningful change.

Prepared to succeed, our students are ready to lead with purpose, thanks to the strong connections cultivated with peers, professors, and the community. Each interaction is an opportunity to grow, and every connection has the power to shape their future and create a lasting impact.

Your contribution to the President's Fund for Excellence or favorite area of campus has played a pivotal role in expanding these opportunities. Thanks to your support, we continue to provide a transformative education that empowers students to lead fulfilling careers and achieve their unlimited potential.

THANK YOU for helping future generations of Golden Bears gain the tools they need to change our world for the better! Each time you make a gift, you impact the lives of current students and help them realize what's possible when they are empowered to dream without limits.

To learn how you can make an impact, visit alumni.wne.edu/impact, or contact us at thefund@wne.edu.



Contact The Fund
for WNE at
thefund@wne.edu
or 413-782-1335.



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CURTAIN CALL

WNE's Stageless Players took the stage with their spring performance of *Sweeney Todd*.



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