

2023

## Innovator - Spring 2023

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# JEFFERSON i n n o v a t o r



SPRING  
2023

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JEFFERSON  
UNIVERSITY





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# The President's Column

**Five years ago**, we embarked on a noble experiment. It was grounded in the changes we observed taking place in the world and in the workplace, and based in our commitment to make the world around us a better place. It has been an unparalleled triumph.

Since its founding in 1824, Jefferson has consistently made the seemingly impossible possible. In 1825, Jefferson was the first medical college to establish a clinic, combining medical education with patient care; in 1889, department of surgery chair William W. Keen, MD 1862, was the first to successfully remove a brain tumor; and in 1953, surgery chair John Gibbon Jr., MD 1927, invented the heart-lung machine, which was instrumental in the world's first successful open heart operation.

Five years ago, the University merged with the first textile college in the country, Philadelphia University (formerly Philadelphia Textile School, then Philadelphia Textile Institute, and later Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science). Founded in 1884, the university would go on to boast its own firsts, including being the first to produce a textile for the manufacturing of artificial blood vessels.

By melding these two institutions—one renowned for excellence in healthcare and one known for architecture, design, engineering, business, textiles, and fashion—we created a professions-focused institution of higher learning, bursting with

new concepts, novel initiatives, and pioneering programs.

We looked into an academic crystal ball to determine the needs of tomorrow's global leaders and conceived something unique—a university centered on the future of work.

We started out by crossing disciplines and encouraging outside-the-box thinking. For example, medical and engineering students worked together to invent an intravenous line connector that doesn't touch contaminated bedding; physical therapy students collaborated with design students to develop a drinking straw for patients with physical challenges; architecture students partnered with textile students to create specialized furniture for neurodiverse patients. We continued by joining with other institutions across the country—and the world—to create expanded opportunities for study and research. We even extended beyond the confines of earth to send research projects into space with our partners in Israel.

This collaborative, transdisciplinary, and interprofessional approach to learning offers a vibrant atmosphere for thought leaders and prepares our students for current and yet-to-be-imagined careers.

We set out to elevate learning, and in doing so we elevated Jefferson's profile. We are now known on a national and international level for excellence in academics, research, and preparing our students for success. We have skyrocketed

in U.S. News & World Report rankings and in enrollment.

We are now an R2 research institution. We are attracting the best and brightest students and faculty. We are not a model of how to successfully merge two institutions, we are the model, and now universities across the country are asking us for our blueprint for success.

Looking back, it's hard to believe what we have accomplished in just five years. Now we are looking forward to what we will accomplish in the next five years—and beyond—as we continue to create a bigger, bolder, better Jefferson.



**Mark L. Tykocinski, MD**  
President  
Thomas Jefferson University

contributors



**Spring 2023**  
**On the cover:**  
(Left to right)  
TJU senior  
Lauren Schuler,  
local recording  
artist Gina Zo,  
and alumna  
Michaela Day '22

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**If you've ever eaten peanut brittle,** with its yin and yang of sweet and salt, you know the most unusual pairings can result in the most delightful outcomes. Often, it's the differences between people or things that give the combination power.

This issue of Jefferson Innovator explores the myriad, magnificent ways that unique pairings can defy expectations.

Five years ago, an odd couple of schools—one renowned for medical education and one celebrated for its design curricula—took a leap of faith together, sparking not just a revolution in education, but an evolution.

Light is a mystery of duality—both a wave and a particle. Professors Bud Brainard and Lyn Godly have spent decades studying another unlikely pairing of light: in health and art.

In matters of the heart, opposites can attract. Recently, we put out a call on social media for alumni to share their “love stories,” and what we heard warms the heart.

Whether it pairs knitting and medicine—architecture and physical therapy—athletics and superheroes—Jefferson empowers its students to do anything—be anyone—and redefine possible.

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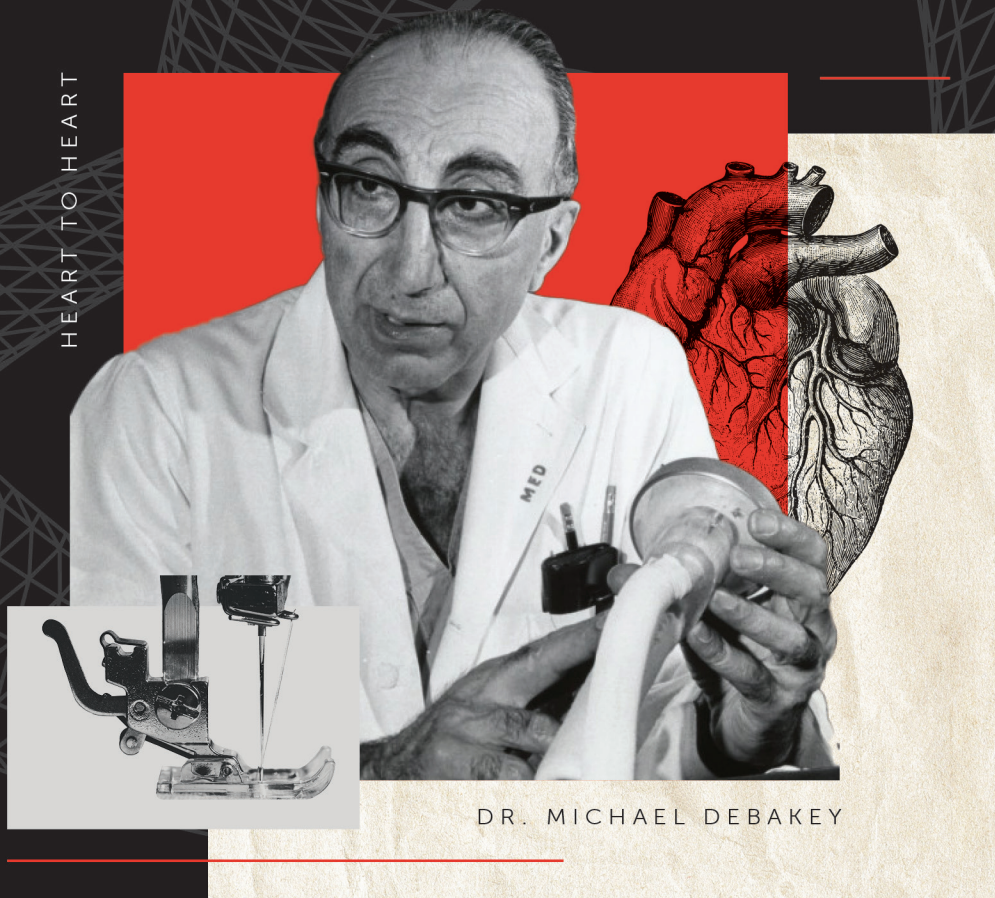
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DR. MICHAEL DEBAKEY

*DeBakey photo courtesy of Special Collections University of Houston Libraries*

## Fabric of the Heart

*In the 1950s, Thomas Edman '48, alumnus and then-chair of Textile's knitting department, worked with Dr. Michael DeBakey, a pioneer cardiologist at Baylor University, to develop novel arterial replacements for heart surgery*

**T**extiles have been part of medicine for as long as humans have tried to heal themselves.

The first eyed-needles appear to have been used both for surgery and to tie wounds together as far back as 30,000 BC—the Stone Age—according to the fossilized remains of Neolithic skulls.

Around 1,600 BC, the Greek surgeon Galen of Pergamon used silk and catgut (made from the twisted intestines of sheep or horses) to suture together gladiators' severed tendons.

Over the centuries as medicine evolved, caregivers refined the use of sterilized sutures and surgical materials, and in the 1900s, researchers began experimenting with different types of artificial fibers for operations. Most natural or “staple” fibers have a discrete length, which

proved limiting for complex surgical procedures, like bypass surgeries that redirect blood flow. The development of synthetic polymers like nylon opened new avenues for physicians to explore.

The mid-20th century saw a series of world-changing breakthroughs in cardiac surgery, including the first open heart surgery using the heart-lung machine designed by alumnus John H. Gibbon Jr., MD '27. Among the era's magicians of the heart was the “Texas Tornado,” Michael E. DeBakey, MD.

DeBakey (1908-2008) was perhaps the first U.S. celebrity surgeon, gracing the cover of *Time* magazine in 1965, which noted “the dexterous scalpel and deft needle of Baylor University's professor of surgery have operated on more than 10,000 human hearts and arteries.”

In the 1950s, DeBakey had been working on the development of artificial blood vessels, but struggled to find a way to create tubes that were both strong enough to withstand the pressure of blood flow and flexible enough to bend and twist as needed.

As DeBakey relates in “Heart to Heart: The Twentieth Century Battle Against Cardiac Disease,” upon experimenting with shaping tubes on his own—using his wife's sewing machine—and successfully grafting a homemade bifurcation tube on a patient in 1954, he needed a way to fashion the synthetic fiber Dacron into the custom shapes.

His search led him to a socks-knitting factory in Reading, Pennsylvania, where someone directed him to an expert at the Philadelphia Textile Institute (now Jefferson) named Thomas Edman.





▲ *Thomas Edman*

Edman was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1923 as Thomas Eidlitz. After serving the U.S. in WWII, he registered at Textile under the GI Bill for the four-year knitting degree program. Preternaturally talented purlwise, Edman later recalled, “I knew more about knitting than the instructor.”

After graduating, Edman completed a one-year specialty knitting course at the Leicester College of Technology in England. In fall 1953, he returned to his alma mater for an open house, where he ran into then-president Dr. Bertrand Hayward, who listened with interest about his experience abroad. Impressed, Hayward offered him a job in the knitting department. The following January, Edman arrived on Henry Avenue—only to find that Hayward remembered him, but not his name, then Eidlitz, “because

of the unusual spelling,” he recounted.

The next week, he legally changed his name to Edman.

Edman quickly rose through the academic ranks, becoming chair of the knitting department and gaining a reputation for creativity and ingenuity in the textile industry.

Edman was intrigued by DeBakey’s challenge. He saw the potential in using novel textile structures for biomedical purposes, particularly their flexibility and adaptive properties. Synthetic textiles could be woven or knitted into tubes, ribbons, bifurcated structures, or braids. They could stretch or compress.

Edman agreed to help, and funded by philanthropy from a grateful patient of DeBakey’s, he got to work.

At first Edman tried using a hand-cranked, Swiss-made knitting machine to craft the tubular grafts. He tinkered with it, replacing its needle-and-jack mechanism with one utilizing long and short needles. But it just wasn’t right.

Finally, he had a breakthrough. Edman realized the key to creating a strong, flexible tube was to knit fibers in a way that would allow the tube to expand and contract. No existing machine could do it, so he invented one that could.

Edman’s novel machine could knit fibers together in a seamless, multi-branched manner. It proved to be the crucial step in the development of artificial blood vessels.

Edman and DeBakey’s partnership laid the foundation for many of the advancements that have been made in cardiac

surgery since then, which have saved and improved countless lives.

DeBakey would continue operating in the surgical theater well into his 90s. He would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Medal of Science, and the Congressional Gold Medal, among other honors.

But DeBakey’s and Edman’s lives would remain bound, in profound ways, by the fabric of the heart they developed together.

In 2007, upon hearing about the Congressional Gold Medal, Edman wrote to DeBakey to congratulate him. DeBakey wrote him back: “Your machine was the grandfather of all the current types of grafts. I am most grateful for your contributions in this regard and as fate determined, I benefited personally by having a Dacron graft used on me to repair an aortic dissection.”

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REDEFINE POSSIBLE







When local recording artist Gina Zo landed an invite to music's grand event, the Grammys, she turned to a Jefferson fashion design student and a recent alumna to create a 'coming-of-age' look.

BY BRIAN HICKEY



GYPSY SOUL



ROCK 'N' ROLL

The lead singer of the “gypsy soul rock 'n' roll” band Velvet Rouge knew she wanted to tap into the creative energy of younger designers not yet hemmed in by their professional routines. Already well aware of Jefferson’s stellar reputation, Zo all but immediately reached out to the University’s fashion-design program.

“Young creatives have more of a fearless approach to their work” she says. “They can take more creative liberties than someone who’s been in the industry a long time and already has a certain standard that they rarely will shy away from.”

The job posting sought designers to create dresses and accompanying accessories, an exciting opportunity that prompted both senior Lauren Schuler and 2022 alumna Michaela Day to apply posthaste. Seeking to amplify the talents of students was a deliberate step.

“I would have killed for these opportunities when I was younger,” Zo said. “If I can offer Lauren and Michaela an opportunity like this, why give it to someone who already has endless resources?”

The trio teamed up for a design sprint during which Schuler feverishly customized three dresses to match Zo’s vision, with Day accessorizing those looks in advance of the February 5 event in Los Angeles.

This moment wasn’t always in the cards. After appearing on “The Voice” in 2016, Zo had soured on an industry that she saw as tilted against female performers.

“I felt conflicted and stressed, as if men in the industry were holding me hostage, so I quit for three years,” says Zo, who took a job during the hiatus with Joan Shepp, a designer women’s clothing boutique.

“I needed to mature to be a successful musician,” continues Zo, aka Gina Castanzo. “I didn’t even sing in the car because of the negative emotions music made me feel. When the pandemic happened, there was a shift in my opinion of music, and I fell back in love with it. I cautiously texted the band, asking if they wanted to get back together. We were all so excited by the idea.”

That was in July 2020. By 2021, Velvet Rouge would release their first new single, “Never Meant.” They also started playing live performances and working with renowned

producers Brian McTear and Amy Morrissey at Miner Street Recordings.

“When Brian and Amy were working with us, it felt like, ‘Oh my God, we’re not only being taken seriously, but being taken seriously by two impactful producers,’” says Zo, of a duo that has worked with The War on Drugs, Sharon Van Etten, and Dr. Dog.

The up-and-coming artist’s revival led to the Grammys invitation. It also created an opportunity that has seen the 25-year-old West Chester native meeting regularly with the Jefferson designers.

The connection was made possible through Zo’s employment at Joan Shepp. Specifically, as Shepp’s marketing manager, Zo oversaw a window-display competition, which Schuler’s team from Jefferson won. When Schuler replied to Zo’s job posting, she did not make the connection. Seeing her name immediately jarred Zo’s memory, though.

“When I saw her email, I was like, ‘oh duh, of course I’m using Lauren for the gown work,’” says Zo. “The vibe I got from her during the competition was that not only was she professional and creative, but she’s someone who would be slaying in the fashion industry.” For Schuler, it was an absolute thrill to re-connect.

“She is a young professional with immense amounts of energy and confidence—such a perfect muse!” says Schuler, who is already working in the bridal industry. “Making red-carpet looks is a natural extension of what I love to do.”

With a portfolio of custom, commissioned wedding dresses and prom looks, she notes that “working one-on-one with women to create such a personal look makes me so happy. I came into this process with experience and expectations of how I would conduct fittings and space out our timeline.”

Echoing those sentiments is Day. Zo was not only “awed by her ability to be super creative and visionary,” but impressed that Day had previously worked on gloves with one of her favorite designers, Ana Sui. Day was uniquely qualified for the role since she closely studied accessories while working at the Jefferson Design Center. She was also already a huge fan.

“When I saw who she was and what she wanted for her band, I was immediately awestruck,” says Day. “She had been the muse I had in my head all throughout college. She was enchanting with wild





red hair, sultry eyes, and a voice that could move female rock music forward. My true start of inspiration was Zo. I listened to her songs everywhere and some demos to see where her band was heading.”

Discussing the start of the creative planning sessions, Schuler notes that Zo shared both designers and brands that she loved, while explaining specifically why she was drawn to those styles.

“At the same time, I was writing in my notebook key words that Zo seemed most excited about,” Schuler recalls.

“She mentioned Gucci, Florence Welch and Cher in the early 1970s and '80s. Design elements that she was looking for were sheer fabric, low-cut, ruffles, or beading. She had a very clear vision of what she wanted so the design process for me was super easy.”

A list of elements Zo wanted was used to sketch drawings of the fronts and backs of proposed designs up for initial consideration.

“Each sketch highlighted a different design element, color and construction technique,” Schuler says. “Zo and I met to talk about them, and we decided on the final dress.”

Next up were the “construction plan and garment engineering trials” during which Schuler built computer animated design (CAD) maps of the dress to digitally render the seam lines, stitches and pattern placements to be followed while constructing the dress. Samples were created, and different types of fabrics, ruffles and applique were tested.

“My biggest challenge was figuring out how I can make this dress look expensive while being made on a small budget,” Schuler shares. “The ruffles were a strategic design element in that sense. Ruffles are a very basic sewing technique, but they add lots of volume and interest to a garment, making it look high-end and interesting. I made at least four mockups in various fabrics before I chose a final. When I was happy with the muslin sample, it was finally time to buy the real fabric and make the dress!”

Step-by-step draping and pattern-making techniques

led to weekly fittings, which sparked the idea of creating a shorter version of the red-carpet dress for the afterparty.

“We strategically decided to make the afterparty dress similar looking as a way for people to continue to recognize Zo, as she will be a new face at the Grammys,” Schuler says. “I wanted to design Zo’s assistant’s dress as well since they will be next to each other on the carpet. It was important to me that this third dress would naturally continue our design concept, color palette and overall help to enhance Zo’s showstopping look.”

For accessories, the team discussed looks from 16th century France, whimsical and/or witchy concepts, and Moroccan architecture.

“Ultimately, I could not get the sun and moon out of my head,” says Day of the headpiece-and-gloves ensemble designed to mesh with Schuler’s sheer, ruffled gown designs. “Think of the sun as yin and yang, two parts of a whole. The moon symbolizes femininity, love and the stages of life, whereas the sun is powerful, passionate and energizing. I want the world to see how powerful Zo is, and that she is doing it without sacrificing her femininity. In fact, her femininity is her power.”

For Zo’s “how do we show who I am as an artist when nobody knows me?” challenge, finishing touches were completed during a series of January meetings in a Hayward Hall design studio, including one which drew the attention of CBS3.



**This whole custom look that the students have created is a coming-of-age moment for all of us.**

“This whole custom look that the students have created is a coming-of-age moment for all of us. My whole vision as an artist is to be creative, crafty, and very sexy but professional, and not let people dictate my vision,” Zo says. “You can be so talented as a woman, not in a cocky way but knowing I don’t need to hide myself. Confidence: That’s what matters, and that’s what we want to teach other young women working in these industries.”

For Day, it’s an unexpected source of pride.

“I didn’t imagine my stuff going on the red carpet so soon

after graduation,” she says. “I am really proud of that.”

“I cannot wait to see Zo walk the red carpet. It’s going to be so surreal,” Schuler concurs.

“I take a lot of pride in what I do,” Schuler says. “It’s not easy getting to a point where you get opportunities like this, especially as a student. A lot of sleepless nights. A lot of hard work. I don’t think it will feel real, to be honest, and I’ll probably shed a couple tears.”



## Architecture and Physical Therapy Students Collaborate to Improve Health and Community Engagement

Thomas Jefferson University's distinctive, multidisciplinary educational methodology is bringing about unparalleled innovation and discovery for its students and the surrounding community and patients Jefferson serves.

In the culmination of a semester-long project and in collaboration with faculty, architecture and physical therapy students recently presented proposals to design installations and wayfinding strategies to enhance the Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center.

The student teams designed spaces outside the Center—located in the BOK Building in South Philadelphia—to improve accessibility to its health and wellness services, including physical therapy (PT) and the use of outdoor space to improve health and community engagement.

Thanks to PT professors Drs. Louis Hunter and Stephanie Muth, and architecture professors Christopher Harnish and David Kratzer—who earned a grant through Jefferson's Center for Faculty Development and Nexus Learning Pedagogy Grant Program—this collaboration allowed architecture students to design with the patient or client in mind.

"Doctor of physical therapy (DPT) programs have begun



▲ *Top photo: PT student Madeline Reich and architecture student Wyatt Korb present their project to faculty. Bottom photo: Architecture student Samuel Becker partnered with PT student Cristy Peterson on "Natural Escape."*

to incorporate the social determinants of health into their curricula," says Hunter, noting the PT students acted as design consultants for the architecture students. "Faculty wanted the DPT students to provide input regarding how the patients and people in the community could safely access and utilize the space in the architectural designs to improve their health, especially from a functional and participation perspective."

Students partnered on designs to motivate patients to do their PT exercises and therapeutic activities. The PT aspect enriched the architectural discussion. Kratzer notes, "It was important for the architecture students to consider how one sits, stands, moves, and interacts with the spaces around them."

Working with PT student Madeline Reich, architecture student Wyatt Korb proposed

an installation with a towering wooden frame, and shifting walls and roof moved by the patients. It would simultaneously act as a PT gym and piece of equipment in one, its structure allowing for bodies to move and use space in an unconventional way. For example, it would include a large rope that a patient could pull down to enhance strength and lift the roof to allow the sun to shine in. "Working with a student from a different discipline grounded the project for me," Korb says. It helps to design with a purpose of use in mind."

"I found it valuable to see another angle on a similar concept and case," Reich concurs.

Muth championed the project from a PT perspective. "As PTs, we usually focus on the individual," she says. "This type of collaboration allows us to have a larger impact on entire communities."

Architecture student Samuel Becker and PT student Cristy Peterson partnered to create "Natural Escape." Their proposed design is a garden path with green walls. Winding walkways direct patients, and have offshoots of empty space where patients exercise.

"I didn't consider putting railings along the path until speaking with Cristy," Becker says. "She helped me realize the limitations of not having them. It would be difficult for patients with mobility issues to use the walkways without railings."

"I didn't really know anything about ADA protocols, so considering dimensions was



▲ *Thirteen medical and industrial design students—pictured with Dr. Robert Pugliese (left) and Dr. Mark Tykocinski (center)—pitched their products during DesignPhiladelphia on Oct. 19.*

something I'd never done before," Peterson says.

### JeffSolves Brings Medicine and Design Together to Improve Patient Care

Since its inception in 2016, the JeffSolves MedTech program has paired Kanbar College of Design, Engineering, and Commerce and Sidney Kimmel Medical College students to develop innovative solutions to healthcare problems. This year, for the first time, the teams partnered with Jefferson Health nursing departments to identify—and help fix—issues nurses face.

"Nurses see it all," says Tod Corlett, director of the industrial design programs. "They understand patients' issues, see clinicians' problems, and know what is needed that may not be found in available products. It's an amazing opportunity to take advantage of their perspectives and insights."

This year, three teams worked with nursing units at Jefferson Health—Abington, Jefferson Stratford Hospital, and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. Students chose their focus areas based on contextual inquiry with their nursing units as opposed to previous years, when projects were assigned.

Dr. Kate FitzPatrick, the Connelly Foundation Chief Nurse Executive Officer at Jefferson Health, associate dean for nursing health systems partnerships and innovation, and professor at Jefferson, says nurses are uniquely positioned to address challenges in care delivery.

"It has been powerful to empower our students and give them access to leaders to advance solutions that can enhance patient care and clinical practice," she continues.

Eric Schneider, associate professor of industrial design, says both medical and design students benefited tremendously from the collaboration. "Design



students gained a deeper understanding of how rigorous research practices can drive and reinforce the development process, and medical students learned how design practice provides a framework for both iteration and convergence as a concept is developed," he says.

"JeffSolves prepared students to succeed as innovators," says Dr. Rose Ritts, executive vice president and chief innovation officer at Jefferson. "Students experience the innovation process directly while getting support and mentorship from industry and patent experts." This year's projects include the following:

NursePOD reimagines the mobile workstation, and was developed in response to the challenges in bedside care and physical and emotional fatigue experienced by nurses. Project leads: Medical students Jessica Dragonetti and Sam DeMatte; industrial design students Nate Godshall and Calvin Matischak.

Motivity is a redesigned IV system that improves ambulation, safety, and utility. Project leads: Medical students David Gordon and Rachel Monane; industrial design students Joseph Braverman and Maitri Doshi.

Acclivity is a securement system that ensures patients' safety and prevents disoriented patients from pulling out their IVs. Project leads: Medical students Haley DeMartin, Albert "Andy" Huang, and Paarth Jain; industrial design students Julia Ponezk and Ethan White.

The students presented their concepts at Delve

on October 19, 2022, as part of DesignPhiladelphia. University President Dr. Mark L. Tykocinski, who launched JeffSolves in 2016, congratulated the teams and their faculty mentors for their efforts. "Sometimes, you seed something, and you never know where it might go," he says. "It's incredible to see what you have done here."

### Middle East Fellowship Forever Changes Nursing Professor

Anthony Bourdain said, "The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart and on your body. You take something with you. Hopefully, you left something behind."

Eager to travel following the two-plus years of the pandemic, Jennie Ryan, assistant professor at the Jefferson College of Nursing, embarked on a two-week trip to Israel this summer with the Jewish National Fund Faculty Fellowship Program.

The program seeks to foster collaboration between U.S. professors and their Israeli counterparts, building international partnerships in science and research, and aiming to break down stereotypes and introduce U.S. academics to the "startup" nation of Israel.

"I expected to learn a lot about Israel on this trip," Ryan shares. "I didn't anticipate learning so much about myself."

Ryan's journey began in the north, visiting Nazareth and the Church of the Annunciation. "The enormity of being in the Holy Land quickly enthralled me," she says. "We traveled to a rural kibbutz and met Efi Talbi, the first Israeli prisoner in the Lebanon War, and discussed the Israeli Defense Forces and the many conflicts Israel has seen in its short history as a nation. It struck me how much violence this country has experienced, but it wouldn't really set in until we went to Galilee Medical Center which, like many hospitals in Israel, has multiple underground floors where staff move patients during missile attacks."

Ryan later visited Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. "Its simulation center holds large rooms to prepare students for chemical warfare and mass casualties," she shares. "Here, I learned what everyone in Israel knows: You have 90 seconds to reach the bomb shelter before the missile hits."

After a visit to Haifa, including a ride on a gondola to the University of Haifa and Technion University, and following academic meetings, Ryan's next stop was Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, one of the holiest sites in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. "I was overcome by how these religions, and this consecrated place, have shaped our world," she says.

"I thought I couldn't be more stunned—and then we went to Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center," she continues.



▲ Assistant professor of nursing Dr. Jennie Ryan spent two weeks in Israel as part of the Jewish National Fund Faculty Fellowship Program. The fellowship ended in Tel Aviv during Pride. Over 30 faculty members from around the country participated in the program. Here, Dr. Jennie Ryan is with Nicholas Metheny from the University of Miami.

There, the group met Rena Quint, who was taken to a concentration camp at age 6. "I will never forget her story of resilience," Ryan says. "I asked her how she overcame such trauma in her life. 'Love,' she answered. Love always will be more powerful than hate; more prevailing than violence."

Ryan recounts that the trip not only provided intense moments, but also shared laughter and joy—from meeting chefs and musicians, eating Shabbat dinners, floating in the Dead Sea, climbing to the top of Masada, and spending her last night in Tel Aviv dancing in celebration of Pride.

"Throughout our trip, we saw the diversity of modern Israel," she shares. "We met Jews, Arabs, Druze, Palestinians, Ethiopians, Bedouins and Christians. I was taken aback by the diversity

in an area the size of New Jersey."

Throughout her journey, Ryan often thought about her students and her role as teacher. "Immersed in learning, actively asking questions and quietly reflecting, I came back eager to share not just about Israel but the importance of constructing your own opinions," she says. "In a world often shaped by social and popular media, we sometimes lose our own views. I want my students to form their own opinions based on their experiences, and I will continue to encourage their individual thought and development."

"Israel is a country of unfathomable complexity, layered in history and culture," Ryan remarks. "Its duality can be seen in the mingling of minarets with menorahs, and the observance of traditions

coupled with progressive values. It's both the center of ancient religions and a world leader in innovation."

"The Faculty Fellowship was a journey through the heart of Israel that has forever changed me," she concludes. "I took so much with me, and hope I left something behind."

### Alumna Maddie Woytovich Is Making Strides in the Fashion Industry

Fashion has captivated Maddie Woytovich '20 almost her whole life. At age 5, she was diagnosed with alopecia, which caused her to lose all the hair on her body. While this initially shook her confidence, fashion allowed her to express herself and embrace her differences.



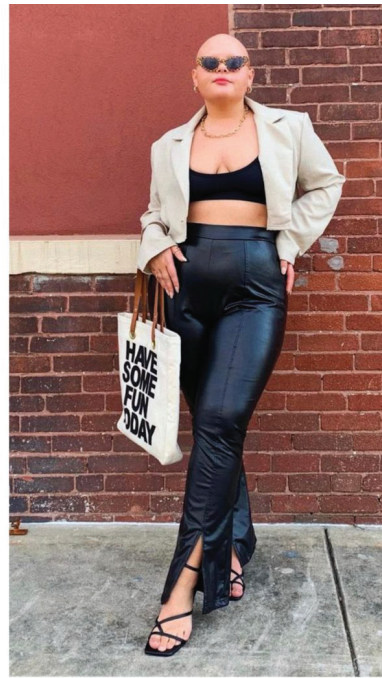
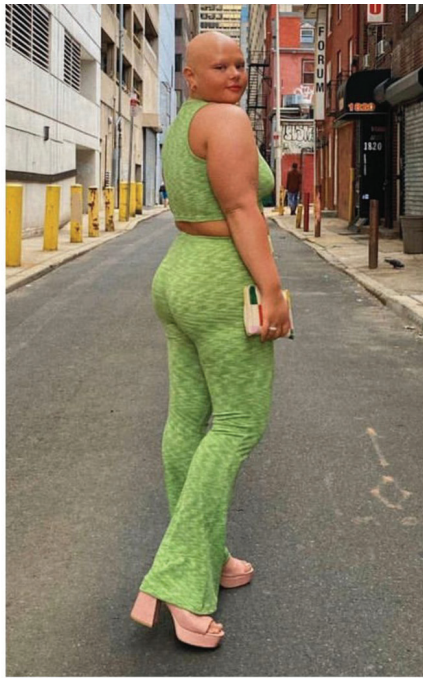
"When all my friends and sisters were doing their hair in different ways, I was playing around with funky outfits and crazy earrings," she says. "I grew to love standing out and being different. One day I even came to elementary school with a hot pink wig."

While a student in Jefferson's fashion merchandising and management program, Woytovich started modeling for Aerie. "Modeling was always a dream of mine, but as someone with alopecia and a mid-size body type, one that I never thought would happen," she says.

Woytovich believes that her alopecia forced her out of her comfort zone, and that self-expression has followed her into adulthood. "I decided to be bold and buy an Aerie bikini," Woytovich says. "I posted a photo of myself in the bikini on Instagram and tagged the brand." Aerie saw the photo and asked permission to share it on their website as a product photo, reaching out again for consent to use in storefronts and marketing materials. Woytovich was soon featured on a billboard in Times Square, became a model and ambassador for Aerie, and appeared in other campaigns as part of their #AerieReal initiative showing real people modeling their clothing.

"I posted that photo out of one brave moment, and I'm forever grateful that I did," she shares. "It led to so many other opportunities."

Since her campaigns with Aerie, she has also modeled for David's Bridal, and is now



▲ Diagnosed with alopecia at 5 years old, Maddie Woytovich says fashion allowed her to embrace her differences.

represented by btwn mgmt, a body-diverse talent agency representing people between the typical sizes featured by retail sites (4 to 18 for women). Despite being a common size segment, it is often underrepresented in fashion.

"I still feel like that young girl experimenting with fashion," she says. "When I began to model, I was able to embrace the things that make me different."

Today, she is experiencing the other side of the fashion industry through her involvement in retail. Following a stint as a store manager at Aerie, and planning their social media events, Woytovich has just started a full-time position at QVC as a merchandising administrator. "I'm so grateful to get my foot in the door, and I'm learning

a lot from this position," she shares. "I'm really thankful for their flexibility with my modeling career."

As for future plans, Woytovich is still exploring, and is interested in social media marketing, influencer relations, and possibly modeling full time.

"One thing I loved about Jefferson is the broadness and variety of experiences I got there," she says. "I'm grateful to have gotten my feet wet in different parts of the industry to see what I truly love to do. For now, I'm taking things one day at a time."

Woytovich encourages fashion students to be open-minded and try everything. "Immerse yourself in what you're learning, and it will take you far," she advises.

# THE NEXXUS

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LOVE

J



student to #philebrity



## Influenced by Jefferson

**As 2023 approached,** The Philadelphia Inquirer asked readers, “Which local icons had a 2022 that felt so distinctly Philly?”

Over the next few weeks, 79,000 votes poured in for celebrities, athletes, fans, and “wild cards.” TikTok influencer and alum Brandon Edelman ’18, MS ’20—or @bran\_\_flakezz as he’s known online—was placed in the Wild Card category, head-to-head against other local icons like “Philadelphia’s Chicken Man” Alexander Tominsky, who ate 40 consecutive rotisserie chickens in front of a boisterous crowd at the abandoned pier by Walmart in South Philly. The competition was stiff, but Edelman notched the win with 48% of the wild card vote.

Take a glimpse through his TikTok, and it’s not hard to understand why. Edelman’s content encapsulates relatability, like his viral “Immunity Necklace” TikTok, where he humorously advocates for a safe word that grants you safety from judgment in gossip. His account has amassed millions of views and gained over 350,000 followers, including “Only Murders in the Building” star Selena Gomez, who even joined Edelman on a live stream.

The actual wild card in Edelman’s career trajectory is this: He never sought a career in social media or content creation. Born and raised in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Edelman had always been fascinated by fashion and pop culture. As a child, he preferred to play dress-up with dolls. Television shows that spotlighted New York’s early- to mid-2000s social and style scenes, series

like “Gossip Girl” and “Sex and the City,” were his favorites. Early on, he had dreams about a career in fashion.

“I’ve always been like a big fish in a little pond,” he says.

However, Edelman didn’t dream of designing clothes. Instead, he was drawn to the behind-the-scenes: retail strategy, marketing, and buying. When it came time to consider colleges, he set out to find a school that offered a degree in fashion merchandising. That’s when he found Jefferson’s Fashion and Management major, a program ranked in the top 20 fashion schools by Business of Fashion. It was a seemingly perfect fit.

“I did a regular campus tour, then I went to Discover Fashion Day, and I met Carson Kressley, who was on the original ‘Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,’” Edelman says. “I was like, this is already so cool that I don’t even go to this school yet, and there’s already such an amazing opportunity to meet a celebrity in the industry.”

Close enough to visit his family on the occasional weekend but far enough away that he could begin establishing his own identity, Edelman fell in love with Jefferson’s East Falls Campus.

“It was like a small undergraduate campus that was really pretty, had trees, and was close to the city but not exactly in the city,” he explains. “I was like, this is it. I feel like this is where I want to start my education.”

Describing his educational journey, Edelman laughs. “I was obsessed with Jefferson. I literally did everything that they had to offer.”

BY KASEY SHAW





**The education I got was invaluable...It's been incredible and part of why I think I've had such success... If this dies down, I can easily go back into that industry because I have two great degrees from a reputable institution like Jefferson. And I was able to work in the industry...all because I had a great education.**



Edelman was hungry for opportunity and found it at Jefferson. By the time he returned for his master's in fashion design management, he had turned his part-time job at Urban Outfitters into an internship at its corporate headquarters. He'd even spent a semester in Milan through Jefferson's fashion design study abroad program.

"That's one of the things that Jefferson really taught me," Edelman says. "You don't have to live in New York or even study a degree in New York to work in the fashion industry. Are there several fashion corporations there? Of course. But I think Philadelphia is slept on in so many areas but [not] in the fashion industry. I learned quickly that Philadelphia was a viable option if I wanted to pursue a degree and an education and a career in fashion."

Shaped by the confidence created by his education, Edelman grew comfortable in front of the camera and began making videos on TikTok for his friends.

"Everything I learned from my fashion education has applied to social media," he says.

Soon, his videos gained traction beyond his immediate circle, and that traction hasn't slowed down since.

"The education I got was invaluable," he says. "It's been incredible and part of why I think I've had such success... If this dies down, I can easily go back into that industry because I have two great degrees from a reputable institution like Jefferson. And I was able to work in the industry...all because I had a great education."

Edelman smiles when asked what a young Brandon would think about @bran\_\_flakezz.

"I think he'd be shocked," he laughs. "He'd be very pleasantly surprised seeing the bigger version of him accomplishing all of his dreams."

And what could be more distinctly Philly than that? 🍷

# REDEFINE POSSIBLE



At **Thomas Jefferson University** we dare to ask bold questions, like **Can an industrial designer get a surfer back on his board?** and **Can the future of architecture empower global sustainability?**

But asking tough questions isn't enough — we need to answer them. So, we are converging people, ideas and perspectives to find leading-edge solutions for real-world problems. We focus on our craft to drive progress and growth in architecture, business, design, engineering, fashion & textiles, health, medicine, nursing, science and social science.

Built for a future that has yet to be defined, Jefferson is crossing disciplines to bring unrivaled innovation and discovery to higher education and to answer the questions that will **redefine possible**.





# The *Light* Fantastic

*Physicists describe the wave-particle duality of light. At Jefferson, faculty explore another duality in light—between health and art.*

BY IRISA GOLD

**L**ight is elemental to human life, affording the power to see and interact with the world around us. Yet light does so much more, affecting physiological, psychological, and emotional health and well-being.

Light captured the imagination of professor of neuroscience George C. “Bud” Brainard, PhD, early in his life. He says, “At age 12, I read an article in *Life* magazine about the western fence lizard, also called the blue-belly, which has a small, functional third eye on its forehead that detects light, and is closely associated with the pineal gland, found

in the center of the brain. That grabbed my attention.”

A pioneer in the study of how light affects biology, Brainard has directed Jefferson’s renowned Light Research Program since 1984.

He says 90% of his work has focused on how light regulates the circadian system, the neuroendocrine system, and the neurobehavioral system. “And in that mix is the pineal gland,” he explains.

Brainard’s early curiosity about the blue-belly lizard eventually led to a breakthrough in 2001. “I hypothesized that we could understand what wavelengths or colors of light are strongest or weakest in regulating the

pineal gland,” he says. “We thought retinal photoreceptors in the eye were detecting light and sending it to the brain to regulate the hormone melatonin. From studies on 72 healthy women and men, we deduced that there was an undiscovered photoreceptor in the human eye.” The findings caused an upheaval in the field. He continues, “We weren’t certain the scientific community would accept the paper, but the article has now been cited thousands of times.”

Just one year later, researchers from Brown University and Johns Hopkins located this new photoreceptor in the retina. Instead of there being four types of



▲ George C. “Bud” Brainard, PhD, with spacecraft lighting design.

photoreceptors in the eyes, there are five. “This newly discovered photoreceptor is a directly photosensitive retinal ganglion cell containing a novel photopigment called melanopsin,” he explains. “These cells proved that the eyes do far more than provide sight—they send signals to the brain that influence countless aspects of human physiology and behavior.”

Brainard’s discovery caught NASA’s attention. “Space flight is hard on the body and can disrupt sleep and circadian rhythms,” he says. “They wondered how we could use light during space flight in a non-pharmacological way to improve these for the astronauts.”

He served as a key advisor in spacecraft lighting design, including retrofitting the entire lighting system of the U.S., European, and Japanese portions of the International Space Station. Research continues and will examine astronauts’ responses to the new system, and additional ways to improve lighting. Recognized with NASA’s prestigious Johnson Space Center Director’s Innovation Award, Brainard says, “As a kid, I used to build and launch model rockets. Having a hand in these projects was a high point in my career.”

More recently, Brainard received the Illuminating Engineering Society’s most prestigious technical achievement, the IES Medal Award. But perhaps his brightest recognition is the





▲ Lyn Godley, MFA

The project investigates how the stress of a space mission affects the human body. “Data collected will be added to the database to inform NASA further on whether their particular light settings are appropriate for both physiology and color vision,” Hanifin says.

Back on Earth, the merger of Philadelphia University and Thomas Jefferson University (see page 30) has opened new avenues of collaboration for Brainard and other faculty working on the health effects of light.

Since arriving at the University over 10 years ago, artist and professor Lyn Godley, MFA, has developed a cross-disciplinary concentration in lighting design focusing on light as experience. “As soon as you light anything, it draws people toward it,” she says. “Everything I do has light involved.”

In 2011, Godley was offered a solo exhibition in Cologne, Germany. The results were astounding. “We filled the gallery with images of birds in flight that we had fed fiber optics through, creating pixels of light along the wings and tails,” she says. “The curator shared that visitors were behaving strangely after entering the gallery. They were sitting on the floor, not speaking, staying for up to three hours, and returning multiple times. This was not normal.”

Godley investigated. “We discovered that the LEDs, chosen because they were the brightest, were the same wavelength used in light therapy,” she says. “This had a

growth of his program and the widespread interest in the work.

“The field has exploded,” says John Hanifin, PhD, an assistant professor of neurology and associate director of the Light Research Program.

Hanifin is the lead researcher on a collaborative study funded by the Department of Energy to examine whether tunable solid state lighting systems—which control a light source’s color temperature output—can impact health and sleep quality in measurable amounts, compared to static fluorescent lighting systems.

“Compelling research in mice has shown that the kind of daytime lighting—fluorescent or tunable LED light—can have a significant impact on health,” says Hanifin. “We want

to test whether that’s the case in people too, and whether tunable LED lighting systems can improve measures of sleep, metabolism, and overall health.”

A second study will more closely replicate the real-life conditions of the average day-time worker and will help to understand the health impacts of different types of workplace lighting.

In collaboration with the Sheba Medical Center, the Ramon Foundation, and the Israeli Space Agency, the Brainard and Hanifin lab contributed one of three research projects to the 2022 Rakia space mission, the first-ever private enterprise to send space tourists to the International Space Station.



▲ Godley's InFlight solo exhibit in Cologne, Germany.



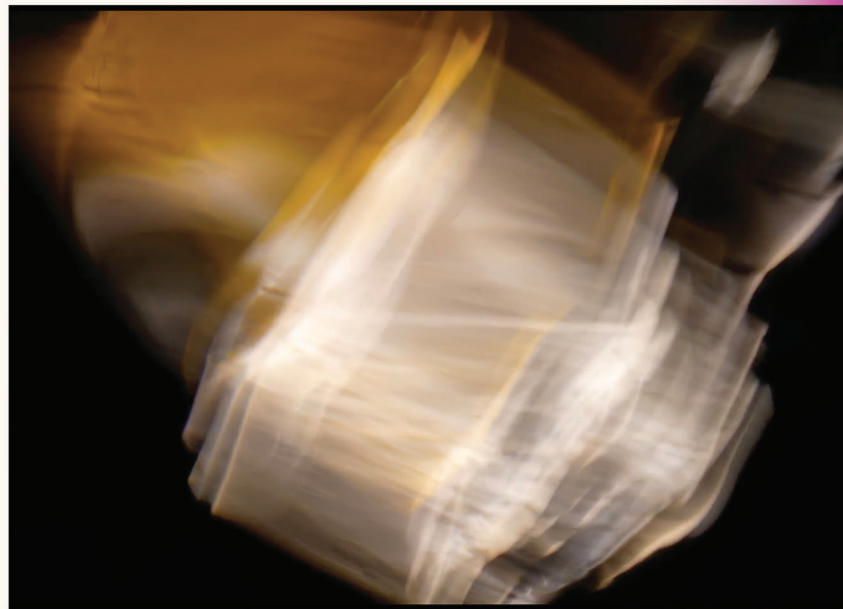
profound effect on the direction of my work.”

Godley founded and directs Jefferson’s Center of Immersive Arts for Health, a collaborative initiative across 14 design, research, and clinical departments dedicated to studying the impact of dynamic and interactive art and design on wellbeing.

“Immersive arts using light engage the viewer in ways that might help to relieve stress or induce a meditative state,” Godley says. “This is similar to distraction therapy, where patients are given a virtual reality headset to change their focus. We believe the experience could engage the patient to positively affect the overall healthcare experience, resulting in improved physiological and psychological impact on clinic visits.”

The merger has allowed close collaboration between Godley and Brainard, including a project with five other international universities to write an open-source curriculum





▲ *Waiting Room exhibit at HOT•BED Philadelphia.*

on the effect of light on health, Light4Health, which was funded by a European Union Erasmus+ grant.

In spring 2022, the center ran its first dedicated interdisciplinary course, “Health and the Art

Experience,” for students across a range of medical and design fields to develop hypotheses to use dynamic light for healthcare settings. Their 2022 international student design competition challenged students to design immersive

light installations for a positive impact on patient health.

An art exhibit designed as a series of “waiting rooms” featuring six artists and including student competition winners debuted at HOT•BED, a Philadelphia gallery, in September 2022. “Nearly 200 visitors surveyed reported that they stayed anywhere from five minutes to two hours, felt calmer, peaceful, more introspective, and inspired,” shares Godley.

“Research shows that art and light can have a positive impact on health, specifically in healthcare environments,” Godley says. “It’s an exciting time to be involved in research on light and art—the door is open to many innovations.”

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Secure 2.0 increased the age retirees must begin taking taxable withdrawals from 72 to 73 in 2023 and 75 by 2033. IRA owners can still make qualified charitable distributions at 70½.

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— Den Cullen, '74



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# We Are One Jefferson

*Blazing New Trails in Education*

BY CINDY LEFLER

It all started with a road trip.

In 2015, then provost, now president Mark L. Tykocinski, MD, and other university leaders took a ride to East Falls to tour Philadelphia University. While walking through the halls, Tykocinski thought: “This is an impressive place. Wouldn’t it be something if we could join together?”

By July 2017, Jefferson and Philadelphia University had merged, creating a preeminent university like none other—one that stretched imaginations and reached across disciplines, one that took all the “what ifs” and made them “we cans.”

“We brought two institutional stories together, and melded legacy with transformation,” Tykocinski says, noting the rich histories of both Thomas Jefferson University, a health sciences university with one of the oldest medical schools (founded in 1824),

and Philadelphia University, a regional master’s university and the nation’s first textile school founded in 1884.

Five years down the road, the combined institution now consists of 10 colleges and has grown in size and reputation. Demonstrated successes include increased enrollment, a considerable rise in rankings, enhanced value, more research funding, and an impressive 97% rate of students getting jobs or gaining acceptance to graduate school.

Today, Jefferson has garnered national and international recognition, and stands as a window into what education will look like in the future.

“There’s a growing number of mergers like these across the country, and we have emerged as a model for how it is done,” Tykocinski says, adding that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an institutional accreditor

recognized by the United States Department of Education, refers people to Jefferson to learn how such unions are accomplished.

The success, says Tykocinski, hinged on two factors: taking novel approaches to learning and making connections that add value to the University.

### Nexus Learning

The Nexus Learning approach adopted by the University focuses on transdisciplinary learning that is active, collaborative, real-world, and grounded in the liberal arts, with a distinctive approach to humanities education.

The model allows for inventive collaborations among branches of learning that seemingly have little in common, but spawn projects that culminate in novel concepts.



## What will best benefit the students?

“We had this idea of enriching students through co-curriculum by cultivating different kinds of thinking—design thinking through medicine plus design, medicine plus humanities, medicine plus data science for computational thinking, medicine plus policy for relational thinking,” Tykocinski says.

One of the first programs was JeffSolves, which pairs second-year medical students and design students to apply novel principles for generating creative solutions to challenges in healthcare settings. Some of their projects have included restyled nursing carts that improve efficiency, IV poles that reduce the tripping hazard, and a fabric sleeve designed to prevent patients from pulling IV lines from their arms.

But the partnerships aren’t just between design and medicine programs. There is also a focus on other combined disciplines, such as architecture and urban planning, that tackles the global water and energy crises, alleviates “hot spots” in big cities, and eases the effects of climate change.

However, adds Matt Dane Baker, interim provost, all of the cross-collaboration

takes nothing away from each individual college and major.

For example, students hoping to become the next Ralph Lauren or Stella McCartney enjoy an internationally recognized fashion design and marketing program. In fact, fashion design at Jefferson is consistently ranked as a top fashion school by Fashionista, Business of Fashion, and Fashion-Schools.org

“The fear was that we would become one big health science place, but we are fully supporting the architecture, design, fashion, and business programs, and have added scholarship money to them,” Baker says. “We have also maintained the culture in areas where it’s critically important, using signature pedagogy [the style of teaching common to specific disciplines, areas of study, or professions] to ensure that each discipline’s ethos is carefully considered.”

### Ranking, Enrollment, and Research Strides

Because of the merger, Jefferson has seen a steady rise in ranking in U.S. News & World Report’s National Universities category. It is now ranked number 127—up 49 places in just the past two years. In addition, it is ranked number 61 on the list’s Best Value colleges, and is nationally ranked in a number of other areas, including colleges for veterans, fashion, and occupational therapy.

For the fifth year in a row, in 2022, Jefferson saw an increase in the first-year undergraduate class, this year enrolling 760 students, an 11% increase

from fall 2021. Additionally, Jefferson’s overall enrollment—including undergraduate, transfer, and graduate students—is increasing at a time when many universities are seeing a decline.

“All of this elevates Jefferson’s profile,” says Tykocinski, noting that Jefferson is now well-known outside of the region, and is attracting students from all over the country.

With growth in prestige and prominence comes an increase in research funding.

Jefferson’s extramural grant funding has more than tripled over the past decade to more than \$200 million annually, sourcing from federal agencies, corporate partners, foundations, and individual philanthropists. It is now classified as an R2 Carnegie National Doctoral Research University.

Another important benefit of the merger, says Baker, is the financial stability that a larger institution allows.

“The merger put us in a better financial position—one that helped it survive recessions and the COVID-19 crisis,” he says, noting that universities of 10,000 students and more thrived during the pandemic, while many smaller ones were forced to close. He adds that the University has been able to invest in infrastructure, scholarship money, and marketing.

### Connections

The success of the merger, says Tykocinski, lies in the connections Jefferson has made. Connections within its own organization, connections

with other colleges, and connections across the globe.

Aside from cross-disciplinary work on its own campuses, Jefferson has partnered with other colleges and universities as a cost-effective way to offer expanded academic opportunities.

“When an undergraduate enrolls at Jefferson, they will essentially have a free academic pass to take courses or semesters at 10 other universities and colleges,” he says. “For example, we don’t offer all aspects of computer science, but our students can take courses at the Goergen Institute of the University of Rochester.”

Another partnership with Princeton University allows Princeton undergraduates to garner early acceptance at Sidney Kimmel Medical College in exchange for enrolling in a joint program with Jefferson.

Jefferson’s partnerships don’t stop at its shores—it now spans the world with a number of global centers, including in Japan, India, Italy, Israel, Malawi, Ireland, United Kingdom, and Colombia.

These partnerships provide students with unique research and learning opportunities. For example, textile students will soon have the chance to earn a first-of-its-kind joint degree through a partnership with Heriot-Watt University in Scotland.

Another partner is Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and the Gemelli University Hospital in Rome, where a joint program allows for an exchange of medical students and health researchers. In addition, a

Vickie and Jack Farber Institute for Neuroscience is currently being built at the Gemelli campus.

The Israel Global Center brings together academic opportunities, including architecture, design, engineering, textiles, fashion, and healthcare, as well as clinical and research initiatives.

While the multitude of connections have made the world just a little smaller for Jefferson, they have also expanded its universe. Earlier this year, three of Jefferson’s research projects focusing on the effects of low gravity and space travel on the human body were part of a space mission with institutional collaborators, including Israel’s Sheba Medical Center.

### The Next Chapter

While the merger between the two universities has been an exciting ride, Geoffrey Cromarty, EdD, senior vice president of operations for the East Falls campus, says it is now time to stop talking about it.

“It’s been five years, and now we need to move on and stop looking back. We proved ourselves, and now it’s time to talk about us as one institution,” he says.

Cromarty was in the first meeting in April 2015 when the merger was first proposed.

“My initial thoughts were: this is really daring, somewhat risky, but potentially rewarding for students,” he says. At that point he had been at PhilaU for 13 years, so there were plenty of concerns. But he quickly

decided to follow his mantra: It’s all about the students.

“For the students, it was the right decision. It has given them opportunities they wouldn’t have found anywhere else,” he says, adding that their degree is worth more now than 10 years ago.

“The faculty has also benefited,” he says, noting that the merger has allowed cross-discipline collaborations that have enhanced instruction and provided wide-ranging opportunities among professors and programs across campuses.

Looking ahead, he believes that Jefferson will continue to be more aspirational and better represent that it is a national research institution with a global presence.

“We are no longer a small commuter college in East Falls or a large health professions university in Center City,” says Cromarty. “We are one, we are bigger, and our goals are bigger. We can’t settle for initiatives that are just going to make us better, but those that will make us stand out.”

Cromarty says that the merger has succeeded beyond what was dreamed, and even more good work will be happening in the future. And as the University progresses, every decision will continue to be made with one thing in mind: “What will best benefit the students?”





# innovate

question



**P**laton is one of the world's most renowned portrait photographers, having photographed more world leaders than anyone else in history, including six American presidents. He has photographed over 30 covers for Time Magazine. In 2013, he founded The People's Portfolio, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to celebrating emerging leaders of human rights and civil rights around the world. Platon's life's work is the subject of a Netflix documentary, "Abstract: The Art of Design." In 2018, he received an honorary degree from Jefferson.

■ **Bon Ku: You have photographed more world leaders than anyone else in history, and now you photograph the least powerful people in the world. What was the inspiration or impetus to shift?**

**Platon:** Some years ago, I had the privilege of photographing Muhammad Ali. I went to his home, and he was very ill when I visited him. He had lost control of his once-powerful fists and arms. I remember draping the American flag over his shoulder, and he was compelled one last time to hold up his hands in the classic defiant boxing pose.

I said to him, "Muhammad, you are the greatest. Teach me to be great. How can my generation be as great as your generation had to be during the civil rights era?"

He couldn't speak very well because of Parkinson's. He whispered in my ear, "I have a confession to make: I wasn't as great as I was...it wasn't me. It was people who saw themselves in my struggle. If you can get people to see themselves in the story that you put forward, then you have a chance of achieving greatness."

I realized at that point that power is not necessarily in authority or the establishment. There is people power. So, I still am a photographer of power, but it's not of the old power as I used to know it. It's people power. It's the same thing, but driving in a different direction.

■ **BK: You said that you believe your mission is to cure society of its amnesia. What does that mean?**

**P:** We've all got the memory of a goldfish.

We all forget what happens. If something bad has happened, we've got to remind ourselves that happened. I used to get criticized for photographing dictators, like Putin, Mugabe, and Ahmadinejad. But the human condition is not as simple as we make it out to be in our society. We paint these dictatorial men as two-dimensional dictatorial cartoons. And they're not. They're three-dimensional, which can make them even more sinister.

I feel my job is to show how complicated this all is. If a dictator is capable of showing an element or hint of charm, they can inspire others. So, if we paint him as two-dimensional, we are underestimating his power and his ability to get people to follow him. I'm here to remind people that these are not men to underestimate.

■ **BK: I want to ask you about the importance of creativity in everyone's life, whether they're in a creative field or not, and how we can tap into that creativity.**

**P:** That's a big question and deserves a big answer.

I think back to a day I spent with Quincy Jones. We all think of Quincy as this beautiful, magical creature who's always smiling. But we forget—going back to amnesia—the battles he fought as a young Black man breaking into a white establishment. I asked him, "When you were young and you faced so many opponents who were racist, what did you say to them? How did you get through that?"

And his face dropped. The charisma stopped. Somehow he channeled this kind of power, resilience. He said, "This is what I always said to my opponents who judge me: Not one drop of my self-worth depends on your acceptance of me."

I thought, that is epic. That is the kind of self-belief you need to break through barriers. The most valuable thing is humility, curiosity, and a determination to serve and drive positive change—in any field you are in. And anyone can do something that makes a difference.

We need everyone to be like Quincy and believe in themselves that they can be part of this pivotal moment in history, because we have some rebuilding to do together.

|| **The most valuable thing is humility, curiosity, and a determination to serve and drive positive change—in any field you are in. And anyone can do something that makes a difference.** ||

## Guest Interviewer



**Bon Ku, MD**, the Marta and Robert Adelson Professor of Medicine and Design, is associate dean for health and design. A practicing emergency physician, Dr. Ku's work has been featured in The New York Times, CNBC, Architectural Digest, and Fast Company. He hosts the Design Lab Podcast, cowrote the book "Health Design Thinking" with Ellen Lupton, and has spoken at various conferences, universities, and academic medical centers worldwide.



Check out [designlabpod.com](https://designlabpod.com) for the full interview and other episodes of Design Lab with Bon Ku, where Bon and guests share stories on the intersections of design, art, science, and health. Tune in on Thursdays to apply new insights, hacks, and design principles to your own life!

### Credits

Host: Bon Ku  
Producer: Robert Pugliese  
Edit: Fernando Queiroz  
Theme Music: Emmanuel Houston  
Cover design: Eden Lew





## Paying It Forward

BY IRISA GOLD

A wizard with numbers and a scholarship recipient, Charles Mond '69 is balancing the ledger by investing in the future of Jefferson students.

Mond, a graduate of Jefferson's School of Business (then Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science), has generously endowed a scholarship through his estate. The Charles H. Mond Scholarship will support students in Jefferson's School of Business, and advance the University's strategic goal of equity in education. In honor of his philanthropy, a room has been named in the Tuttleman Center, where most of today's business courses are held.

He knows firsthand the critical importance a scholarship represents for a deserving student. "Jefferson gave me financial aid as well as a strong foundation, and a good, diverse background," he says.

Mond shares, "People thought the textile field would be good for me as they knew I would

one day want to be in business for myself. I originally wanted to be an accountant, and after one semester as a textile engineering major, I switched my major and graduated with a degree in textile management and marketing. After graduation, I realized that I was more the financial type, and started working toward my MBA, taking a lot of accounting courses. I attended Temple University part time while working as a financial analyst in a large commercial bank."

After learning of an opportunity in California, Mond headed west. "Shortly after, I realized that in order to get ahead in the financial world, I needed a CPA certificate. I passed all four parts of the CPA exam in California," he says.

Mond went to work in public accounting, advanced in the field, and began to take on consulting work while building a practice. "I knew I had a certain mindset and would eventually want to be in business for myself," he confides. "I worked for other CPA firms and corporations, but realized I needed more flexibility."

He became his own boss. "When I decided to build my own practice, I was able to freelance, work for other firms, and make time for myself to work on my own clients," he says.

Real estate became a second passion and aptitude. Mond met his wife, a law student, and married within three years. "I married a very talented young woman," he says. "We began to invest and bought our first piece of property within six

months of getting married. We bought more and more properties, and as real estate in California blossomed, it became more of our avocation. We had a good strategy and knew that we would do well."

Mond's college experience was never far from his mind—or heart. "When I look back at it, I made a lot of friends and quite a few long-lasting friendships," he says. "I excelled in statistics and was inspired by my professors, really relating to my accounting professors even though I had limited accounting courses."

Even now, he still values his unforgettable experience at Textile and the comprehensive, transdisciplinary education that he received. "I obtained broad knowledge from the courses I took that most accountants would not have, and learned about various subject matters that are still in my mind today," he shares.

While his CPA license has been retired, Mond's business interests and property management keep him busy. He now regularly attends Jefferson alumni receptions in the Los Angeles area, and returned to campus for the first time in 2019. "I went to my 50th reunion and reunited with a lot of people," he shares.

Mond's generosity has the power to transform the lives of future Jefferson students just as his life was forever changed. "I felt the need to reciprocate so that someone else could have a scholarship," he says. "I just feel that it's a moral obligation. Jefferson was a major part of my life at the time, and it's always good to give back." 🍷



# Reimagine Scholarships

You have the power to change the course of the future, one student at a time.

The Reimagine Scholarships initiative allows talented and creative students from all backgrounds to attend Thomas Jefferson University. Scholarships enable these bright scholars to start their careers with less debt so they can focus on becoming the global leaders in business, industry, and medicine who will create a brighter tomorrow.

To learn more, please contact:

Lisa W. Repko, JD, Vice President  
Thomas Jefferson University  
and Planned Giving  
lisa.repko@jefferson.edu | 215-955-0437

[reimagine.jefferson.edu](https://reimagine.jefferson.edu) // #iminforjefferson





## Philip J. Kodroff '82 Fashion Merchandising and Management Studio

The University celebrated the opening of a new dedicated space for the fashion merchandising and management program in February 2023. The studio, featuring a large window to merchandise, will complement students' hands-on, project-oriented work and action research with industry connections.

The room is named the Philip J. Kodroff '82 Fashion Merchandising and Management Studio for late alumnus Phil Kodroff, who passed away in 2020. His mother made the gift to honor him. 🇺🇸

▲ Nioka Wyatt, Associate Professor and Program Director, Fashion Merchandising and Management Program



## Explore, Learn, and Experience the World with Jefferson Alumni!

As part of our commitment to lifelong learning, the Office of Alumni Relations offers opportunities for group travel for Jefferson, Textile, and Philadelphia University alumni, friends, and families. Our varied itinerary of travel destinations combines educational forums, unique adventures, and excursions to places of historical and cultural interest, with opportunities to discover nature's majestic landscapes and incredible wildlife. These trips offer the highest-quality travel experience through our partnerships with experienced travel providers.

- ▶ **Dutch Waterways - Aboard Amadeus Elegant**  
May 4-12, 2023
- ▶ **Polar Bears & Beluga Whales**  
August 3-9, 2023
- ▶ **Discover Egypt and the Nile Valley**  
October 21 - November 3, 2023
- ▶ **Great Pacific Northwest - Aboard American Empress**  
June 11-19, 2023
- ▶ **Dazzling Alaska - Aboard Regatta**  
August 8-18, 2023
- ▶ **The Galápagos Islands - Western Itinerary**  
October 24-31, 2023
- ▶ **The Charm of the Amalfi Coast**  
June 14-22, 2023
- ▶ **Flavors of Chianti**  
September 7-15, 2023
- ▶ **Cuba and Its People: Havana**  
November 3-10, 2023
- ▶ **Toronto to Vancouver by Rail**  
June 20-26, 2023
- ▶ **Pursuits and Passions: Golfing in Southern France**  
September 20-28, 2023
- ▶ **Irish Inspiration - Aboard Riviera**  
June 21-29, 2023
- ▶ **Greece: Athens & Gytheio**  
September 22 - October 1, 2023
- ▶ **Journey to Southern Africa**  
October 15-30, 2023

For detailed trip information and to join our Travel Interest List, visit [Jefferson.edu/AlumniTravel](https://Jefferson.edu/AlumniTravel) or contact Alumni Relations at 215-955-7750 or [alumni@jefferson.edu](mailto:alumni@jefferson.edu).





# RAM → ROUNDUP

For the latest news and updates, subscribe to the Ram Roundup newsletter at [Jefferson.edu/Newsletter](http://Jefferson.edu/Newsletter)



## Rams Rise Up! Jefferson Donors Rise to the Challenge

Thank you to our incredibly generous donors for their support of the Fourth Annual Rams Rise Up Challenge!

Alumni, students, parents, employees, and fans alike came together for one goal: to support the Jefferson Rams. Thanks to their support of our 17 Division II sports teams, the Challenge raised \$109,001 for Jefferson Athletics.

Donations will be put to work immediately—fulfilling equipment needs and providing players the critical resources they need to train, perform, and compete at their best.

Our Ramily helped make this Rams Rise Up Challenge one for the books!

Thank you! See you next year!



## Alumni Spotlight Christian Burns Rams Basketball 2005-07

Now in his 16th season as a professional player, former Rams' basketball star center (2005-2007) Christian Burns' basketball journey sent him from his hometown in Hamilton, New Jersey, across the globe.

Several stellar career memories stand out for Burns—among them playing for PhilaU Rams' Hall of Fame Coach Herb Magee.

He recalls a moment in the locker room late in the 2006-2007 season, when Magee informed him that he had been named Division II Player of the Year by the nation's athletic communications staffs. He was also proud to be honored as CACC Player of the Year and named to the NABC All-American Team by the Division II coaches.

Burns dominated as a senior, averaging 21.7 points and 11.2 rebounds per game. He also led the way with a 34-point, 17-rebound performance in the Rams' history-making 65-60 overtime victory against Wilmington on February 1, 2007, when Magee became the winningest coach in Division II history.

Following college, he attended the Philadelphia 76ers pre-draft workout and the NBA Draft Combine. "We thought I had a chance to get drafted late in the second round but it didn't happen," he recalls.

After an invitation from the 76ers to play on their NBA Summer League team, his options were limited to the NBA's development league or pursuing a career overseas. Burns started a long and successful career in Europe that continues today, playing for teams in Poland, Portugal, Germany, Ukraine, Israel, Russia, Czechia, and the United Arab Emirates before settling in Italy for the past seven years. "I became a citizen of Italy and have stayed ever since," he says. "It helps your value as a player."

Due to his Italian citizenship, Burns had the opportunity to play at the international level, representing Italy at the 2017 European Championships and helping the squad reach the quarterfinals. Burns currently plays for Germani Brescia in the Lega Basket Serie A, the top pro league in Italy.

"It's been a blessing, but also difficult being away from family," he says. "I try to see as many people as I can every June and July when I come back to the U.S."

Now 37, Burns is thinking about retirement. He plans to play two more seasons before stepping away to spend more time with his family, including his wife, who he met at PhilaU, their 13-year-old son, and 8-year-old daughter.

"My son will start high school soon," he says. "He wants to



be in the U.S. where all of his friends are. My family is going to move back next year while I finish out my career."

Burns does not see himself coaching after basketball. He wants to become an agent and help players get opportunities to play overseas, just like the assistance he received early in his career. "I think I would be very good at it," explains Burns. "I have seen all of the leagues and all of the clubs. I know their budgets and everything so I think it would be a good fit."





## A “Slam Dunk”—55 Years in the Making

On November 22, 2022, a new era of men’s basketball at Thomas Jefferson University was born.

It was a night of firsts—55 Years in the Making.

Before their home opener hosting the Bloomsburg Huskies, the University held a ceremony honoring its favorite son, Herb Magee, and bestowing the Thomas Jefferson University gym with a new moniker. The Coach Herb Magee Arena was inaugurated.

Celebrating the beloved Magee, who retired earlier in 2022 following 55 seasons, was a “slam dunk.” His career not only boasted the second-highest victory total in NCAA basketball history, he also has the distinction of winning more NCAA basketball games at the same school than ANYONE.

Magee triumphed through three name changes (Philadelphia College

of Textiles and Science, Philadelphia University, and Thomas Jefferson University), and his 1,144 victories included 31 NCAA Tournament appearances topped by the 1970 College Division National Championship. Magee was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2011.

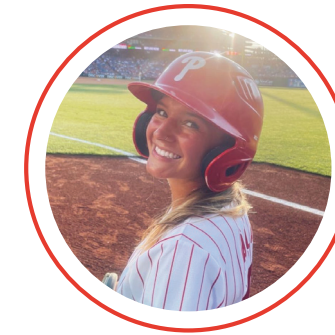
After a renaming pregame reception and ceremony attended by former and current players and VIPs, Jefferson began its home schedule under new head coach Jimmy Reilly, who became the fifth head coach in program history after 15 years as Associate Head Coach under Magee. As Magee’s top assistant and right-hand man, Reilly had a major hand in game and practice planning, strength and conditioning, recruiting, scouting, fundraising, alumni relations, community service, logistics, and academic support.

Since Reilly’s debut on the coaching staff in the 2007-08 season, Jefferson amassed



a 311-123 record for a .717 winning percentage, and the Rams have recorded 20-plus wins 11 times during the span. Jefferson reached the CACC Championship Game eight times, winning five titles, and advanced to the NCAA Tournament nine times. The Rams were the NCAA East Region runner-up in 2010.

And the final score of this season’s home opener under Riley? Jefferson did it again, winning handily, with the score of 91-77.



# field of dreams

BY MIKE BEDERKA

**Jefferson Rams softball standout** Cayla Kalani found her own “Field of Dreams” at Citizens Bank Park with the Philadelphia Phillies. The team’s shortstop and a third-year pre-medical studies student, Kalani worked as a ball girl in their 2022 championship season and stood on the rain-soaked field as the team clinched the NLCS on their way to their first World Series run since 2008.

“It was an absolute dream,” says Kalani. “The energy from the fans and players was something I’ve never seen or experienced before.”

The journey to achieve this coveted role lasted a few months. Kalani explains, “First, I filled out an application and sent a video showcasing my skills and personality, along with my resume.”

Once approved, applicants were interviewed, had hitting

and fielding tryouts at the ballpark, and took a quiz about the Phillies’ background. The selection process didn’t end there. “They carefully reviewed my social media and conducted background and reference checks,” she says. “During each step, the field narrowed down to, eventually, an extremely small group. I’m thrilled and thankful to have been chosen.”

Phillies ball girls not only work the foul lines, they also serve as team ambassadors. “I’m at most home games and had a few games on the field, working the foul lines,” Kalani says. When not on the field, the ball girls sell 50/50 tickets around Citizens Bank Park or collect recyclables during the game.

Kalani is also active on behalf of the team outside the stadium, participating in area softball and baseball

clinics, charity events, and other community engagement activities.

“Being a ball girl has been a dream come true,” Kalani shares. “One of my favorite parts is getting to share my knowledge and teach the game that I grew up playing and loving. Being on the field is awesome, but seeing kids’ faces light up when you talk with them or give them a ball is another highlight.”

“I’ve been a Phillies fan my whole life, and being part of this organization is incredible,” she says. “You get to meet so many new people and talk with fans. My coaches and teammates have been so supportive. Go Phillies!”



# 2022 HOMECOMING







▲ Left to right: Dr. Mark Tykocinski, Gary Peck, Ritu Jadwani, and Anthony J. Vitullo Jr.

## ALUMNI AWARDS

Alumni returned to campus for Jefferson's 2022 Homecoming in October, excited to reconnect with their former classmates and peers. As they revisited East Falls, they reminisced on their past school days while also looking toward the future; they toured the fantastic developments made on campus, met and mingled with current students, cheered on the Rams, and celebrated a most memorable Homecoming filled with events, games, and more. Homecoming was especially meaningful for the milestone reunions of the Golden Ram Classes of 1970, 1971, and 1972 and the Silver Ram Classes of 1995, 1996, and 1997.

### Graham J. Littlewood III '42 Time, Talent & Treasure Award

Established in 2001, the Award celebrates the achievements and contributions of an outstanding graduate from a

program on the Jefferson—East Falls Campus who has contributed time, talent, and treasure through a commitment to the mission of the University and to future generations of Jefferson students. A chemistry student at what was then the Philadelphia Textile Institute (PTI), Littlewood was an active member of the PTI Alumni Association for many years, serving as president in 1965-66.

### Anthony J. Vitullo Jr., CPA BS Accounting '97

Anthony "Tony" Vitullo Jr. is a certified public accountant with more than 25 years of experience in accounting and finance. He is vice president of finance at Spencer Spirit Holdings, Inc., a multinational retailer operating more than 2,000 Spencer Gifts and Spirit Halloween stores across the U.S. and Canada out of their

corporate offices in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey.

Vitullo has served on several boards and committees, including on the Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science Alumni Board. He was appointed to the Philadelphia University Board of Trustees in 2006, where he served through the merger with Thomas Jefferson University in 2017. Since the merger, Vitullo served on the Jefferson Alumni Engagement Council and the Jefferson Academic Affairs Committee (JAAC), serving on the Finance and Research subcommittees. He currently serves as Chair of the JAAC Research subcommittee.

He is also on the Board of Directors of the Zeldin Family Foundation, an organization funding out-of-school programming that seeks to create chances for young people to think creatively, practice leadership skills and

civic engagement, and build confidence and self-esteem.

A musician and actor in his spare time, Vitullo has a passion for live theatre and music and has served on several theater company boards. He and his wife are the parents of three young children and reside in South Philadelphia.

### Young Alumni Achievement Award

Established in 2009 by Philadelphia University's First 5 Council, the Award honors and recognizes the personal and professional achievements of a Jefferson—East Falls Campus or Philadelphia University graduate of the last 10 years.

### Ritu Jadwani MS Global Fashion Enterprise '19

Ritu Jadwani is an experienced social entrepreneur, educator, and fair trade advocate whose academic research and industry work are at the intersection of sustainability, entrepreneurship, and community building to build a better tomorrow.

Jadwani has had educational and work experiences in India, China, France, and the U.S. Since 2013, she has created employment opportunities for physically disabled women and skilled artisans in India. Her initiative, Namaste NYC, creates hand-block-printed apparel, scarves, and leather accessories to support the crafts and textiles of India.

At Jefferson, Jadwani received the Best Graduate Student Award in 2019. She was on faculty at the

University of Delaware and the National Institute of Fashion Technology in India, and has delivered talks and workshops at various institutes, nonprofit organizations, and conferences in the U.S. and India. Her work has been covered and published in global magazines and newspapers, and she has served as a mentor at the Clinton Global Initiative.

Jadwani was recently awarded the Mary E. Guthrie Fellowship at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she is currently pursuing a PhD in fashion merchandising.

### Frank L. Giese Textile Award

The award was created in 1970 by Philadelphia College of Textiles & Sciences alumni in honor of Dr. Frank L. Giese, professor emeritus of Textiles, in recognition of an individual's contributions to innovation in the design, technology, or marketing of textile products and outstanding and significant impact on the textile industry.

### Gary Peck BS Textile Engineering '80

Gary Peck attended Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science after completing his military service in South Africa in 1978.

He began his career in 1982 as the first Nike apparel ex-pat to go to Southeast Asia and set up their development and sourcing operation. After four years in Asia, he returned to the U.S. to lead Nike's Design and Development Division, the group driving the industry's first signature apparel lines from

greats like Michael Jordan, Carl Lewis, John McEnroe, and Alberto Salazar.

In 1989, Adidas recruited Peck to head its global design and development. He was stationed in Europe for the purpose of dissolving four vertical infrastructures in the U.K., France, Japan, and the U.S. into one cohesive, all-encompassing brand strategic force in Germany. One world and one brand was then developed. After three years in Europe, Peck returned to the U.S. to head up the North American Apparel Division. Over a period of nine years, he grew sales from \$60 million to \$850 million.

In 2000, Peck founded The S Group to address three untruths in the industry: Design DNA needed to be aligned with brand story, innovation and engineering needed to drive product, and supply chain needed to eliminate 50% of the lead time in the go-to-market calendar. He believes this vision is even more applicable 22 years later.

Peck earned an Executive MBA from the University of Oregon and resides in Portland, Oregon. 🇺🇸



# SHEER REENERGY ⚡



*Finance and marketing alumnus Ryan Rendfrey uses his superpowers for good as he works to transform athletic performance.*

BY IRISA GOLD

To Ryan Rendfrey '03, superheroes are in his DNA. He already has his own superhero name, "Renergy."

"I define it as a positive force of energy to make a difference," he says.

Rendfrey grew up in the small town of Riverside, New Jersey. "I wrestled and played football in high school," he recalls. "But I had a passion for golf and wanted to play in college. I remember visiting [then Philadelphia University] with my mom and grandfather. I met the golf coach, but it was meeting Brian Lee in admissions that changed the game. He sat down with us, answered all our questions, and offered insight and feedback. That experience sold me. I went from the Riverside Rams to the PhilaU (now Jefferson) Rams."

Rendfrey was awarded an annual \$5,000 scholarship, and as captain of the Men's Golf Team was awarded the Bucky Harris Scholarship Award as a sophomore. In his senior year, he was selected by Tom Shirley, (then) Jefferson University athletic director, as the Male Athletic Director Award winner.

"I was so proud," he says. "It is something I will never forget."

After graduating with a double major in finance and marketing, his journey took him from positions in financial services and start-up nonprofits to his position in marketing today. "I am a man on a mission," Rendfrey says. "I always had big dreams to make a difference in people's lives. I felt like I was here to do something amazing—and had the entrepreneurial spirit to do my own thing."

Rendfrey's athletics career spawned a novel idea—creating a weighted compression suit for athletes. He observed baseball players using weighted donuts on bats during practice to increase swing speed and had an "Aha" moment. He explains, "What if you can add weight to an athlete's body to increase athletic performance?"

There were some practical questions Rendfrey first had to solve. "For contact sports like football and wrestling, it isn't safe to put an athlete in harm's way by putting objects externally on the body such as gel, sand or metal inserts like traditional weighted workout solutions. The only real way is to create a weighted fabric."

Rendfrey located a textile company as a strategic partner. It was a delicate balance, but after two iterations they were able to create a stretchy fabric, now patent-pending in the U.S., that utilizes weighted fibers, while also providing a greater range of movement and mobility. He then connected with a company to create a prototype and also reconnected with his former mentor Brian Lee, now an executive with THINK450, (SVP, Player Marketing & I.D.E.A.S. Lab), which is the revenue generating arm for the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA), and has teamed up with his colleague Que Gaskins (President, THINK450) to serve on Rendfrey's Board of Directors.

The "Super Suit" was born. "I love superheroes," he says. "Our product slogan is 'Practice Heavy, Perform Light.'"

In 2022, Rendfrey's prototype was ready for testing. The results of the first independent sports performance study were promising, showing increases of 2% in speed, 8% in strength, and 19% in power within four weeks and 12 workouts.

"We believe that wearing our Super Suit helps the body

## Jefferson invested in me...

recover faster, keeps the athlete safer, and minimizes injuries," Rendfrey says, noting the potential uses for physical therapy and rehabilitation in the future.

Rendfrey's family is never far from his mind. Married to his high school sweetheart, they share four children. "My greatest goal is to be a mentor to my kids and teach them that if you have a dream and work hard, you can achieve anything you put your mind to," he says. "To prove it to them, I have to do it myself."

To bring his product to life and to market, Rendfrey and his wife created a company, Hero Gear, Inc., and are actively raising capital and pursuing medical research opportunities.

"Jefferson invested in me," he says. "My goal is to someday be the single largest donor to the University. Jefferson is near and dear to my heart. If I could go back in time and do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing." 🙌



Rendfrey Family



Ryan Rendfrey (left) and Tom Shirley (right).



## 1969

### DAVID ALAN GINGRAS Marketing

While working for Price Waterhouse, Gingras started coaching and recruiting for cross country at Textile as Harry Pure's assistant. He completed a master's degree in education as a graduate assistant at Saint Joseph's University and went to work for Burlington/Klopman in New York. Burlington sent him to Wharton for an MBA in their management development program. He went to Merrill Lynch and then started American Financial Advisors LLC to advise closely held businesses on all aspects of private corporation finance and benefits. He is a USA Track and Field (USATF) Master Official covering NCAA and high school meets and a Penn Relays chief official. He is a grandfather and great-grandfather and is active with the Shriners Hospitals system.

## 1990

### JAMES P. CASS Finance

Jim Cass has been named president of Ultimus LeverPoint Private Fund Solutions, a leading independent provider of full-service administration, fund accounting, middle office, and investor solutions to traditional and alternative investment managers. Jim was previously senior vice president and managing director at SEI Investments, where he headed the firm's alternative investments fund administration group. After

leaving SEI in 2020, Jim founded Hidden Crest LLC, an alternative investment services consulting firm. Jim is chair emeritus and an active Kanbar College Advancement Council member.

## 1997

### KATE KIBLER Fashion Design

Kate Kibler has been promoted to senior Vice President and general manager of Vionic Shoes, a member of the Caleres global family of brands. She previously served as senior vice president, digital commerce for Caleres. Kate has a versatile background with leadership experience in digital, product design, merchandising, and marketing with Timberland, Under Armour, Tommy Hilfiger, and more. Kate also serves as an active Kanbar College Advancement Council member.

### ROBIN SHANER Fashion Design

Shaner had her costumes and photographs on exhibit at the Washington County Arts Council (Hagerstown, Maryland) in October 2022. Shaner has been the costume designer at Hagerstown Community College for nearly 30 years.

## 1998

### JESSE BALCER Psychology

After coaching the men's basketball program from 2003-2019, Balcer is currently the director of athletics at

Chestnut Hill College, a Division II College in the Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference. Balcer has three kids, Isabella, 25, Jesse Jr., 21, and Angelina, 17, and is married to Natalie Martinez-Balcer. They reside in Andorra, Pennsylvania.

## BOB FILE

### Computer Science

File has recently achieved a significant milestone in his academic career by completing a master's degree in information technology leadership from LaSalle University with honors. File transitioned into a new role as vice president of solution engineering at Sorcero. In addition, File has demonstrated a strong commitment to giving back to the community by volunteering as a mentor for underprivileged students in Philadelphia. He has been actively involved in various university boards, serving in a leadership position, and organizing events to further professional development. File is excited to stay connected with fellow alums and be inspired by the achievements of the Jefferson community.

### THERESA PERALA, AIA Architecture

Perala was announced as the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) Architect of the Year on November 28, 2022. Perala is the inaugural selection of this new award and was chosen from a competitive field of NAVFAC Washington



▲ Architect of the Year 2023 Theresa Perala, AIA

architects, landscape architects, and interior designers. Perala has served at NAVFAC Washington for over 14 years as an architect, project leader, design manager, program manager, and branch supervisor.

## 2003

### ANTHONY BERICH, MBA Business Administration

Berich serves as the director of athletics at Stockton University in Galloway, New Jersey. He is married to Kristin (Ford) Berich '00.

## 2015

### HUNTER GREENWOOD Communication

After graduating from PhilaU, Hunter attended Coastal Carolina University for graduate

school, earning a master's degree in sports management. After graduation, Hunter spent three years as the director of athletics compliance at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, before moving back into the Philadelphia area and transitioning to a role as an admissions counselor at Rosemont College. In his current role, Hunter assists student-athletes and transfer students with the admissions and onboarding process and guides initial and continuing eligibility for NCAA student-athletes.

## 2013

### JIM CONNOLLY, MBA Finance and Accounting

Connolly is currently the head women's basketball coach at Chestnut Hill College. Connolly

has worked at CHC since October 2019 after serving as a women's basketball assistant coach for Tom Shirley at Jefferson and working in the finance office at Jefferson for four seasons.

## 2018

### NICHOLAS NGUYEN Systems and Industrial Engineering

Nguyen has been working at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for the United States Navy as a Civilian Systems Engineering Process Quality Engineer for about five years. He recently furthered his education through the Naval Postgraduate School with a Master of Science in program management. He also recently became the head men's golf coach here at Thomas Jefferson University after being the assistant coach for four years. He is excited about the direction of the program!

## 2021

### GIAVONNA PITTMAN Web Design & Development

Pittman recently completed a 10-month internship with the Philadelphia Eagles as a web developer for the 2021-2022 Season, from Training Camp to this past year's draft. She is currently working as a user interface designer with a Canadian startup with clients in professional sports from the NFL to the Premier League.



# Jefferson *Loves* Love

Some lucky Jefferson alumni left school not only with a degree, but also hand-in-hand with the love of their life.



## **Bob Smith '76**

Kathy Flack and I first saw each other in September 1975 in the cafeteria at Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science. At that time it was located underneath the gym, which today is an underground parking garage.

Kathy was a first-year student, and I was a first-semester senior, having just gotten back from my first year in professional baseball, as I was drafted my junior year by the New York Yankees. In those days you could not be drafted as an underclassman unless you went hardship. As both my parents were deceased and I was on my own, I was eligible for the draft that year. In her

own words, Kathy asked a friend who I was, and then said to her friend, "I do believe I will marry him someday!"

Kathy transferred to The Art Institute of Philadelphia after a year, but we kept in touch now and then. In 1977 we stumbled across each other at a Textile basketball game and started a sincere relationship. Kathy did a bit of local modeling during college and ironically, I did some after college for local department stores such as Gimbels and Strawbridge & Clothier, manufacturer JG Hook, and a fashion show at Textile.

I received my bachelor's degree in marketing, started in the newly formed MBA

program at Textile, but completed my MBA at Long Island University as work took me to New York City in 1978, leaving Kathy and me to maintain a semi-long-distance relationship until we married in 1980.

On October 11, 1980, we were married at St. John the Baptist, located in Manayunk, Pennsylvania. We are on our way to 43 years of marriage. To this day, with all respect to our daughter and daughter-in-law, Kathy is the most beautiful bride I have even laid eyes on.

My baseball career was to only be one season as a knee injury ended those hopes, but with the educational foundation from the University

## ▲ *Bob Smith*

and the guidance from many professors, staff, and coaches at Textile, I was able to embark on a long and fruitful business career. Highlights include 22 years with Legrand, a France-based international electrical manufacturer where I finished as their executive vice president of sales and 14 years as the president and CEO of IMARK Group, one of Legrand's largest customers, retiring in November 2020. I was thrilled to learn I was being inducted into the University's Hall of Fame in April 2023.

Kathy has had a successful career in design, working for Mitchell Associates in Delaware, Steven's Interiors, and then at United

Technologies, both in Syracuse, New York. We moved to Syracuse for work after our marriage. Today, Kathy enjoys working with residential clients up and down the East Coast on re-designs and at times structural changes to their homes and condos.

Kathy and I have two children; a son, Colin, Philadelphia University '14, who studied business, and is also in the electrical industry with NSI, and a daughter, Kyle, University of Scranton, class of 2014, who majored in international business. Kyle also took a summer class at Philadelphia University and after an internship in Paris has worked for Legrand in marketing since

2014. Both our son (8/13/22) and daughter (11/13/21) recently married wonderful spouses, but we don't have grandchildren yet. Today, Kathy and I split our time between Naples, Florida, and Avalon, New Jersey.

## **Beverly Banks '96**

My name is Beverly (Sheeder) Banks. In the summer of 1993 I signed up as a PCT&S college ambassador (CA). Little did I know it was the best decision I ever made. During that summer I helped incoming freshmen pick their classes. One gentleman in particular had the dreamiest blue eyes that I remember thinking I





▲ Left to right: Tahisha Jones Anderson, Aprille O’Kane, and Eileen Roe Sheehan.

could look into forever. At the end of summer another CA came running over with that same gentleman saying, “Have you met Bob Banks?” We hung out as friends, eventually dated over the next three years, got an apartment together after graduation, married in 1999, and now have two amazing boys. All because I didn’t want to stay home that summer.

**Tahisha Jones Anderson '99**

My husband, Keith Anderson '95, and I met as residents of Ronson in 1994. I caught his eye when I was working at the Dining Hall. My favorite memory was the Homecoming dance in '94 when we officially became a couple. We’ve been together ever since—married for over 20 years with two kids. He studied computer science and I majored in architecture. We both pursued careers in these fields.

**Aprille O’Kane '06**

My husband Tim O’Kane '05 and I were both students at

Philadelphia University when a friend set us up on a blind date because we went to the same school. From there the sparks flew. We would meet for lunch together between classes, and I’d drop off snacks for late night design studio sessions. We just celebrated 10 years of marriage and four babies.

**Eileen Roe Sheehan '07**

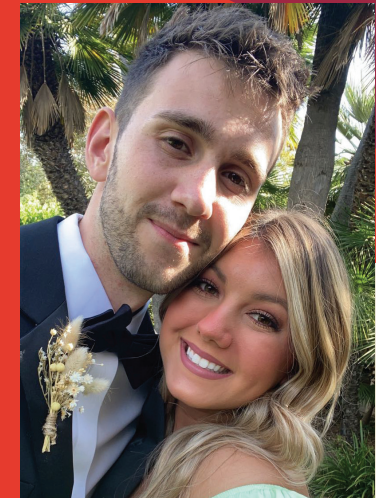
Tim Sheehan '05 and I met in 2004. I was a freshman in the fashion design program at (then) Philadelphia University. Tim was a junior in architectural studies. We were just friends for a time, and then started dating in the fall of 2005 while Tim was working full time and attending the MBA program at night. We spent many “Wing Nights” together at Murphy’s pub in East Falls, and supported each other through our final years in college. In 2007 we both graduated and moved to Plymouth Meeting together. We married in June 2009 and have been together since,

creating a life full of adventures and fun with two beautiful daughters (plus a cat and dog, too).

**Cindy LaBar '11**

My husband, Jaime Hancock '02, went to Philadelphia University as an undergrad way before I came to Jefferson, but since the schools merged I guess we are considered fellow alumni now, and without Jefferson we may have never met.

I was accepted into Jefferson’s couples and family therapy program in the summer of 2011. I lived in the Poconos at the time, and started the long search to find a roommate to share the cost of housing while in grad school. I ended up finding an ad posted on Craigslist for a man looking for a roommate in Glenside, right outside of Philadelphia. He was recently divorced, and wanted to find a safe and stable roommate to share his home with him and his daughter. I had all



▲ Left to right: and Cindy LaBar, Lauren Lombardo, and Gianna Klisch.

my clearances since I was substitute teaching at the time, so it seemed I was a perfect fit. I went to see the place and agreed to move into his home in August at the start of school.

We very quickly realized how much we had in common, and long story short, we started to date and were married in 2016.

He supported me through grad school, starting off as a new therapist in the field, through the LMFT licensure process, and all the way up to the present moment where I am currently a clinical supervisor. I would not be where I am today without him, and I would not have gotten the opportunity to be a stepmother to our amazing daughter. If I wasn’t accepted to Jefferson, we may have never met. I am forever grateful

for the role Jefferson played in bringing us together.

**Lauren Mellott Lombardo '19**

Mathew Lombardo '18 and I met in the Kanbar Campus Center in 2016. He was an architecture major and I was pre-med, so our paths were unlikely to cross elsewhere. We started dating shortly after and have been together since! Seven years later, we just celebrated our wedding this past weekend. It was a beautiful celebration and wouldn’t have been possible without school bringing us together!

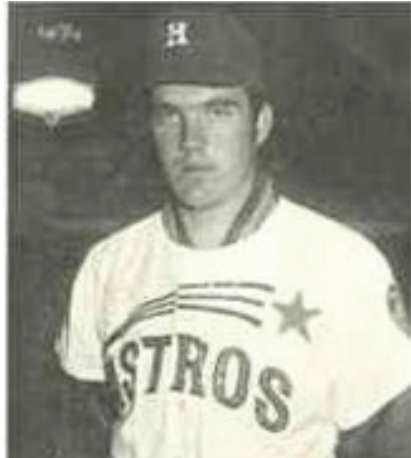
**Gianna Klisch '20**

Daniel Modestine '20 and I were both in the same program and the same design class our freshman year, which

is how we first met. Within the first few weeks of that class, he offered to show me where the printer was located in the DEC Center, which is how we started to become friends. We became part of the same friend group and would take turns carpooling to design class and work late nights together on our projects in Hayward. We would give each other ideas and help each other with design work and assignments we had in other classes.

Throughout our four years in school we remained close friends, and didn’t decide to date until a few months after graduation. Now, we have been together for almost three years! 🍷





### Walter “Buddy” F. Harris Jr.

Walter “Buddy” F. Harris Jr., 73, passed away on Saturday, November 5, 2022, at Penn Medicine Rittenhouse in his hometown of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As Buddy’s nickname suggests, he was a friend to many and will be dearly missed.

Buddy continued the legacy of friendship between TJU and the Harris family, who generously established two scholarships, the Bucky and Lorraine Harris Scholarship and Billy Harris '74. His father, Walter “Bucky” Harris Sr., was the Director of Athletics. Buddy, his brother Billy (for whom Buddy is predeceased), and Bucky are all inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame.

A naturally gifted athlete, Buddy used his talent and work ethic to guide him toward success in baseball and basketball. He began collecting countless accolades in both sports early on as a student at Roxborough High School: in basketball, he made

3rd Team HS All American and was selected to receive the William Markward Award and the Men of Cliveden Award as the City’s Outstanding Athlete; in baseball, he played for the All Public Team and earned awards from the American Legion Program along the way, including being selected as Pennsylvania’s top player.

However, baseball would keep all eyes on Buddy during his collegiate years at the then-Philadelphia College of Textiles & Sciences (now TJU) and the University of Miami. In 1970, he started his professional baseball career and signed with the Houston Astros, where he became the first former Ram to appear in a Major League baseball game.

Buddy is survived by his wife Cathy and their five children: sons Walter F. Harris III, Brent Harris, Bradley Harris, Jonathan Harris; daughter Ashley Murray; and six grandchildren.

#### 1945

Thelma Fleming

#### 1946

James Gilbert, MD  
Howard Isaacson, MD  
Harold Meyer, MD

#### 1947

Doris Moore

#### 1948

Nancy Ritzman

#### 1949

Roy Deck Jr.  
Fay Pepperman

#### 1950

Wealthy Shutt

#### 1951

Daniel DeMeo, MD  
Elizabeth Donald  
Victor Greco, MD

#### 1952

Alvin Barg  
Joseph Lynch

#### 1954

Walther Weylman

#### 1955

Richard Brams  
Raymond Wiss

#### 1956

Paul Frank

#### 1958

Paul Berkebile, MD  
Donald Dubrow, MD  
Victor Pantich, MD  
Sonia Williamson

#### 1959

Janet Renn  
John Schubert, MD

#### 1960

Gene Adams, MD  
John Brennan, MD

#### 1962

Susanne Dunbrack  
William Staas Jr.

#### 1963

Thomas Houseknecht, MD

#### 1964

Jerome Kosoy, MD

#### 1965

Victor Dunphy

#### 1966

Kenneth Heaps, MD  
Timothy Michals, MD  
Michael Strong III, MD  
William Zavod, MD

#### 1968

Dodd Pfeffer  
Kathleen Schade

#### 1961

Stanley Brand, MD

#### 1970

Richard Bernini, MD  
Michael Goldberg, MD

#### 1972

Samir Ballas, MD  
James Roberts, MD

#### 1973

Thomas Layton, MD  
Eugene Secor

#### 1974

David Harding, MD  
James Poupard, PhD

#### 1977

Thomas McLaughlin, MD

#### 1978

Ellen Brooks, MD

#### 1984

Josephine Quinn

#### 1987

Elizabeth Bowen, MD  
Joseph Knight

#### 1989

Carol Porter

#### 1991

Joseph McBride

#### 1992

Mary Malone

#### 1996

Carmela Gipprich

#### 1997

Dorothy Leapson

#### 2019

Patricia Churchill, PharmD



# JEFFERSON INNOVATOR Magazine

# TRIVIA

Give our open-book quiz a shot!  
HINT: All of the answers are in this issue!

1. What year did George C. Brainard become the director of the Jefferson Light Research Program?  
A. 1982  
B. 1984  
C. 1990
2. What Carnegie National Doctoral Research Level does Thomas Jefferson University have?  
A. D  
B. PU  
C. R2
3. Which of the following medical technologies was a result of using Thomas Edman's knitting machine?  
A. Artificial blood vessels  
B. Medical gauze  
C. Prosthetic limbs



Submit your answers at [Jefferson.edu/InnovatorTrivia](https://jefferson.edu/InnovatorTrivia) or scan the QR code with your smartphone camera by May 30, 2023. A perfect score will enter you in a drawing to win a Jefferson T-shirt.



## Get Connected with Alumni Relations



At our last reunion I felt right at home. I listened to a presentation by President Dr. Tykocinski outlining the school's new direction, and all is in very good hands! The Alumni Committee is warm and welcoming. I encourage you to get involved, visit our alma mater, and meet our leaders. You will be as proud as I am to say, "I am a graduate of Jefferson University!"

GEORGE GATI, PCT&S '71

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# SHARE YOUR STORY

Let fellow alumni know what you've been up to by sharing your news in Class Notes! Send your news to [editor@jefferson.edu](mailto:editor@jefferson.edu).

