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innovation

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# DREAMS

**SPRING  
2026**

**THOMAS  
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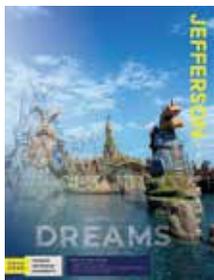
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How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk attraction; photo is property of Universal Studios. Artistic overlay added for creative effect.

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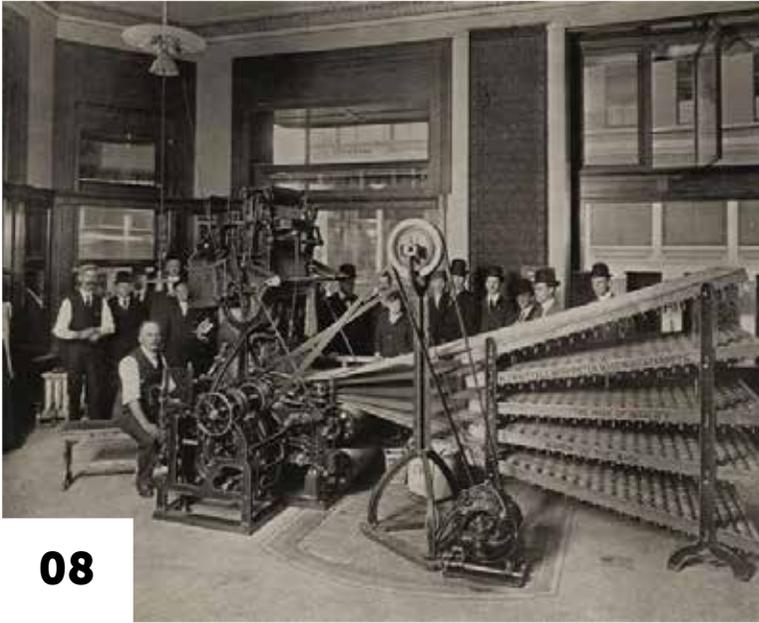
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08



22

**Have you ever had an aha moment?** Maybe it came quietly, like inception, a subtle idea that clicked and wouldn't let go. Perhaps it was more a thunderclap of revelation that rearranged the furniture of your mind.

This issue of *Innovator* is devoted to those moments, to inspiration in its many disguises.

Sometimes it is carefully cultivated. Architecture alumna Gabrielle Kemberling '12 (page 22) helped bring *How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk* to life at Universal Orlando by blending

imagination with rigorous technical skill — proof that wonder is often built on discipline.

Other times, inspiration begins at home. A fashion alumna looked at a heap of unwanted clothing and saw not clutter, but possibility, transforming it into a thriving consignment business (page 34). A graduate student, sitting in her living room, wrote Jefferson's first-ever alma mater, turning private creativity into new tradition (page 15).

Occasionally, inspiration arrives sideways. A century ago, a hunting trip and a quail helped

give the U.S. Army olive drab (page 8) — an enduring reminder that innovation often comes from paying attention to the unexpected.

And sometimes inspiration becomes a legacy. For John Oughton III '71 and his family, service itself is the muse for their extraordinary generosity (page 28).

What inspires you? We'd love to hear. Write to us at [editor@jefferson.edu](mailto:editor@jefferson.edu).



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and exclusives at  
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## *Strength, Elegance, and the Art of Learning How to Ask Better Questions*

There is a book I return to often called “The Elegant Warrior,” by Heather Hansen. Its central idea is deceptively simple: You can be fearfully strong in your profession and still meet every challenge with grace. Strength and elegance are not opposites. In fact, at their best, they are inseparable.

That idea has quietly shaped the way I think about leadership in higher education. Because this work demands both. The challenges we face — shifting demographics, changing workforce expectations, rapid technological change — require us to be bold and resolute. But how we respond to those challenges matters just as much as the fact that we do. In a time of disruption, elegance is not a luxury. It is a strategy.

Nowhere is that balance more important, or more tested, than in how we approach artificial intelligence.

John Dewey once observed that “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow.” He wrote those words more than a century ago, and yet they have never felt more urgent. AI is not a distant horizon. It is already transforming the professions our students are entering — medicine, design, architecture, business, nursing, the law. The question is

not whether we prepare them for it. The question is how.

Last year, Jefferson launched four AI-focused academic programs, each one designed to build meaningful, career-relevant fluency in the technologies reshaping our students’ fields. This semester, we are going further. We are rolling out free, optional online modules on AI basics — available to every student across the University, regardless of discipline or degree level.

These modules cover a range of foundational concepts. Among them is something called prompt engineering — essentially, the skill of constructing clear, precise, purposeful questions that draw the most useful responses from an AI system. It sounds technical. What it actually is, is timeless.

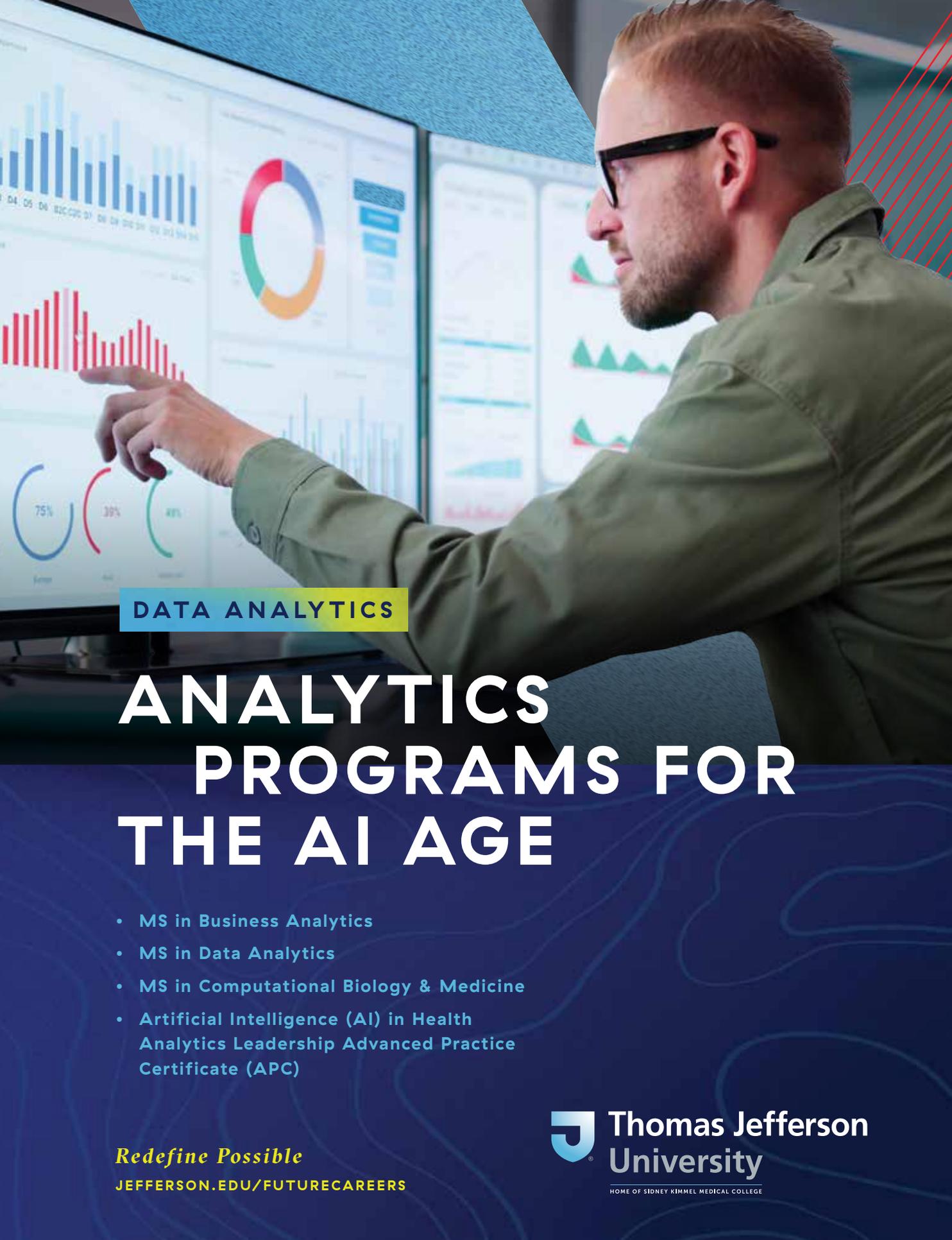
Learning how to ask better questions is one of the oldest and most powerful forms of intellectual development we know. Socrates built an entire method around it. And now, in the age of generative AI, it turns out to be one of the most practical professional skills a graduate can have. What’s more, it crosses disciplines: The student who learns to prompt an AI more precisely is also learning to think more precisely, to communicate more precisely, to advocate for themselves and their patients and their clients more precisely.

This is what strength and elegance look like in education.

Teaching students to thrive amid constant change — not merely to endure it, but to lead through it. Helping them think critically, collaborate generously, and stay resilient when the path forward is unclear. Giving them, as we have always given them here at Jefferson, not just knowledge, but the capacity to use that knowledge wisely.

Jefferson has entered its third century, but our mission has not changed. Only the tools — and the beautiful, demanding work of mastering them — are new. 🍷

**Susan C. Aldridge, PhD**  
President  
Thomas Jefferson University



DATA ANALYTICS

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HOME OF SIDNEY KIMMEL MEDICAL COLLEGE

[ time machine ]

# *A Colorful History*

BY MARK TURBIVILLE



*In 1902, at a moment when the United States was awakening to its role as a global power, Jefferson gave the U.S. Army something as unassuming, and as enduring, as a color: **olive drab***

At the turn of the 20th century, the American military was reckoning with lessons learned from recent conflicts, particularly the Spanish-American War.

Bright uniforms, once symbols of pride and pageantry, had proven dangerously conspicuous on modern battlefields. Against the backdrop of Cuba and the Philippines, the American soldier — a stark silhouette in deep indigo — was an easy target for an enemy armed with modern rifles and smokeless powder.

Across the Atlantic, European armies were already experimenting with subdued hues that blended into the landscape rather than standing apart from it. While the British had pioneered the use of khaki, the American military needed a color uniquely suited to its varied terrain — a blend that could disappear into the dry grasses of the plains and the wet moss of Eastern forests.

The question for the U.S. Army was not merely what color to adopt, but how to standardize it — how to ensure consistency, durability, and practicality across a rapidly expanding force.

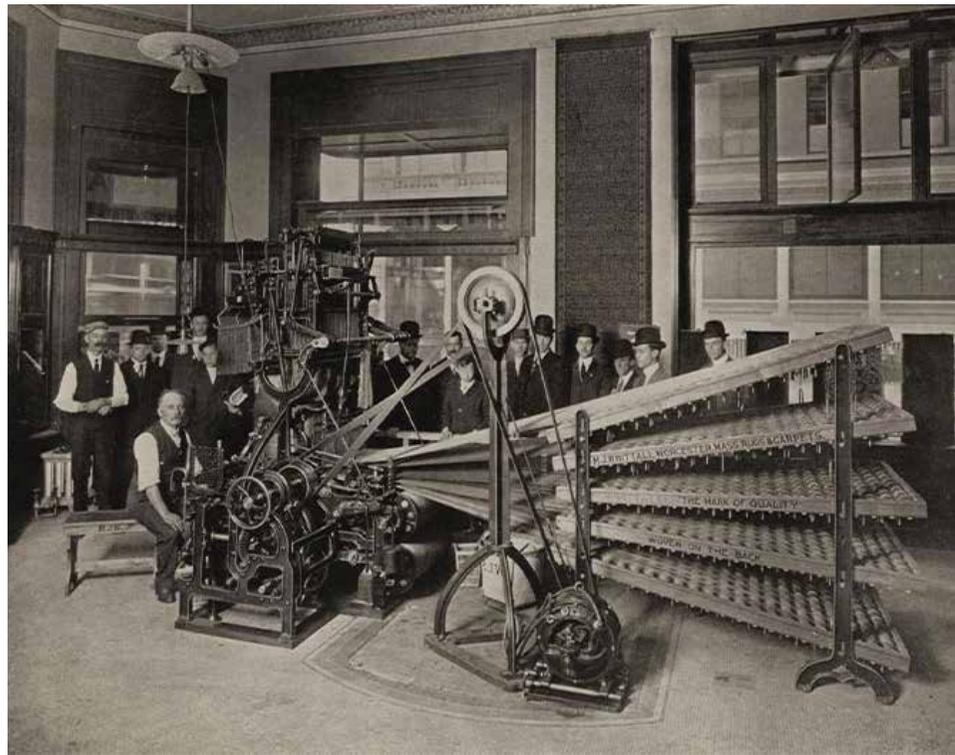
This technical quandary was passed not to a general or a high-level commission,

but to the workshops of what was then called the Philadelphia Textile School. (The institution later became the Philadelphia Textile Institute in 1942, the Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science in 1961, Philadelphia University in 1999, and merged with Thomas Jefferson University in 2017.)

For decades, the school had stood at the vanguard of American industrial expertise. Under the leadership of its director, Edward France, the school became a national authority on dye chemistry, fiber behavior, and industrial testing.

France was just 29 years old when he became director in 1884. To cultivate a more authoritative air, he immediately grew a beard. Because he regularly walked the halls in rubber-soled shoes, checking in on classrooms and laboratories, students and faculty nicknamed him “Old Gumshoes.”

France and his team faced a complex challenge: creating a color that was not only effective camouflage but also durable, lightfast, and consistent enough to be replicated by mills across the country for an army operating on a vast



continental scale. Natural dyes and wools were notoriously inconsistent, producing hues that varied widely from one batch to the next. The precise shade the Army sought — a dull, greenish brown — proved maddeningly elusive.

After long discussions and spirited debate, someone suggested the team adjourn and go hunting. During the expedition, a quail was accidentally shot. Still preoccupied with the color problem, France suddenly realized the bird's protective coloring was exactly what the Army needed for its uniforms.

France's solution was a marvel of applied science. What emerged from the school's laboratories was more than a shade; it was a system.

Moving beyond simple dyeing, France pioneered a technique that involved blending ground

quail feathers with wool before spinning and dyeing. The natural tones and textures of the blended fibers were then treated with specific chemical dyes to produce the final color. This approach did not merely coat the surface of the fabric; it integrated color into the fiber itself, achieving a depth and dullness crucial for concealment.

The result was a standard that was consistent, stable, and perfectly suited to the practical needs of the modern U.S. Army: olive drab.

The adoption of olive drab in 1902 marked a quiet revolution. The color would clothe American soldiers through two world wars, Korea, and beyond, becoming inseparable from the nation's image of its military. It symbolized practicality over ornament and function over flourish.

"Old Gumshoes" could not have foreseen all the

consequences of his work, but his legacy endured in the principles he championed.

He believed educational institutions had obligations beyond their walls and that expertise carried with it a duty to serve the public good.

The origin of olive drab reminds us that military history is shaped not only by presidents and generals, but also by institutions and individuals working at the intersection of knowledge, craft, and national need. In helping the Army solve a practical problem, Jefferson's forebears demonstrated how knowledge, creatively applied, can win the day. 🇺🇸

# Jefferson Health

is building on over 200 years of milestones, firsts and historic medical achievements that improve care and create better outcomes for patients.

**Together with Lehigh Valley Health Network**, we continue our legacy of excellence in cardiovascular care at the Bruce & Robbi Toll Heart and Vascular Institute.

We've integrated our heart services – including cardiology, cardiac surgery, vascular medicine and vascular surgery. Integration means closer collaboration and increased access to advanced cardiac surgery options like a leading heart transplantation program and innovative interventions.

## Our history of firsts

- Founded more than two centuries ago with a faculty of four
- The first American medical college to teach students in the clinic with patients
- In 1953 our surgeons were the first to perform successful open-heart surgery using total cardiopulmonary bypass
- One year later we enrolled our first cardiovascular disease fellow
- Jefferson has trained hundreds of physicians as specialists in the care of patients with cardiovascular disease

**At Jefferson Health**, we're leading the way forward, building on decades of transformative cardiovascular advancements to reach new heights in prevention, treatment and patient outcomes.



**Jefferson  
Health**



## Thomas Jefferson University Unveils New Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab

**Thomas Jefferson University** hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the opening of the Thackrah Capital Markets Research Lab on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025.

The new \$1.8 million research lab was made possible by a donation from alum and philanthropist John Thackrah. Housed in the School of Business, the lab expands access to live market data, financial news, and financial-sector research tools, including 12 Bloomberg terminal data feeds, to help students make informed financial investments.

“This is the most wonderful time and a new chapter for the School of Business — a dream that has been realized through the extraordinary vision,” Philip Russel, the business school’s dean, said according to WHYY. “We are profoundly grateful for John’s

transformational gift, which provides unparalleled educational and technological resources. His generosity equips our students with a vital competitive advantage, empowering them not only to succeed but to soar in today’s data- and AI-driven business world.”

Thackrah credited Doris, his wife of 67 years before her death five years ago, as well as his father, uncles, and grandfather, who are Jefferson alumni, for making his donation possible.

“I hope that all the students who go to this new laboratory and take a course in this new laboratory will be better equipped to go out and obtain employment in this incredibly complex capital market that we all live in today,” Thackrah said according to WHYY. “I’ve heard some people say it can take a year to learn how to use one of

these machines. I know it’s not easy, and I hope this lab helps them. Just as importantly, I hope they learn about investing because that will serve them well for the rest of their life.”

Thackrah graduated from Philadelphia Textile Institute in 1953 with a BS in Chemistry and Dyeing. The institute evolved into Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science and then Philadelphia University in 1999, and merged with Jefferson in 2017. Following graduation, Thackrah worked for DuPont for over 41 years in the textile dyes, colored pigments, and specialty chemicals businesses. He began his career as a textile dyes technical representative and salesman and retired in 1994 as the business director of the Performance Products Business Division. [↗](#)

## Jefferson College of Nursing Announces Expansion to Lehigh Valley Health Network

Jefferson College of Nursing has activated its governance and operational framework for the academic expansion into the Lehigh Valley, as part of the Definitive Agreement between Jefferson Health and Lehigh Valley Health Network. In close partnership with Jefferson Health Nursing, this effort strengthens academic-practice pathways across the enterprise — creating new opportunities for workforce development, clinical placements, and leadership advancement.

Beginning in fall 2026, the college plans to offer onsite classes at the Lehigh Valley Health Network Center for Healthcare Education in Center Valley, Pennsylvania. The DNP–Nurse Anesthesia program will be offered full time at this location, and other graduate programs’ clinical program intensives will also be held there. Traditional and accelerated BSN programs are planned to launch in the Lehigh Valley starting in June 2027.

The Lehigh Valley expansion reinforces Jefferson’s system-wide commitment to prepare the next generation of nurses while meeting the evolving needs of our regional health ecosystem.

Under the direction of Jefferson College of Nursing Dean Marie Ann Marino, EdD, RN, and project administrators Gabrielle Santulli and Kate White, the initiative exemplifies the power of coordinated, human-centered strategy in education and care — aligning people, process, and purpose to deliver on Jefferson’s mission of improving lives

through education, discovery, and care.

Even before the college opens its doors in the Lehigh Valley, some nurses have enrolled in the DNP–Executive Leadership cohort. Michele Adzema, RN, says, “Attending the Jefferson College of Nursing as a doctoral student in the DNP–Executive Leadership program is an incredible opportunity to advance my nursing practice. Through this program I am learning how to apply the best leadership and nursing quality and safety practices into my role as a nurse leader.”

To promote the college’s debut at the Lehigh Valley location, Dean Marino and Maggie — the College’s Chief Compassion Officer, a specially trained service dog — toured hospitals in the Lehigh Valley Region.

## University Announces College Restructuring

Beginning July 1, 2026, the University will reorganize and rename its colleges of architecture, design, and business to better align programs and better prepare students for success in a rapidly changing world. The Kanbar College will transition into two new, distinct colleges: the **College of Business** and the **College of Fashion and Textiles**.

Design and engineering programs not housed within Fashion and Textiles will move to the renamed **College of Architecture, Design, and Engineering (CADE)**. Students will remain in their current programs with no changes to curriculum, faculty, or advising, and the award-winning DEC Core Curriculum will remain intact under the direction of Dana

Scott, the William A. Finn ’67 Endowed Director of the Design, Engineering, and Commerce Core Curriculum. This new chapter marks an exciting step forward for Jefferson as it continues to build programs that prepare its students for the future of work.

## Retirement of Provost Matt Dane Baker, DHSc



Thomas Jefferson University announced that Matt Dane Baker, DHSc, will retire as

provost and chief academic officer, effective July 3, 2026, concluding a 32-year career at Jefferson.

Baker was appointed provost in August 2023 after serving as interim provost beginning in July 2022. During his tenure, he advanced Jefferson’s academic mission by supporting enrollment growth, launching new academic programs, strengthening research and academic partnerships, and helping guide institutional integration following the University merger. He previously served as provost and dean of the faculty at the legacy Philadelphia University.

Across more than four decades in academic, clinical, administrative, and research roles — including 24 years of military service in the Army and Air National Guard, retiring as a lieutenant colonel — Baker also contributed nationally through accreditation leadership and service on nonprofit boards. A national search for Jefferson’s next provost and chief academic officer is underway.



# Jefferson *How We Adore Thee*

By Elizabeth Avril Barden

Jefferson, how we adore thee  
Forging knowledge with industry  
Through years of collaboration  
All in all, we're shining through  
With vision, care and purpose  
We've evolved with much to give  
So very grateful for this moment

**To shape the world in which we live**

*Chorus x2:*

Here's to Jefferson  
Strong and true  
Where innovation leads us through  
*Together* we achieve our best  
As we prepare for what's next

Thomas Jefferson University  
*Improving lives daily*

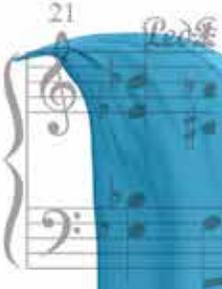
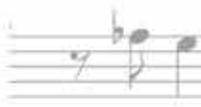
**Designers, healers, thinkers, leaders**

Honoring our legacy  
With devotion and discovery  
And compassion we will lead

*Chorus x2:*

**Here's to Jefferson**

Strong and true  
Where *innovation leads us through*





## The Sound of Jefferson

*Graduate Writes University's First Alma Mater*

BY MIKE BEDERKA

Elizabeth Avril Barden began singing in front of crowds at age 2, encouraged by her parents, both pastors. By age 7, she had written her first song, “Forevermore,” and growing up in New York City’s gospel music scene deepened her passion. After seeing jazz great Wynton Marsalis perform as a teenager, she immersed herself in the music of other luminaries, including John Coltrane, Marvin Gaye, and Aretha Franklin.

In high school, Barden won a regional songwriting contest, earning the opportunity to meet Grammy-winning R&B singer Jazmine Sullivan. “She

told me that I was an amazing songwriter and to keep writing,” recalls Barden, a 2025 graduate of Jefferson’s health services management program.

The University has named Barden’s composition, “Jefferson, How We Adore Thee,” the official alma mater — the first in its 202-year history.

As part of the Bicentennial celebration, the University invited the Jefferson community to submit alma mater compositions. Dozens of entries were received, and Barden’s submission was selected by a judging committee that included Jefferson leadership. “I started crying,” Barden says.

Barden, who works as a customer experience specialist at Jefferson Health Plans, learned about the competition from a colleague. She wrote the song in about 25 minutes in her Germantown living room, drawing inspiration from Jefferson’s history, spirit of collaboration, and commitment to improving lives.

“When I hear a melody, I can write a song for anything,” she

says. “All I hear is music, every second of my day.”

After her selection, Barden recorded the piece with producer Keegan Myers of Delaware-based KLMusic Productions. The alma mater debuted at the Jefferson Gala on Nov. 18 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and will be featured at future University events, including Ram Madness, Commencement, and Convocation.

“It’s my baby,” Barden says. “It’s about leaving a legacy. The best thing someone could have done was recommend that I attend Jefferson after community college. I earned my degree in a year and graduated at age 31 with four kids. That seemed impossible. The alma mater is a gift to Jefferson because Jefferson gave me a gift.”

Barden is currently pursuing a Master of Social Service at Bryn Mawr College. “I want to create a better future for my family and show my children the power of perseverance,” she says. 🎵



## WINNERS

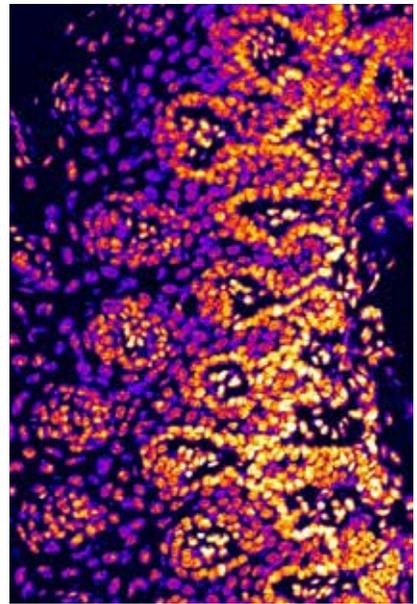


CONCEPTUAL ART

### Without Borders *Pamela Talero Cabrejo*

This artwork, created for the cover of Occupational Therapy Without Borders, configures the world map without borders, dissolving it into a vibrant background of people, animals, and landscapes. The continents become inseparable from the living mosaic of creatures, symbolizing how human and ecological life are intertwined. Figures move together in rhythm, representing the shared struggles and hopes that connect humankind.

The composition reflects both beauty and defiance — communities orchestrating resilience while interrogating injustice. From a research perspective, the image shows how occupational therapy engages with diversity, equity, and belonging, where knowledge emerges through collective action, creativity, and interconnected perspectives.



LIFE UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

### Taste Buds on Fire *Elham Javed*

This image reveals the intricate world of mouse taste buds, glowing fiery hues that capture the energy of sensation itself. The tongue tissue was stained with DAPI, a nuclear dye used to identify each cluster of taste bud cells — gateways where chemicals from food ignite electrical signals that travel to the brain to create the perception of taste. The depth of the tissue is color-coded in the hues of fire, adding dimension to the image. Beneath the microscope, what appears as flames is, in fact, the beauty of biology — where flavor begins and the science of sensation comes to life.



To view all of this year's submissions, scan the QR code or visit [research.jefferson.edu/art-competition](https://research.jefferson.edu/art-competition)



## Jefferson Students Embrace New Studio Art Minor

BY CASSIE DRUMM

**When a handful** of pre-medical and biology students enrolled in a design-based drawing course in 2022, associate professor EJ Herczyk noticed a clear pattern: Students across Jefferson were seeking creative experiences that felt as meaningful as their major coursework.

At the time, the University offered only a limited number of undergraduate drawing courses, most geared toward design majors. Conversations with students revealed a broader appetite for traditional studio art — courses and spaces that encouraged exploration beyond disciplinary boundaries.

That interest became the foundation for a growing slate of offerings, including painting, printmaking, drawing, and materials and techniques, and ultimately the launch of the studio art minor in 2025. The minor is open to students in all majors.

### A Creative Community for Any Major

Accessibility across disciplines was a core principle from the start. Herczyk says students from different

academic backgrounds bring varied perspectives to the studio, strengthening both the work and the learning environment.

The result, he notes, is a collaborative space where students form connections they might not otherwise make.

That sense of community drew Grace Gaither, a pre-medical studies student, who initially assumed an art minor would be out of reach. Instead, she found a supportive studio environment that became central to her Jefferson experience.

For Gaither, studio courses offer more than a creative outlet. She says they provide balance within the rigor of her major, creating space to reset in a less competitive setting alongside students from across the University.

### Skills That Translate Beyond the Studio

While grounded in traditional techniques, the courses often shape how students approach their primary fields. Herczyk recalls a Jefferson alumnus

◀ Far left: Textile design major Francesca Milani discusses her work

Left: Landscape architecture student Emily Luckenbach describes one of her pieces to University President Susan Aldridge, PhD, who displayed it in her Center City Campus office.

▶ Members of Jefferson leadership, including Susan Aldridge, PhD, and Joe Cacchione, MD, hosted a reception for students in the art classes.



**“It’s incredibly satisfying to offer something that students see as valuable to both their academic pursuits and personal growth.”**

now in medical school who said figure drawing sharpened his understanding of human anatomy in ways textbooks could not. Students across disciplines echo that impact.

Landscape architecture student Emily Luckenbach says the courses have influenced her design process, encouraging more hands-on, artistic exploration. Fashion design major Annalee Capuano credits printmaking with deepening her approach to surface design and revision. Biotechnology student Jennifer Tran enrolled to counterbalance the structure of her STEM coursework and discovered unexpected growth in patience and creative confidence.

Herczyk says those outcomes reflect the broader value of studio practice. Creating art, he notes, builds cognitive flexibility, persistence, and the ability to generate and refine ideas — skills that apply in any field.

#### **A Growing Presence on Campus**

As the program expands, its visibility has increased. Student artwork is now displayed in offices across campus, including those of Jefferson leadership, such as Susan Aldridge, PhD, and Joe Cacchione, MD, signaling institutional support for the arts.

Inside the classroom, Herczyk sees students gaining confidence as they move beyond familiar habits and assumptions. Those moments of discomfort, he says, often lead to the most meaningful discoveries.

The studio art minor provides a structured pathway, beginning with observational drawing and progressing through figure study, materials exploration, painting, and printmaking. For Herczyk, the goal is straightforward: to ensure creativity is recognized as an essential part of learning at Jefferson, regardless of major. 🍷



## Jefferson Architecture Student Elected President of International Student Organization

participating in discussions that affect students' futures, from licensure pathways to work-life balance.

### A Lifelong Interest in Building

Vastano's interest in architecture began early. "I was a Lincoln Logs kid," he says. "I loved building things, taking them apart, and starting over." Over time, that curiosity grew into an awareness of how buildings and spaces shape everyday experiences.

At Jefferson, Vastano found an environment that encouraged exploration rather than a single prescribed path. He points to the strong connections among students, faculty, alumni, and professionals across creative disciplines as one of the University's greatest strengths.

"You don't have to do just one thing after graduation," he says. "Talking with alumni in diverse roles helped me see what's possible and opened doors I didn't know existed."

### Preparing for Leadership

As a dual-degree student in the accelerated 5+1.5 Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Urban Design program, Vastano regularly collaborates with program directors and administrators, developing skills in communication, time management, and leadership.

"Jefferson gave me opportunities I wouldn't have had anywhere else," he says. "It taught

me how to prioritize my time and step into leadership thoughtfully."

Staying connected to Jefferson's AIAS chapter keeps him grounded as he balances the presidency with full-time study. "Being a student reminds me why this organization matters," he says.

### Supporting Students Through Change

One of Vastano's primary goals is helping students navigate the transition from college to professional life.

"There's no longer just one timeline for practicing architecture," he says. "Students are exploring where they can make the most impact."

Through AIAS programming, he hopes to ensure students' voices help shape the future of the profession. "Students deserve a seat at the table," he says.

### Looking Ahead

Vastano credits mentorship at Jefferson, particularly from Barbara Klinkhammer, dean of the Jefferson College of Architecture and the Built Environment, for encouraging him to think bigger.

"His dedication to amplifying student voices exemplifies the impact we hope all our students will make," Klinkhammer says.

Inspired by that support, Vastano hopes to pay it forward. "Helping students advocate for themselves and find opportunities has been incredibly rewarding," he says. "That's what leadership means to me." 

**From the studio** to the global stage, Luke Vastano will lead the American Institute of Architecture Students.

Bachelor of architecture and master of urban design student Luke Vastano has been elected the 70th president of the American Institute of Architecture Students, a national honor that highlights his leadership and Jefferson's commitment to preparing students for impact beyond the classroom.

An independent, nonprofit, student-run organization, AIAS supports architecture and design students worldwide through advocacy, professional development, and community-building opportunities.

"This organization is run by students, for students," Vastano says. "Our goal is to represent architecture students in conversations about education, accreditation, and professional life after graduation."

As president, Vastano represents student voices within the broader architectural alliance, including the American Institute of Architects and other professional organizations,



The Philadelphia Inquirer asked fashion design students around the Philadelphia area to design wedding looks for Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce.

Jefferson students' Abigayle Brubaker, Caroline Wickramaratna, Isa Borst, and Carly Marquess' sketches were selected to be featured in an article.





ARCHITECT of

# DREAMS

Jefferson architecture graduate Gabrielle Kemberling '12 played a key role in designing and building How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk at Universal Orlando's Epic Universe, which debuted in May 2025 as Orlando's first new major theme park in 25 years.

**BY IRISA GOLD**



*Photos are property of Universal Studios. Artistic overlay added for creative effect.*



GABRIELLE KEMBERLING '12

**M**ythical dragons soaring through the air, fierce Vikings around every corner, and a cup of mead to toast a battle well won – these are just a day at the office for Gabrielle Kemberling '12.

Kemberling, who earned a bachelor's in architecture with a minor in historic preservation at Jefferson (then Philadelphia University) recently completed eight years in an integral role designing and building How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk in Universal Orlando's Epic Universe. The park, the first major theme park to open in Orlando, Florida, in over 25 years, debuted in May 2025.

Growing up in rural Northumberland in central Pennsylvania, Kemberling knew from a young age that architecture was in her future. "I played with a lot of Legos, building houses," she says. "My parents were looking into building a house so there were a lot

of home-planning books around that I would pick up and study and try to do my own designs."

When it came time to choose a college, Kemberling saw Jefferson as a perfect next step, allowing her to move easily from her small-town environment to a school close to the city but with a smaller, community-oriented campus. "I liked the setting," she shares. "It felt very park-like, and the smaller class sizes were also very attractive over a lot of the bigger schools that I had toured. And fun fact: my parents lived in Independence Plaza before it became part of the campus housing when they were in Philly for my dad's med school. It was a full-circle, small-world coincidence."

For Kemberling, creative artistry and technical expertise go hand-in-hand. "I've always been on the creative side of things," she says. "I call myself a serial hobbyist and enjoy having a creative outlet, but I'm



## A BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING MAGIC

Take a cascade of curiosity, two large clouds of creativity, a hearty splash of technical know-how, and a spark of childlike wonder.

also very technically based and logical, and like the math and science of how things work and come together. Architecture is the best of both worlds.”

Jefferson’s well-balanced architecture curriculum focused on both conceptual and technical design and provided students with early opportunities to hone their presentation skills in front of fellow students as well as professors. “That allowed me to become more confident as a person and built me into a better professional,” she says.

Kemberling fully embraced her Jefferson experience, taking advantage of academic, social, and cultural

Yet from an early age, Kemberling dreamed of a career steeped in wonder, imagination, and magic. Annual visits with her grandparents in Florida inspired her love of theme parks.

“They’re creating magic for people — so how is it being done?” she says. “You’re really thrown into whatever world they’re trying to create. I loved trying to figure out how they did everything and grew up wanting to contribute to that creation.”

During college, she and a classmate were chosen as semi-finalists in a Disney Imaginations competition. That experience was her first introduction into designing for themed environments. And after

## THEY’RE CREATING MAGIC FOR PEOPLE — SO HOW IS IT BEING DONE?

opportunities. “On top of my education, the thing I valued most was the people I shared it with,” she shares.

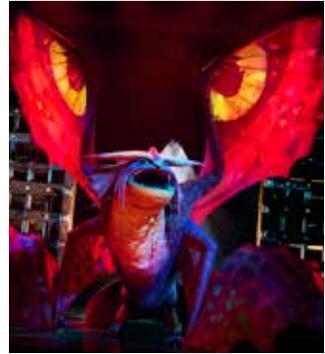
In addition to studying abroad in Rome, she participated in several extracurricular activities, including the chamber ensemble and tango club. “I was also part of a group that brought the first American Cancer Society Relay for Life to the East Falls Campus,” she shares.

During summer breaks, she interned with Anthony Visco Jr. Architects in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, returning to work full-time following graduation. There, she learned design basics and was exposed to different building typologies and scales of projects, offering her the opportunity to manage projects on her own. She shares, “That’s contributed a lot to how I handle the complex projects that I work on now.”

working for three years as an architect, she wanted — and needed — to make a change.

“My plan was always to work at a theme park, but a lot of the advice I had gotten was that I needed to have a lot of experience,” she says.

After researching her options, Kemberling applied and was accepted to the Savannah College of Art and Design’s MFA program for themed entertainment design. There, she was able to hone her theme park design and architecture skills. Following a trip to Orlando, in the winter break of her first year, she connected with Universal Creative and was hired for a summer internship working as part of the concept architecture and planning group. Following graduation, she moved to Orlando and returned full time to Universal Creative.



Kemberling spent eight years working on Universal Orlando Resort’s newest theme park, Epic Universe, specifically on one of the theme park’s five new lands, How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk. She started on its master planning before advancing into the concept phase of the design process and through its final construction.

“It was an exciting collaboration and not something that everybody gets to do every day,” she says. “This was definitely one of those once-in-a-lifetime projects.”

Kemberling is proud of the magical result. At 14 acres, How to Train Your Dragon is the second-largest land in the park and features the most attractions. “There’s a lot of interaction and movement throughout, so even if you’re not riding something, you’re still participating,” she shares. “There is the coaster going; the round rides are spinning; the boat ride is in the middle of the lagoon; and dragons are happening at the center of it all. The village feels like it’s alive.”

Today, she holds the title of Senior Manager of Architecture and Engineering Design. “My role specifically handles making sure that we’re developing buildings, landscape, interiors, and graphics that are fulfilling the needs of our operations partners, the vision of the creative team, and ultimately the code requirements,” she shares. “I spend a lot of time gathering information, ensuring that we’re coordinated, and that we’re all coming to a solution

that works for everybody and is completed on time and on budget.”

Beyond the unforgettable, immersive experience she has created for visitors, the challenges of her job are one of its greatest rewards. “What we’re doing is not easy,” she says. “A lot of different systems and parties have to be coordinated and come together to create something like this. The challenge of bringing all of those together and ultimately building what we do is exciting.”

After eight years, Kemberling was lucky enough to be there to experience the park’s opening day with her family. “That was probably my proudest moment,” she shares. “Taking my family to see what I had been working on for so many years — but also just seeing all the people around me enjoying something that I had helped contribute to — it was a lot of very overwhelming emotion. It was happy, sad, and kind of bittersweet at the same time. This is the end of a chapter, but you’re handing this over to the public as something for them to enjoy for the next few decades.”

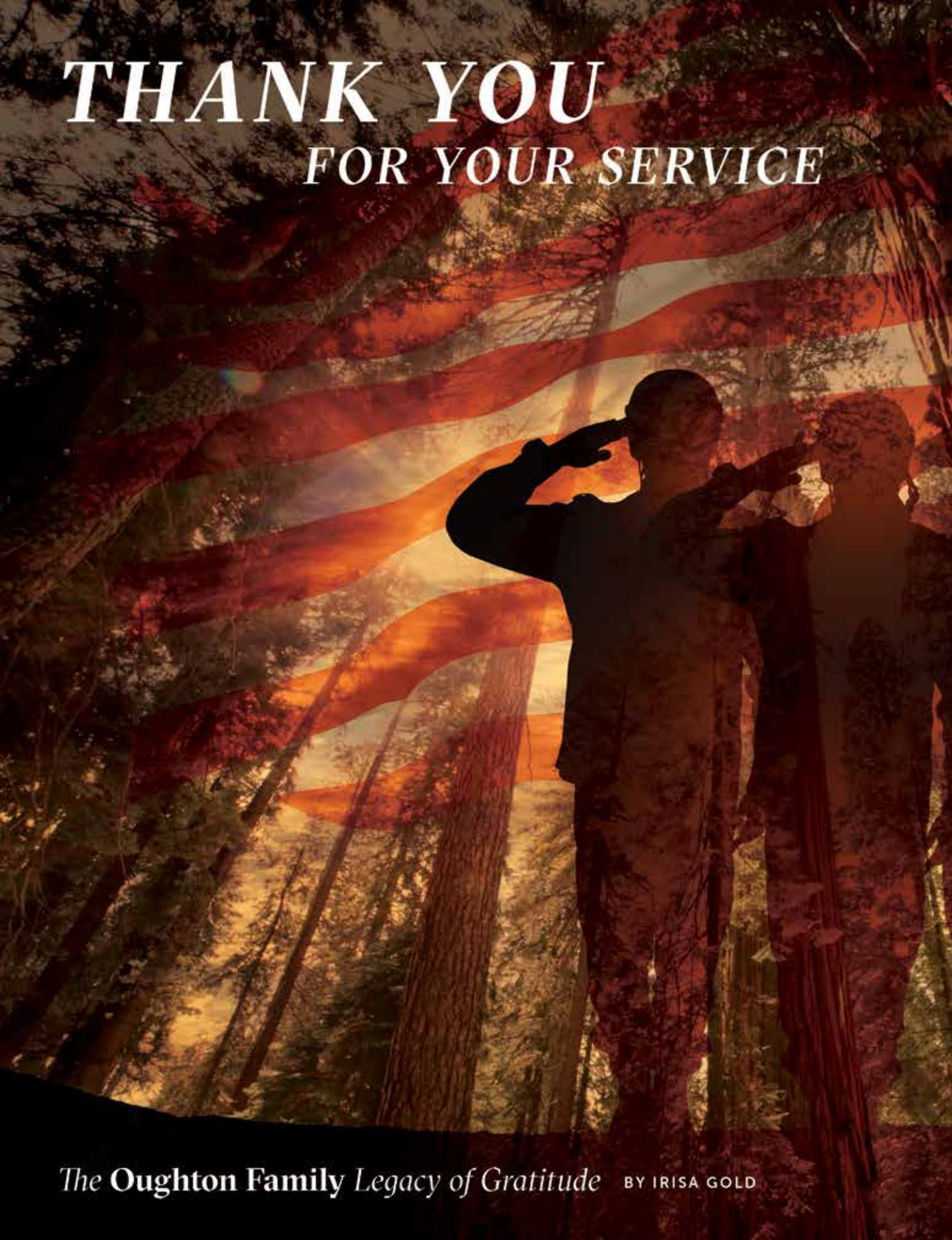
Kemberling can’t share what she’s working on next — it’s still under wraps — but she plans to bring the same sense of magic to it. “I always keep in the forefront of my mind that what I do is a privilege and something that shouldn’t be taken for granted,” she says. “I get to create places that people share with their families and friends and make memories that last forever.” 🐉

I started a  
new career!

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Happily retired!



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

*The Oughton Family Legacy of Gratitude* BY IRISA GOLD



## “ We Don’t Know Them All, But We Owe Them All.

**I**t’s impossible to repay the debt owed to those who serve their country. But **John Oughton III ’71**, wants to try.

Following high school, John only applied to one school, his father’s alma mater, the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. After his first semester, he decided to join the Marine Corps. “I wasn’t certain I really wanted to go to college at that point in my life,” he says. “I had always wanted to be a Marine, and within seven days, they had me at Parris Island.”

After spending seven years in various assignments overseas, he returned to Textile to complete his education and remembers meeting a group of fellow veterans. “Two of us were Marines, three were Army, one was Air Force, and one was Navy,” he says. “As veterans during the Vietnam War, we were not particularly cared for by members of the student body, so we started our own Semper Fi Society.”

That experience was the catalyst for a mission dear to his heart. “I started to get the idea that, as I grow in my career, if I’m able to, I want to set up a scholarship for veterans,” he says.

He knew that for many who served, a shot at an education after the military was life-changing. John recalls being treated by a battlefield corpsman after sustaining an injury as a Marine. “I’ll never forget him saying, ‘When I get out of here, I’m going to go to medical school,’” he says.

In 2012, he established the Oughton Family Scholarship for Veterans benefiting deserving students at Jefferson who demonstrate financial need, served in one of the five branches of the U.S. military, and have been honorably discharged or are honorably serving on active duty or as a reservist. He has created an additional bequest for the same purpose.

As a veteran who benefited from the GI bill to help fund his tuition,



▲ Susan C. Aldridge, PhD, and John Oughton III '71, February 2026, Palm Beach, Florida



*I would call myself a puzzle solver, and my education was key.*

he knew firsthand how assistance with paying for college can transform a student's life. "That was very important to me. I sometimes get a little emotional when I talk about it."

The Oughton family's Jefferson journey spans three generations and highlights disparate callings and careers. The textiles connection goes back to the founding of the Windsor Manufacturing Co. by his grandfather John and his brothers Charles and Bertram in Philadelphia in 1927. While each chose unique paths to graduation, at the heart of their stories are hard work, determination, love of family, and a desire to give back and make a difference.

John's father, John (Jack) Oughton Jr. '40 attended Textile before being drafted into the U.S. Navy and worked at Windsor until his passing. John also had a cousin, George Oughton, who worked as an instructor at Textile in dyeing and finishing in the late 1960s and '70s.

John didn't follow the same path as his father and grandfather before him, instead going into the banking and financial services industry. "In the '60s and '70s, accounting graduates from Textile were greatly sought after by the 'Big Eight' major accounting firms," he says.

He was pleased to learn that his finance courses neatly fit in with what he was tasked with throughout his career. "I would call myself a puzzle solver, and my education was key," he shares. He ascended the ranks in the banking world, working for a number of banks before joining Bear Stearns as the chief executive officer of its subsidiary Custodial Trust Co. After 11 years, John moved to Sovereign

Bank as chief investment officer and economist for its trust and wealth management group before retiring and moving with his wife to Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

However, retirement was far from his mind when he branched out into a new business venture, forestry. "I had timberland in Mississippi over the years," he says. "I worked full time and grew my forest from about 3,800 acres to close to 50,000 acres before selling at the age of 82."

John's dedication to his alma mater never waned, especially after he received an opportunity to help shape the future of the institution. After Textile's transition to Philadelphia University, he was invited to join the Board of Trustees, where he served for several years, departing about six months after the integration with Thomas Jefferson University.

John's brother, Samuel E. Oughton '68, attended Textile as a textile management and marketing major. "It was a natural choice,"

# SEMPER FI

*The Semper Fidelis Society provides students enrolled in Marine Officer training programs at PCT&S an opportunity to prepare themselves physically, professionally, and morally for their duties as Marine Officers. It also fosters a better understanding of the Marine Corps at PCT&S.*



Front: P. Magerman, B.A.M.; A. Hori, M. Kroon, G. Sanginiti. Secretary: J. Oughton  
President: M. Silver, Treasurer: C. McCormack, J. Reicheer, L. Makinoff, J. Yanesu, Vice  
President: R. Jones, R. Levenson, R. Target, S. Oughton

he says. “It opened my eyes to divergent thinking and my desire for marketing. I have always been attracted to the manufacturing process, and college maintained both interests.”

After graduation, Samuel worked for one summer at Dan River Mills in Danville, Virginia, before he lost his college deferment and was drafted into the U.S. Army. He qualified for aviation, completing Fort Rucker flight school in September 1969 and flying UH1-H Huey helicopters.

“I entered Vietnam in January 1970 assigned to 7/17th Cavalry, A Troop, flew combat missions, and served as aircraft commander for a UH1-H Huey,” he shares. Samuel was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Stars, and 17 Air Medals in recognition of his service to his country.

Following his discharge in 1971, his career moved in a new direction, and he obtained a teaching degree. “After teaching three years, I was unfulfilled,” he says. “I finally found my love in marketing.”

He sold industrial tires, becoming the general manager at Teledyne Monarch Rubber in New Jersey before being promoted as general manager of distribution and manufacturing in Houston. In 1989, he was invited to purchase the Houston Distribution Center which he ran before selling the business in 1998 to Maine Industrial Tires, having grown sales to \$2.2 million, and worked for two years managing its distribution centers nationwide before retiring in 2000.



▲ Top photo: Sam Oughton in class

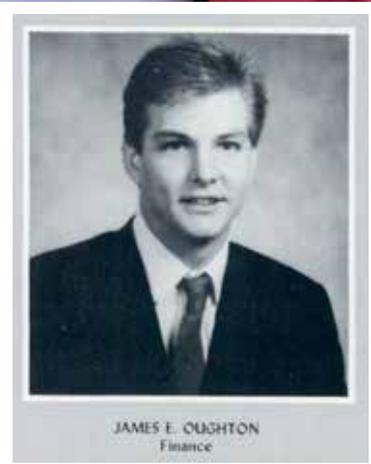
Bottom photo: Sam Oughton and wife Ann receive new forklift at their new business, Monarch Industrial Tire



Left to right: John Oughton III, and James Oughton



▲ Left to right: John Oughton III '71, John Oughton Jr. '40, and Samuel Oughton '68



For John's son, James Oughton '89, his family's legacy was instrumental in his choosing Textile. "After a difficult freshman year, I sat down and spoke to my father regarding my choice in schools," he says. "Knowing my family history, I decided to transfer to Textile my sophomore year. I took great pride in the role that my family played in its early years."

"The education I received as well as my experience as the president of our chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity were key in helping to develop my leadership abilities and critical-thinking skills," he shares. "Upon arrival, I was welcomed by the other students, and the campus and city life offered a new experience for me."

After graduating with a major in finance and a minor in economics, James spent the early part of his

career working for PNC Bank in Pittsburgh. After moving back to the Philadelphia area, he joined a manufacturing company as an accountant before advancing to lead its customer service department and field service team.

In 2012, he joined private transportation firm Rover Community Transit as the accounting manager. When the County of Chester Pennsylvania took over the service in 2023, he transitioned to the role he still holds today, deputy director for Chester County's community transit program, Chesco Connect. "We provide over 600 rides daily throughout the entire county for seniors and people with disabilities," he says.

Both Samuel and James are not only proud of their family's legacy, they are also proud brothers in Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity, which, although no longer active on Jefferson's campus, played a foundational role in their lives.

Samuel shares, "Sig Ep swore me to a brotherhood. I found value in every relationship."

"Sig Ep provided me with an opportunity to create lifelong

friendships and also brought me closer to my uncle Sam," says James.

Reconnecting with their alma mater has brought the entire family together. James notes they return to East Falls together for homecoming events, including his uncle Sam's 50th class reunion. And giving back to the school, creating endowments for future generations, has only deepened their engagement.

When asked how it feels to be part of his family's rich legacy of generosity and service that began three generations ago, John's answer is simple. "Proud. Just proud." 🇯

“ Proud. Just proud.”

# Scholarships Open Doors

**You have the power to change the course  
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# BEYOND

*the*

# seams

Sustainability, adaptability, and inclusion aren't just fashionable buzzwords — they are concepts that define the flexibility necessary to make it in an ever-evolving business world. They also define an education that prepares students for the future of work with a focus on improving lives, the environment, and society on the whole.

Fashion design students at Thomas Jefferson University don't follow the conventional path of haute couture. A well-rounded education based in science, art, and an awareness of the world around them prepares them for careers beyond the runway.

Fashion design degrees have taken alumni **Caitlin Quirk '12** and **Jennifer Pellechio-Lukowiak '90** from sketching and sewing to diverse careers in textile production, sustainable entrepreneurship, and publishing. Current students are taking their skills and designing adaptable clothing for an often-overlooked population — those with disabilities and special needs.



The following stories illustrate how an education based in progressive and innovative thinking has redefined the fashion degree at Jefferson.

## CAITLIN QUIRK '12 | style & sustainability.



*“Eenie, meenie, miney, mo,”* says Caitlin Quirk of Marmora, New Jersey. That’s how she decided her life’s work.

Quirk, who graduated from Jefferson (then Philadelphia University) with a bachelor’s in fashion design in 2012, could just as easily have become a zoologist. As she was preparing to graduate from Bishop Eustace Preparatory High School in Pennsauken, New Jersey, she still

hadn’t made up her mind between the two career options.

“So, I eenie, meenie, miney, moed it and landed on fashion design,” she says. She applied and was accepted to several universities, but decided Jefferson was where she belonged.

“I chose Jefferson because I fell in love with the program,” she says. “I felt all the hands-on learning would be right up my alley.”

Because of the variety of classes and programs offered, Quirk kept changing her mind about where her focus would be. The design courses, photography classes,

various internships, etc., gave her a diverse foundation and keen interest in many aspects of fashion design and more.

“By the time I graduated, I had a couple of internships in New York City, and I very quickly decided that corporate fashion just was not the life for me,” she says. “I needed something more hands-on ... where I could be involved in different processes.”

She credits her rebellious spirit and a penchant for marching to the beat of a different drummer for making the bold decision to start her own business straight out of college.

With the support of her parents (free rent at their shore house!), she signed a lease for a store in the resort town of Ocean City, New Jersey, in 2013 and opened Bangles and Bows Boutique, an upscale children's clothing store.

She started out producing her own line of clothing and hit the ground running. After two years she moved the store to a more central location in Ocean City and changed the name to Bowfish Kids, adopting a traditional retail model of purchasing wholesale and selling retail.

In 2017, she expanded the store into a children's imagination-based entertainment and interactive salon called Bowfish Studios, which hosts themed parties, magical makeovers, and community events.

While the children's costumes are purchased, Quirk designed and sewed the uniforms worn by her "imagination stylists," the young ladies who work in the studio painting faces, styling hair, and running parties and events.

At the studio, children are transformed into mermaids, unicorns, sharks, dragons, pop stars ... whatever they can imagine they can become.

In addition, Quirk conceived and constructed sets to add to the ambiance, including a castle made out of seashells, a life-sized Barbie doll box, and a fashion show runway — all designed to complete the fairy tale experience.

"I didn't go to school for physical space construction, but I

was able to take the things that I learned in my design foundation courses and translate them into physical space design and construction," she says. "Different tools — same process."

Quirk says that the attention to detail emphasized by her professors at Jefferson was also a benefit when she began her businesses.

"What I learned in the design process is how little details really make a difference," she says.

With Bowfish Kids and Bowfish Studios successfully up and running, Quirk also opened a coworking space in Ocean City. She then turned to her attention to a "passion project."

Inspired by a speech given by Greta Thunberg at the U.N. Climate Action Summit in 2019, she vowed to create a more sustainable business model.

"Thunberg spoke so deeply to me ... I decided to do my own homework," Quirk says. What she discovered was that retail businesses like hers — although smaller than many similar businesses — create a considerable amount of trash.

"Every single piece of brand-new apparel that you purchase from a manufacturer comes in a single-use piece of plastic. I just truly became disturbed from the amount of waste that my small store was creating," she says.

After taking a field trip to a local dump, she started attending conferences about waste and composting and educating herself in how to leave a smaller carbon footprint.

"It became my guiding light on all of my businesses ... to create the least amount of waste possible," she says. She made the



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**I didn't go to school for physical space construction, but I was able to take the things that I learned in my design foundation courses and translate them into physical space design and construction. Different tools — same process.**

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decision that Bowfish Kids and Bowfish Studios would only do business with manufacturers that agree to ship items with no plastic and minimal packaging.

Her commitment to the environment led to the birth of a new business idea — one that came from Quirk's own closet.

"I had a ton of clothes that I didn't wear anymore that I was unwilling to donate because I know that when you donate clothing, unfortunately only 10 to 20 percent of it stays in circulation," she says. The rest of it goes into the trash just because of the sheer volume and because many items, such as cocktail dresses and gowns, are simply not needed by most people

who depend on donated clothes.

Staring at the pile of clothes on her floor, she had three options: try to sell them online (which she had tried previously, but had a bad experience); take them to a consignment shop (which is time consuming and frequently not financially worth the effort); or create a new business model that made the consignment shop a more fair, convenient, and attractive place.

And so, she says, The Garb

Collection was born — "A place where people could be in control of what they sold while helping to eliminate clutter in their life and keep stuff in circulation rather than the trash."

The Garb Collection is a brick-and-mortar consignment shop, but the business model is unique, she says. Instead of bringing clothing to a shop and having the shop decide what it will accept and setting the price, the seller is in complete control of the items they offer and price they ask.

In addition, it provides more of a "boutique" experience rather than a warehouse atmosphere that can be overwhelming.

The concept is based on one she discovered in Iceland when she was married there in 2023.

"We rent booth space and handle all of the marketing and sales," she explains. Rentals can run anywhere from five days to 60 days, and the cost is \$3 per day plus a one-third commission on sales.

Once a seller books the rental, they are provided with an account on The Garb Collection website. They tag their clothes, hang them up in their booth, then leave the rest to the store's employees.

"The setup of The Garb Collection also takes some of the stigma away from buying second-hand clothing by making it more of a boutique experience," Quirk says.

The store has been a great success. So much so, in fact, that Quirk decided to open a second location in early 2026 in Collingswood, New Jersey, in an old historic former theater building.

Contemplating her next move, Quirk says she would like to open 10 more Garb Collection stores over the next five years. Ambitious? Yes, but she says she knows whatever obstacles that might arise in future endeavors won't be a problem because one of the greatest lessons she learned at Jefferson was the importance of problem solving.

"Jefferson put a lot of emphasis in all of my classes on problem solving — how to work through challenges and continue to see projects through to the end ... It's something that has 100% led to my success because it's a model that I've kept re-creating," she says. "At the end of the day, having the tools matter — but if you have the skills, you can do anything."

*By Cindy Lefler*

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## JENNIFER PELLECHIO-LUKOWIAK '90

**fashionista. novelist. survivor.**



First there was the yarn-dyed piece-goods manufacturer that focused on stripes — lots of stripes! — then off to London Fog designing men’s sportswear. After that came the job at the United Retail Group creating plus-size women’s wear, and later a brief foray into furniture and drapery design. A return to the world of apparel brought her to Liz Claiborne for several years, and then Macy’s. Moving from the hustle and bustle of New York City to North Carolina landed her at Bermuda Sands where she designed golf apparel. Seven years ago, she jumped to the “fiber side” of the fashion world at Cotton Inc.

Jennifer Pellechio-Lukowiak chuckles a little when she ticks through all the companies she has worked for and all the different jobs she has had over the past 36 years. It’s an impressive and

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**With the education I received I was given a sustainable career — a career that gave me a variety of pathways that I could explore.**

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diverse list — one she says was made possible by the multifaceted education she received at Jefferson.

“With the education I received I was given a sustainable career — a career that gave me a variety of pathways that I could explore,” says Lukowiak, who graduated from Jefferson (then the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science) in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science in fashion design.

“I wanted to make beautiful clothes, but the education led

me down so many pathways that had me dabbling in color science, upholstery and furniture making, and draperies. It wasn’t just about sitting with a paintbrush all day, it wasn’t just about sitting in front of a sewing machine or a weaving loom, it was a well-rounded education.”

Because she was a native of the North Jersey town of Livingston, it was assumed Lukowiak would attend one of the New York fashion schools. But once she explored Jefferson, she decided it was a better choice.

“What set [Jefferson] apart was that it offered a Bachelor of Science. It wasn’t just creative and inspiring — it offered a textile and a science component,” she says, noting that the critical-thinking skills and scientific aspect were a game changer in her career. “The professors always made a point of saying, ‘You can put anything you dream of on paper, but you have to be able to understand how it’s made and constructed.’ They always stressed the follow-through.”

Those lessons helped her steer through the various positions she has held in different aspects of the field, including her most recent on the “fiber side” of the fashion industry.

In 2016, Lukowiak took a job as vice president of merchandising and design at Bermuda Sands, moving from the hustle and bustle of New York to North Carolina so that she and her husband, Pete, could be closer to their two sons, Peter and Connor, both of whom chose colleges in the state.

But a few years later, she became intrigued by a position at Cotton Inc., a company that supports U.S. cotton growers and importers. Lukowiak explains that the move was motivated by the importance of sustainability, which is becoming increasingly relevant in today's society.

For years, she says, manufacturers have focused on what is the cheapest material to make — manmade fabric such as polyester and acrylic. “And we're paying the price on that. What is that doing to our environment? There are islands of clothing that just don't break down. Natural fibers provide sustainability, biodegradability, and breathability.”

Everything she learned throughout her career — starting at Jefferson — seemed to be wrapped up in one neat package in this new job.

“There's so much about going to school at Jefferson that impacts my life today. There are lessons that I learned about critical thinking, about being pragmatic when it comes to managing a project, your time, your investment in yourself,” she says. “There's this need to understand all sides of the cube; it's a very different world view.”

That ability to see the cube from all sides was an asset when she took on a very different job — one that came as a complete surprise to her: novelist.

Her book, “Does This Outfit Make Me Look Bald? How a Fashionista Fought Breast Cancer With Style,” was born of her battles with breast cancer — once at age 38 and again at age 44.

“You're thrown into this world of having to make decisions very, very quickly about something you know absolutely nothing about,” she says.

“It's like drinking from a fire hose — it's so much all at once and it is so colossally overwhelming.”

She says that even though she had a wonderful support system of family and friends, cancer is still a lonely journey. “You're the one losing your hair, you're the one recovering from surgery, you're the one taking a leave of absence from your job.”

At the time, all the books on breast cancer she found were told from an older woman's perspective and carried the message to slow down and take early retirement, and maintained that cancer was a gift.

“And I said, ‘Hold on, gifts make you happy; cancer makes you cry,’” she says. “It is not a gift, and you don't have to think of it as one. You don't have to be all zen about it. It's okay to have a rotten day, it's okay to have a rotten week, it isn't easy.”

She adds that she was not ready to slow down and retire. At only 38 years old she still had too much more to do.

Trying to navigate the overwhelming intricacies of cancer as a young woman inspired her to start keeping a journal.

“I did it to make myself feel better, to be a little snarky, to make the pity party a fun pity party,” she says. “And in starting to write things down, I began to think about maybe somebody else could benefit from what I'm going through.”

It was never her intent to write a book; she was hoping to simply put some thoughts down for a pamphlet to leave at the doctor's office to help other women like herself find their way through the cancer journey. But she soon had 80 pages written and knew it was too much for a pamphlet — it needed to be a book.

The book — in which Lukowiak asks questions such as “Will your nurses mock you if you wear mascara to chemo and you only have three eyelashes?” — became her passion project.

The self-described blogger, fashionista, tattooed rock 'n' roll mama, and indie author describes her book as a “witty and okay-to-laugh-out-loud journey through the unmentionables of breast cancer.”

“My feeling was that if I help one other woman feel a little bit less alone in this journey, then everything I went through makes sense,” she says.

The book was published in 2012 and was offered through Amazon, Apple Books, and Barnes and Noble. To Lukowiak's surprise it was a hit, and messages came rolling in on Facebook, LinkedIn, email, and the website set up by the publisher.

Soon she had a whole network of women taking their own cancer journey with the help of her book. She calls the group of survivors “the best club that nobody wants to be a member of.”

Lukowiak, who is also on a national registry for cancer survivor speakers, often gives talks at American Cancer Society events and support communities, as well as at magnet high schools focused on medicine.

“I'm happy to share my story of resilience, humor, and how style can carry us through even the hardest chapters of our lives.”

*By Cindy Lefler*



## STYLE FOR EVERY BODY

students develop adaptive fashion for clients with disabilities.



“Clothing covers us. Fashion represents us. Everyone deserves an outfit that makes them comfortable in the world,” says Wendy J. Ross, MD, Director, Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity.

Jefferson’s Diversity in Design, a fashion design class that trains students to create clothing for individuals with physical disabilities, skin sensitivity, and autism, aims to do just that.

In the early 2020s, Jefferson implemented the class to teach students about designing for people whom the fashion industry has traditionally overlooked. This year marked the first time the students were paired with actual

clients — several with Jefferson connections.

A required course for seniors, Diversity in Design helps foster an industry of inclusion where fashion is accessible to all, regardless of ability or disability, says Carly Kusy, fashion design program director. “By working with real clients, students practice a human-centered approach to design, addressing disparities in the fashion marketplace head-on,” she says.

Plus, the course prepares students for careers after graduation, where the adaptive wear market continues to grow. According to Forbes, the adaptive fashion market is projected to be

worth about \$400 billion this year with well-known companies such as Tommy Hilfiger, Anthropologie, and Nike leading the way.

Adaptive clothing is designed for individuals with disabilities, mobility limitations, or sensory sensitivities to make dressing easier, faster, and more comfortable. These garments often feature magnetic fasteners, Velcro, open-back designs, sensory-friendly fabrics, and wheelchair-friendly cuts, enhancing independence for users and simplifying care for caregivers.

Through a collaboration with the Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity, students take their designs from concept



**Clothing covers us.  
Fashion represents us.  
Everyone deserves an  
outfit that makes them  
comfortable in the  
world.**

to creation for clients at the center.

Over three sessions last December, students presented their final looks to fashion faculty and six clients, having worked closely with them throughout the fall semester. Among them were Eliza McGann, an active 2-year-old with Down syndrome and limb difference; Amelia Bryson, a neurodiverse 10-year-old; and Amanda Parezo, a Jefferson occupational therapy professor who was paralyzed from the waist down after being struck by a stray bullet in 2021.

“Corporate mass-market fashion doesn’t always include people like Eliza,” says her dad, Sean McGann, MD, a Jefferson clinical associate professor. “To know these fashion students get this education and experience — making clothes for people who might look a little bit different — is awesome. Working at Jefferson and this being a Jefferson project makes it really meaningful to be here.”

“I’m wildly impressed with the work the students did,” adds Eliza’s mom, Lisa. Some of Eliza’s new looks included a playful coat

▲ Left to right: Carly Kusy, Wendy Ross, MD, and Susan Aldridge, PhD

◀ 2-year-old Eliza with her dad, Sean McGann, MD

▶ Amanda Parezo

Photos by ©Thomas Jefferson University Photography Services





with magnetic closures and an adjustable sleeve. Fashion student Ella Cascone worked closely with Eliza and her parents over the fall semester to brainstorm, design, and refine an adjustable dress.

“The fashion industry can feel materialistic sometimes, but to interact with a client who struggles in this area and provide a product they couldn’t get elsewhere felt amazing to be a part of,” Cascone says.

Noting research alone would only take her so far, fashion student Miabella Courtney says she gained valuable insights working directly with Amelia. Together, they developed a fidget sensory hoodie that includes a hidden stress ball in the kangaroo pocket. Both the pocket and hood feature a silky textured fabric for sensory needs.

Amelia’s dad, Tito, says they sometimes struggle to find

clothes that make Amelia feel comfortable. The Jefferson project allowed her to bring her dream designs to fruition. “It’s really cool to see her excitement and the designers’ excitement,” he says.

Parezo felt encouraged by every step of the design process, especially the collaboration and creativity.

“I told them how occupational therapy can be part of fashion,” she says. “They took that and listened to the stuff I like, and what I do every day and in my spare time. For example, one student designed a rain-resistant cover for pants that looks better than a big poncho. They made me feel comfortable and like my old self.”

For Parezo, fashion student Omar Gómez designed a cropped puffer jacket with a tailored seated fit, extended back coverage that avoids catching on her wheelchair,

and lightweight insulation for warmth without underarm bulk.

“I learned to be inclusive and to take the step toward representation, you must have conversations with people from those communities,” Gómez says. “Before meeting Amanda, I had an idea of what direction I was taking for the class. However, by talking with her and understanding what she needed day to day, I went back to the drawing board. This project opened my eyes to a different side of the industry and to overlooked communities. It makes me inspired to continue my design journey.”

The clients found their way to the Diversity in Design course via various University connections, including Jefferson’s Center for Autism and Neurodiversity, which is helmed by Ross, who notes the course is an essential collaborative effort not only for clients but also for underserved populations. [J](#)

*By Mike Bederka*

# FASHION SHOW

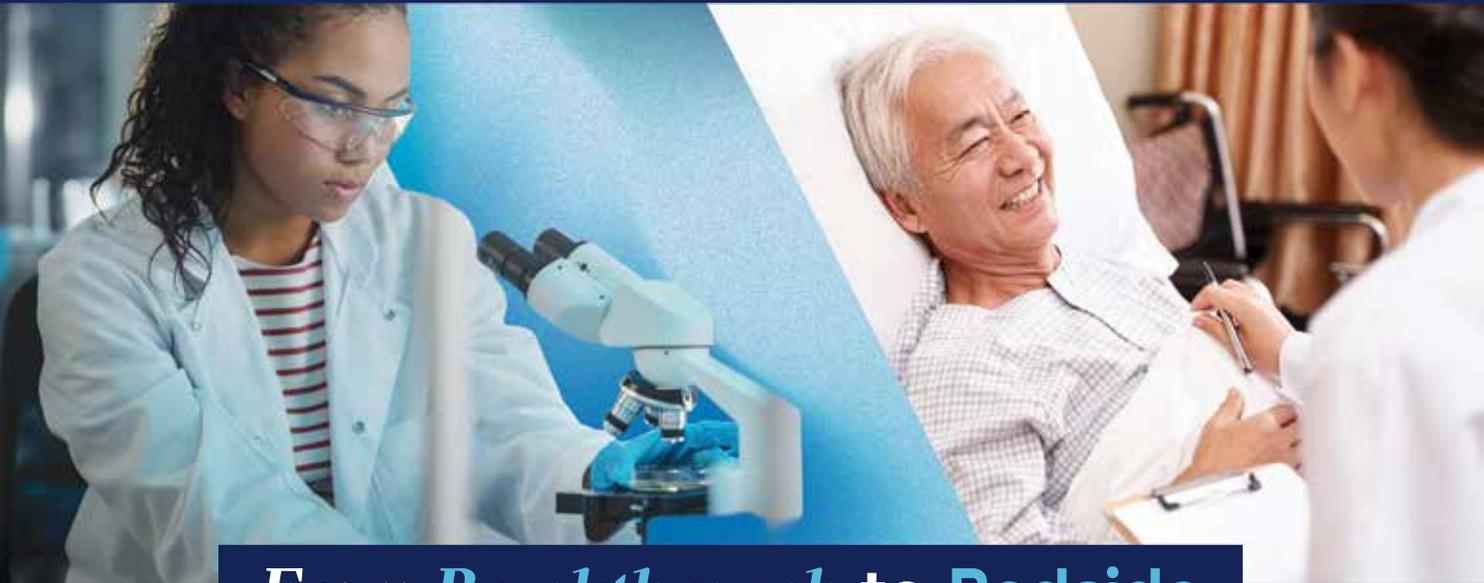
SAVE THE DATE

**4.22.26**

**Jefferson Annual  
Fashion Show**

*Presented by the College  
of Fashion & Textiles*

—  
The Bellevue Hotel



## From Breakthrough to Bedside

At Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, a new center is built around a simple but urgent question: **How do we move breakthrough discoveries to patients — faster?**

The newly launched Clinical and Translational Sciences Center (CTSC) is the realization of a vision set by **Said Ibrahim, MD**, the Anthony F. and Gertrude M. DePalma Dean of Sidney Kimmel Medical College. His goal: to bridge the gap between science and society by making research more collaborative, more efficient, and more impactful — streamlining the path from bench to bedside and into the community at large.

Created with that mission at its core, the CTSC was designed to remove the barriers that slow innovation and bring scientists, clinicians, industry partners, and communities into closer alignment. Backed in part by a transformative 2025 gift from Sidney and Caroline Kimmel, the center provides the infrastructure and momentum to ensure promising discoveries reach the people who need them most.

Walter K. Kraft, MD, Interim Director of the CTSC, explains how the center will accelerate research, strengthen Jefferson's national standing, and reshape how discoveries move from the lab to the clinic — and beyond.



### Walter K. Kraft, MD

Interim Director, CTSC

*A physician, researcher, and educator, Dr. Kraft leads Jefferson's Phase 1 Clinical Research Unit and the Office of Human Research Protection and maintains a clinical practice in vascular medicine. His work spans early phase clinical trials, research oversight, and nationally recognized studies on infants exposed to opioids. He also is chair of the FDA Advisory Committee for Clinical Pharmacology and deputy editor-in-chief of the journal Clinical and Translational Science.*



| (Left to right) Susan Aldridge, PhD, Said Ibrahim, MD, and Baligh R. Yehia, MD, at the Clinical and Translational Sciences Center opening reception

## ■ What is clinical and translational science?

Clinical and translational science turns discovery into action. It moves breakthroughs out of the lab and into real-world care — transforming scientific insight into new diagnostics, therapies, and solutions that improve health at scale.

## ■ Why create the Clinical and Translational Sciences Center now?

The pace of discovery is accelerating — but the systems that move discoveries into practice haven't always kept up. The CTSC is built to change that.

By aligning expertise, infrastructure, and partnerships, the center helps ideas move more efficiently from concept to care. It provides the connective tissue between disciplines and removes friction in the research process — so breakthroughs don't stall before they reach patients.

## ■ What will the Clinical and Translational Sciences Center do?

The CTSC will serve as Jefferson's research accelerator — bringing scientists, clinicians, technologists, and communities together to move ideas faster from concept to care.

Whether advancing personalized medicine, launching next-generation clinical trials, or training future research leaders, the center is built to shorten the distance between innovation and impact.

Beyond the University, the CTSC strengthens Jefferson's role as a regional innovation engine — attracting industry partnerships, fueling biotech growth, and supporting high-skill jobs across the healthcare ecosystem.

## ■ How does this elevate Jefferson?

The CTSC provides the platform to significantly expand Jefferson's research capacity and national competitiveness — particularly in cardiovascular disease, neuroscience, and cancer.

By strengthening infrastructure for industry-sponsored trials and collaborative research, the center will accelerate the development of new treatments, improve readiness for future public health threats, and ensure innovation reaches diverse communities equitably.

## ■ Where is the center investing for the future?

The CTSC is investing in the future of research — expanding capabilities in:

- AI-driven informatics and data science
- Technology-enabled and distributed clinical trials
- Biostatistics and advanced analytics
- Community engagement and inclusive research
- Career development for the next generation of translational scientists. ↴

**FUEL DISCOVERY.  
TRANSFORM LIVES.  
DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT.**

The **SKMC Clinical and Translational Sciences Center** will be a powerful engine for turning scientific discoveries into better health outcomes for everyone. Its mission is simple but profound: *to speed up the process of moving research from bench to bedside to community.*



**Scan the QR code to make your gift today.** Every dollar you give to the center will be matched by Sidney and Caroline Kimmel, putting the most promising ideas and treatments to use even faster.

**To learn more,** please contact Lisa Repko, Vice President, Thomas Jefferson University and Planned Giving, at [lisa.repko@jefferson.edu](mailto:lisa.repko@jefferson.edu) or 215-955-1635.

# RAM



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

# ROUNDUP



## Next Goal: MD Trading Cleats for a White Coat

THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY senior Nikki Dedes added another milestone to a standout career, earning first-team All-America honors from the United Soccer Coaches.

Dedes capped her senior season with 12 goals and 10 assists for 34 points, cementing her place among the nation's top Division II players. The Medford, New Jersey, native secured her second All-America recognition of the year after being named to the Division II Conference Commissioners Association First Team.

The reigning Central Atlantic Collegiate Conference (CACC) Player of the Year, Dedes played a pivotal role in leading the Rams to their second consecutive NCAA Sweet 16 appearance while capturing the CACC regular-season title. She also earned All-CACC First Team honors and was named to the PhillySIDA Academic All-Area Team, where she was selected as Performer of the Year.

Her excellence extended beyond the pitch. In the fall, Dedes plans to attend Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, where she intends to pursue a career in sports medicine.



## Shirley in PA Sports Hall of Fame

TOM SHIRLEY, head women's basketball coach for the past 36 years, will be inducted into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame this fall. Shirley is the winningest active women's basketball coach in NCAA Division II history and ranks fifth all-time across all divisions.

Shirley's impact extends beyond athletics. The Kathleen and Thomas R. Shirley Sr. Scholarship, established in 2008 in honor of his parents, has grown to a market value of approximately \$550,000. The need-based scholarship gives first preference to a resident of Roxborough, Manayunk or East Falls. This year, it is providing six students with nearly \$30,000 in scholarship support.



## BALLING ON THE COURT

# #Trending on TikTok

**MEET CHRIS CERVINO** — Jefferson freshman, hoops star, and now TikTok influencer.

What started out as a project to make a funny piece to throw his opponents on the court off their game recently spun into a TikTok video that went viral.

In an interview with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the freshman guard explained that the video, “Road to D2” was a play on an opposing team member’s online account postings, “Road to D1.”

D1 is Troy Hornbeck, who has gained a large social media following as he has documented his journey in playing Division I basketball.

After posting his own video, Cervino discovered that the post “blew up.” Other videos posted about him followed — one that got 2 million views and 700,000 likes.

Last year, Hornbeck and Cervino played against each other in the Atlanta-based Overtime Elite league, which is similar to a professional league, offering high-level training for athletes between the ages of 16 and 20 and instruction on how to increase their brand and social media presence.

Cervino credits his time at Overtime for putting him in touch with a social media agency that provided pointers on how to monetize his name. He has since signed with an agency that finds brand deals on his behalf. He has a Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) deal, which gives him rights as a college student-athlete to earn money from

his personal brand, including sponsorships, social media, and endorsements, without losing eligibility.

Cervino also decided to take advantage of his surprise social media success and continue to post videos, including those of him dancing, as well as highlights from his basketball career at Jefferson. So far, he has more than 9,000 followers on TikTok.

“On social media, I like to just display myself,” he told the *Inquirer*. “I don’t really care about what other people think of me, even in basketball games. I’m happy with myself and who I am as a person.”

Cervino, a native of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, grew up playing basketball with San Antonio Spurs rookie Dylan Harper. The two played Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball for Brick City, a team coached by Harper’s mother, prior to high school. AAU is a premier, nonschool competitive club basketball system for youth in grades three through 11-plus designed for development, high-level, and intense tournament play.

Cervino and Harper shot hoops in the backyard, “talked smack” to each other, and challenged each other. Harper went on to play for Don Bosco Prep; Cervino won back-to-back state championships at Ramapo.

Cervino, a 6-foot shooting guard, told the *Inquirer* that the sudden TikTok popularity is a “cool experience,” but he is not chasing followers or views, he is just having fun. 🏀

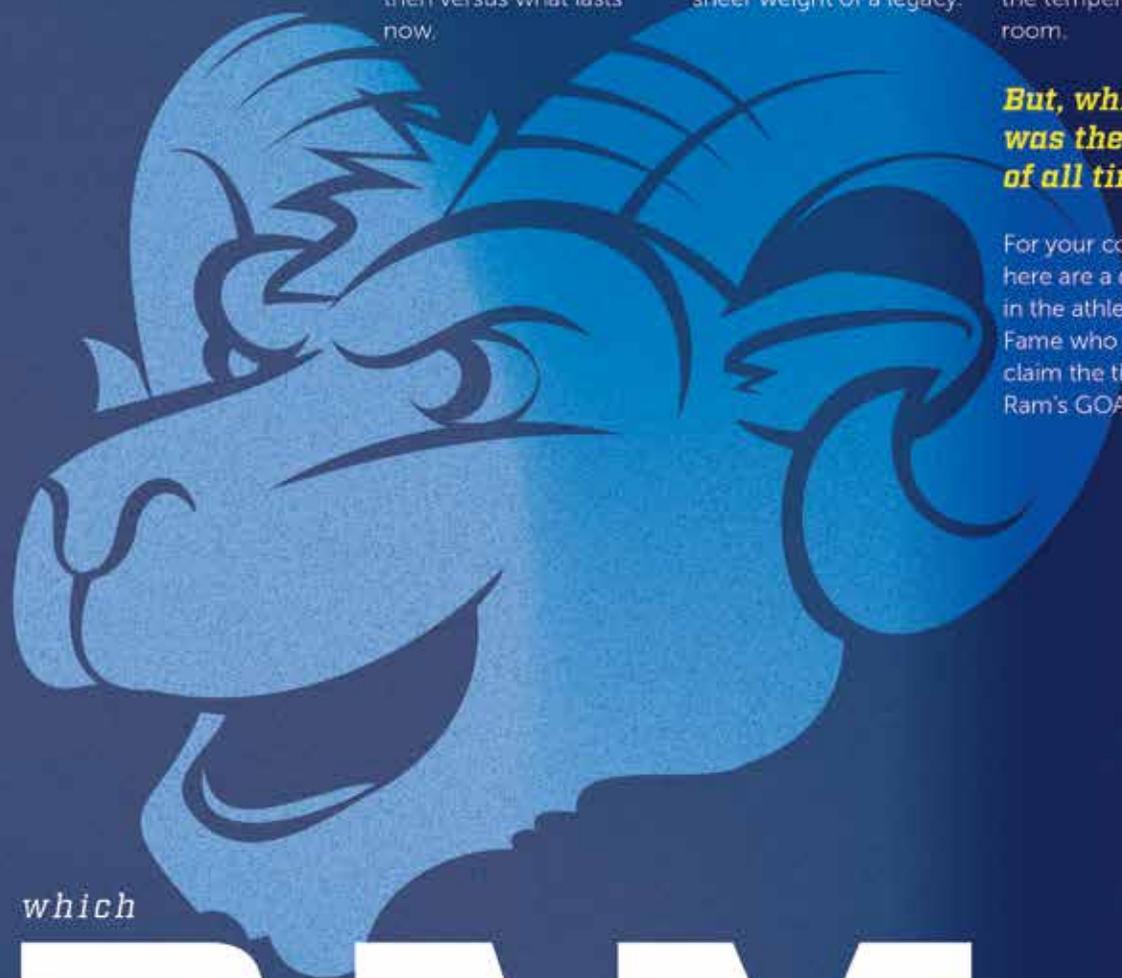
**P**art of the beauty of sports is the debate. We love calculating the barstool geometry of eras and styles, of what mattered then versus what lasts now.

At Thomas Jefferson University, the debate is especially rich, measuring greatness in different currencies: points, goals, wins, or the sheer weight of a legacy.

Whether the jersey read Textile, PhilaU, or Jefferson, the school has produced athletes who didn't just win games; they changed the temperature of the room.

***But, which Ram was the greatest of all time?***

For your consideration, here are a dozen Rams in the athletics Hall of Fame who can credibly claim the title of the Ram's GOAT.



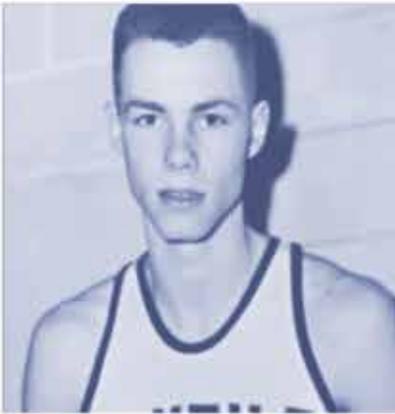
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# RAM

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[GREATEST OF ALL TIME]



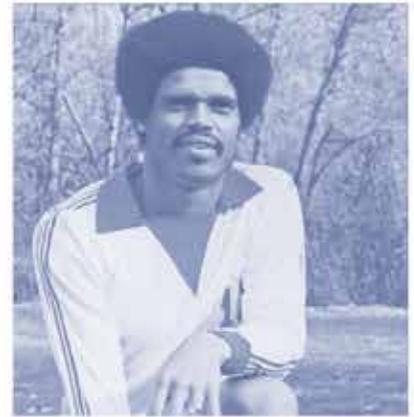
**CHARLES "CHICK" BARNES '58** // Basketball

An early hoops trailblazer, Barnes was the original superstar of the Textile era. His scoring prowess and rebounding tenacity set the standard for every Ram who followed, cementing his place as one of the program's foundation stones.



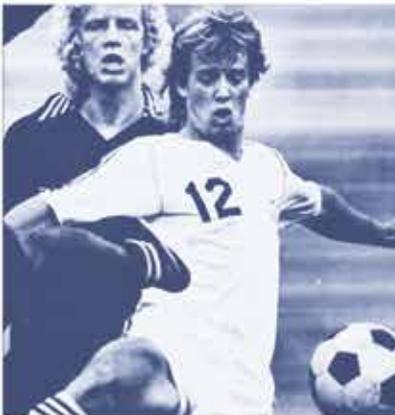
**HERB MAGEE '63** // Basketball

The "Shot Doctor" was more than an iconic coach; he was a pure, lethal marksman. A two-time All-American, Magee finished his career with 2,235 points and set the school record for scoring average in a season when he poured in 29.1 points per game in the 1961-62 season.



**DALE RUSSELL '77** // Soccer

The program's all-time leading scorer, Russell had the ability to find the smallest pocket of space and turn it into a defining goal. A four-time All-American, he played professionally and appeared in one game for the U.S. National Team.



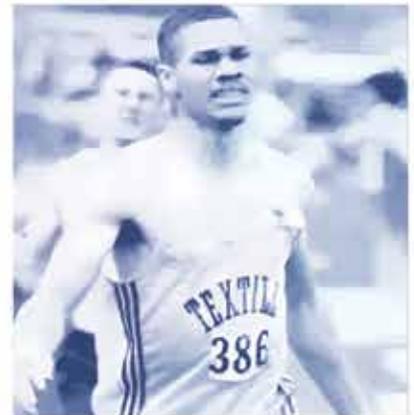
**ADRIAN BROOKS '79** // Soccer

Brooks was the engine of the soccer program during some of its most storied years. A three-time All-American, he navigated the pitch with a vision that seemed to anticipate plays before they happened. He was the No. 2 draft pick in the North American Soccer League and later played in the Major Indoor Soccer League, where his team won the championship in 1984.



**VINCENE MORRIS '86** // Basketball

Morris was the quintessential low-post force for Textile. A three-time All-American, she dominated the glass with 1,335 rebounds while eclipsing 2,000 points. Her 1980s reign defined excellence, blending relentless scoring with shot-blocking prowess to cement her legendary status.



**MORENZ RASDELL '90** // Track and Field

Rasdell was a blur on the track, a mid-distance runner who combined explosive power with refined technique. The school's only five time All-American, he holds the school record for the 800-meter race (1:50.11), 4x800 meter relay (3:16.23), and distance medley (9:56.11).



**TAMMY GREENE '94**

// Basketball

Coach Tom Shirley said Greene could "talk the talk and walk the walk." A clutch performer with lightning-fast hands, Greene is the University's all-time leading scorer with 2,490 points. She is also the all-time leader in steals at 442. She was the 1994 National Player of the Year.



**DIANA TRZASKA '96**

// Soccer

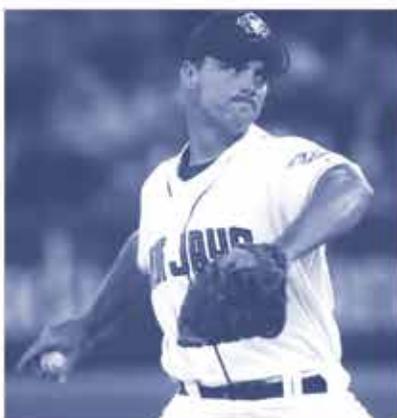
Trzaska was a decorated force who rewrote the record books. The 1996 All-American and Player of the Year remains the program's standard bearer, with school records in points (196), goals (81) and assists (34). She also has the single-season record for points with 65 (28 goals, nine assists).



**MELISSA DERPILBOSIAN '98**

// Lacrosse and Soccer

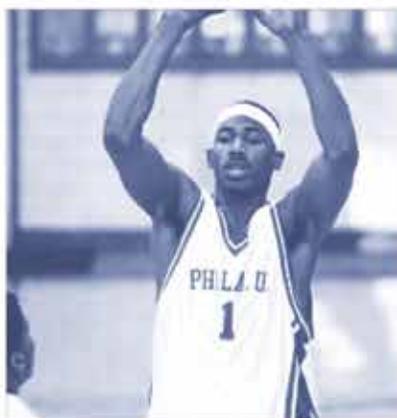
A dual-threat dynamo, DerPilbosian dominated the turf. The two-time All-American rewrote the lacrosse record books with 199 goals then transitioned seamlessly to soccer, anchoring the defense with All-Conference poise. She remains the University's two-sport standard.



**BOB FILE '98**

// Baseball

A two-way star who could hit for average and pitch with heat, File's 1998 season remains one of the greatest individual campaigns in Rams history, setting single-season program records in batting average (.542), hits (90), runs (63), RBIs (68), and home runs (19). Drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays in 1998, he played three MLB seasons.



**TAYRON THOMAS '06**

// Basketball

Thomas played with a relentless, slashing grace that made him the most prolific men's scorer in school history with 2,414 points. A two-time All-American and the 2006 Co-Player of the Year, he turned every night into a master class in offensive dominance.



**LIBBY NICHOLS RITTER '14**

// Lacrosse

A defensive stalwart on the lacrosse field and scholar in the classroom, Ritter defined consistency. She was a defensive vacuum, earning All-American honors while anchoring a defense that rarely blinked under pressure. In 2014, she was CACC Player of the Year and CACC Tournament MVP while leading the Rams to the conference championship.

Greatness, of course, is never settled. It lives in memory, in stories, in echoes on the hardwood.

***Who was the greatest Ram? These twelve make the debate richer – and the legacy stronger.***

Now, we want to hear from the alumni, the fans, and the students who sat in the stands. Who did we miss? Who stands alone at the top of your list?

Write to [editor@jefferson.edu](mailto:editor@jefferson.edu) and join the conversation. After all, the debate is just beginning. 🗣️





## A Match Made in the Jefferson Studio

**Fashion design alumni Ruchi Ladd '24 and Terrence Bridges '23** remember the first time they met — over Zoom in a figure-drawing class. “Not to sound too cliché, but it was love at first sight,” they recall.

The couple got married last year, with many of their Jefferson classmates in attendance. Below, Ruchi and Terrence share details on the fashion-forward wedding, their careers today, and how the University has played such a special part in their lives.

### **When did you realize this was more than a “studio partnership”?**

**Terrence:** We had an infamous moment when I lost part of a project right before the presentation. Ruchi dropped all her plans to help me find it. She knew about those fashion deadlines!

**Ruchi:** From there, the more we hung out outside of class and learned about each other, the more we realized we had a connection far deeper than just the studio.

### **How did fashion show up in your relationship as students?**

**Terrence:** Feedback and advice through experience became the biggest things for us.

**Ruchi:** We both understood each other’s worlds and could give encouragement, support, and direct feedback in a more personal and meaningful way.

### **Tell us about your wedding style.**

**Terrence:** Our wedding featured a fancy, fall-forward theme. We gave our guests a color palette that ranged from rustic browns and oranges to slate blues and dark

grays. It was fun to see our guests interpret the theme and palette in their own unique way.

**Ruchi:** We didn’t design any of the looks, but we did enjoy styling and planning the outfits for ourselves and the bridal party. My bridesmaids wore rustic orange dresses, each with its own variations in design and fabric. Terrence’s groomsmen wore a uniform navy-blue tux with rustic orange ties to match the bridesmaids.

**Terrence:** A major highlight of the night was Ruchi’s second look, where she switched to a two-piece traditional Indian garb.

**Was there a detail at your wedding that felt especially meaningful as fashion alumni?**

Terrence: We invited many of our Jefferson friends to be guests and part of the bridal party. It was meaningful to look back on our time as fashion students and see the strong community we fostered.

Ruchi: Now, we have lifelong friends that we could share this important life moment with.

**How has your shared creative background shaped your life together so far?**

Terrence: Working together as a creative couple has been amazing. Ruchi has been a great addition to make my clothing brand, TRTL Collective, bigger and better. We have a major project coming up this year and love working on it together.

Ruchi: We have slightly different creative interests. For Terrence, it's design- and storytelling-driven, and I'm more styling- and brand-marketing-focused. This makes the creative process much more fun and efficient, as we can make something greater together than we could alone.

**What's one thing you learned about each other during your time at Jefferson that still rings true today?**

Terrence: Ruchi is super passionate about helping others. At Jefferson, she founded the Jefferson Christian Cornerstone club to bring together like-minded students and provide a space for them to grow their faith and



▲ Ruchi Ladd (center), with fellow alumni Trevon Hall and Brianna Barry-Petgoup at her wedding

community. Ruchi's heart for others is just as evident now as it was then. She always makes those around her feel important and appreciated, whether at work, church, or just a passerby on the street!

Ruchi: Throughout my time at Jefferson, I learned that Terrence is hard working and truly lights up every room he's in. His motivation and creativity truly inspire me. When we met, Terrence was just starting to make TRTL come to life. Every day, I could see the passion he put into this brand. With the help of Jefferson fashion classes and faculty, he presented at many pop-up shops and even Philly Fashion Week. Today, he carries himself and his brand with confidence as he continues to navigate the fashion industry and world at large.

**What's your favorite shared memory on campus?**

Terrence: Attending each other's senior fashion shows and seeing the collections created from start to finish. We officially started dating right at the beginning of my collection process, so going through mine and then helping Ruchi go through hers became a big part of our relationship.

Ruchi: The fashion shows were super meaningful and allowed us to celebrate our hard work.

**What's one word to describe your life together now?**

Both: Inspiring. 🍷

## 1994

**Mayne Tabachnick**, Physical Therapy, recently retired after 30 years of federal service at the Seattle VA Medical Center. He arrived in Seattle in 1995 to fulfill a two-year scholarship commitment to Veterans Affairs in return for the support he received during his last year at Jefferson. Initially intending to only stay with VA for two to three years, he grew roots and wound up making it his career choice. He worked as the director of outpatient aquatic physical therapy, achieving Aquatic Therapy & Rehabilitation Institute certification, and co-authoring a chapter on aquatic physical therapy in a textbook on rehabilitation modalities. He also was the lead physical therapist for the outpatient department at the hospital for 15 years. He is now enjoying extensive traveling in his retirement, and when he has completed his upcoming travels

he plans to volunteer at the Seattle Art Museum sculpture park and at a local food bank. He has really enjoyed living in the Pacific Northwest as it has allowed him to frequently hike, backpack, swim in mountain lakes, ski both downhill and cross country, and snowshoe in the mountains.

## 2009

**Troy Hannigan**, Architecture, was named on Jan. 1 as the new executive director of Community Ventures Inc. upon the retirement of David La Fontaine, CV's executive director since 2013. A nonprofit real estate developer, property manager, and supportive services provider in Philadelphia, CV has developed over 560 units of affordable housing, mixed-use neighborhood revitalization projects, and other community projects in partnership with local neighborhood organizations throughout Philadelphia. "Troy

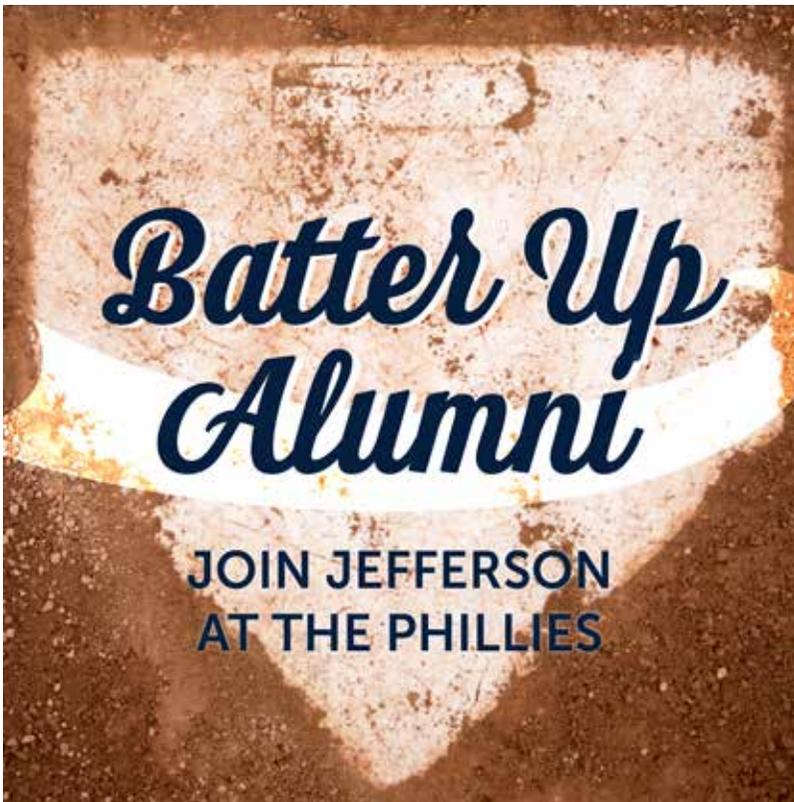
has been a tremendous asset throughout his past 11 years at CV and we are fortunate to have his talent and leadership guiding the CV team," said Nancy Wagner-Hislip, CV Board Chair.

## 2010

**Ryan Conover**, Architecture, has been promoted to Associate Principal | Light + Health at The Lighting Practice.

## 2015

**Nicholas A. Siciliano, PhD**, Immunology, was honored at the 2025 Science Center Nucleus Awards, where he received the 2025 Commercialization Award. He serves on the boards of Vittoria Biotherapeutics and NexEos Bio, a privately held medical diagnostics and therapeutics company.



**Batter Up  
Alumni**

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AT THE PHILLIES**

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### Phillies vs Nationals

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### Phillies vs Mariners

San Diego, CA  
August 25, 2026



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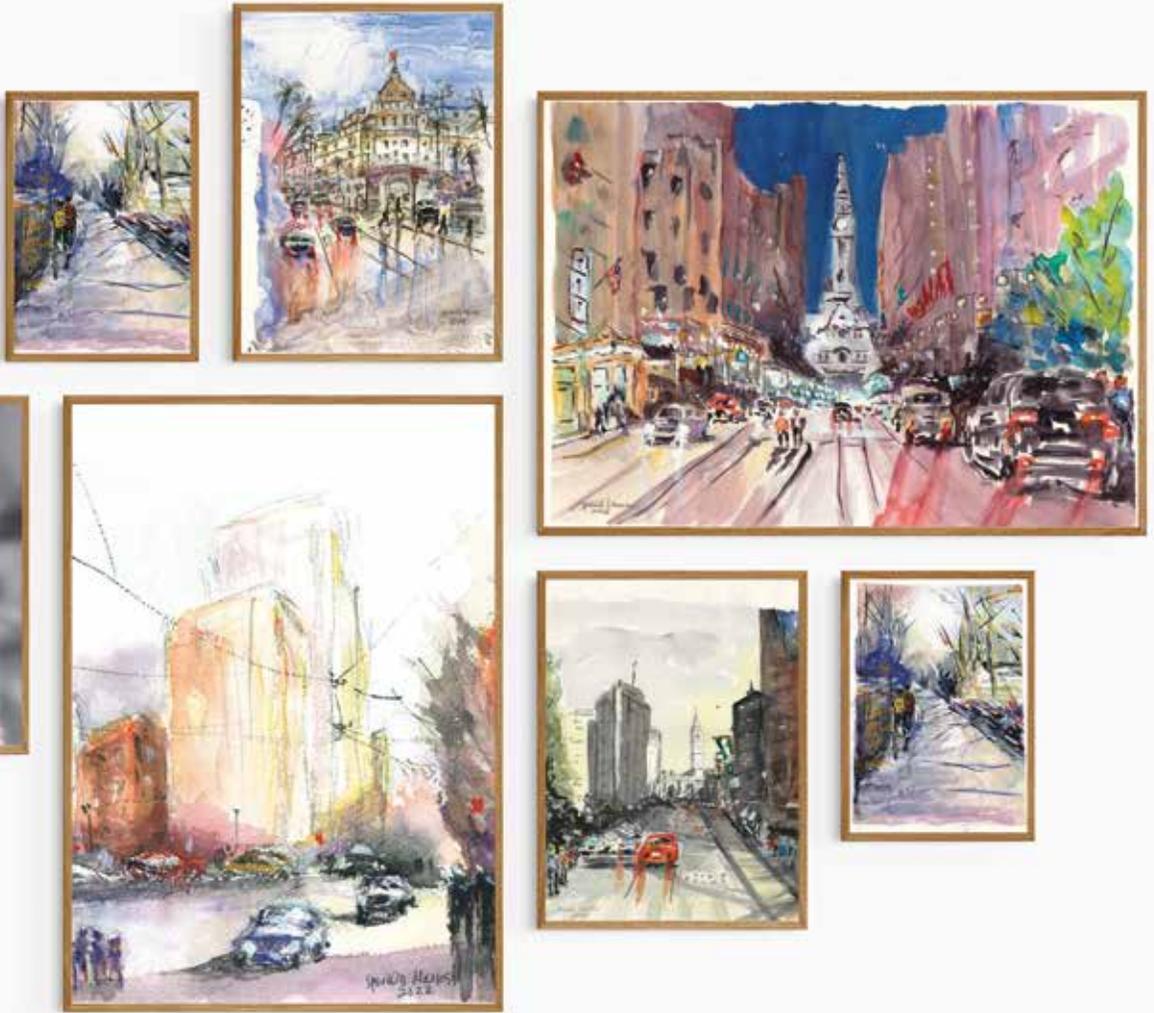
## Explore, Learn, and Experience the World with Thomas Jefferson University Alumni!



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.

- ▶ **Flavors of Northern Italy**  
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- ▶ **English Channel Discovery**  
May 24–31, 2026
- ▶ **Cruise the Norwegian Fjords**  
May 24–June 3, 2026
- ▶ **Majestic Vista & Wildlife of Alaska**  
July 28–August 6, 2026
- ▶ **Scotland**  
August 2–10, 2026
- ▶ **Polar Bears & Beluga Whales**  
August 3–9, 2026
- ▶ **Canadian Rockies by Rail**  
August 19–25, 2026
- ▶ **Flavors of the Spanish Coast**  
September 19–27, 2026
- ▶ **Journey to Southern Africa**  
September 21–October 6, 2026
- ▶ **Bordeaux to Lisbon Aboard Le Lapérouse**  
October 1–12, 2026

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**Gerald Joseph Marks, MD '49**  
1925 - 2026

**Gerald Joseph Marks, MD '49**, of Narberth, Pennsylvania, and Delray Beach, Florida, passed away peacefully on Jan. 31, 2026. He was 100. A world-renowned surgeon, acclaimed artist, veteran of two wars, husband, father, and friend, Marks lived a life defined by discipline, curiosity, and connection.

Born April 14, 1925, in Brooklyn, Marks grew up in West and South Philadelphia during the Depression, often working from a young age to support himself and his family. He enlisted in the Navy in 1943 and, through the Navy's

V-12 program, was set on the path to medicine.

Marks graduated from medical school at Jefferson in 1949 and, after serving as an Air Force officer in Korea, became a pioneering colorectal surgeon. Over a 40-year career at Jefferson he served as chief of colorectal surgery, established a residency program, had an endowed professorship established in his name, and developed innovative treatments that transformed rectal cancer care. A devoted Jeffersonian, he served as a Class Ambassador for many years.

Marks loved conversation, tennis, golf, and cultivating friendships across generations and continents. In his 50s he returned to watercolor painting, producing works inspired by his travels and publishing annual calendars cherished by friends worldwide.

Marks was predeceased by his wife of 63 years, Barbara. He is survived by his sons Richard (April), Jim (Palma), and John (Meredith); 10 grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; his partner, Astrid Suurbek; and his brother Burton (Nancy). [J](#)

## **A Tribute to Professor Dale Michaels** *By Katherine Funk '10*

When I walked onto Philadelphia University's campus in 2006, I was going through a difficult time. I was working to recover from an eating disorder and substance abuse problem and felt trapped in an abusive relationship. I wasn't sure I would make it through college, but my dream of becoming a therapist and offering hope to others kept me motivated.

Once I moved onto campus, I felt at home. The Psychology Department's two core professors, John Pierce, PhD, and Professor Dale Michaels, created a space of appreciation, inclusion, respect and care for students and staff alike. I met Professor Michaels in an Abnormal Psychology class. I appreciated his thorough lectures, with clinical and personal anecdotes that revealed who he was as both a person and a clinician. Somewhat stoic yet witty and deeply caring, he seemed to sense what you were going through. He made you feel seen and understood and always had a resource or recommendation to offer. His encouragement helped me begin to believe in myself and commit to my recovery.

With his support, I finished college and went on to become a therapist specializing in the treatment of eating disorders. Over the next 18 years we were colleagues, even sharing a client. We stayed in touch sporadically. I last texted him in the winter of 2025. He mentioned he had been sick and would get back to me. Barely a month later, I learned he had passed away. I was overwhelmed with grief.

Becoming an adjunct psychology professor felt like the perfect way to honor Professor Michaels' legacy. I began teaching at Jefferson in fall 2025.

Being back on campus feels like coming home. It is surreal to teach students at an institution that played such an important role in my own growth and healing. This spring I am teaching Abnormal Psychology—the same class where I met the professor and mentor who helped me save my life while discovering purpose and value. It is a privilege and an honor. The students have been wonderful.

As I walk across the East Falls campus, I am honored to walk in Professor Michaels' footsteps and to foster and encourage our future mental health professionals at Thomas Jefferson University. 

**1948**  
Bettilou Daubert Brown

**1949**  
Gerald Marks, MD

**1950**  
Marvin Goldstein, MD

**1952**  
Lawrence Moskowitz

**1953**  
Irwin Potash, MD

**1954**  
Mary Kuntz Stoudt

**1955**  
Burton Schaffer, MD  
Martyn Romano Whyte

**1956**  
Betty Bingman Kendall  
Paula Scarlett Kenworthy  
C. Warren Koehl Jr.  
Robert Meckelnburg, MD

**1958**  
Barbara Dutton Kanas

**1959**  
Patricia Heisey Harzer  
George Pappas, MD

**1960**  
Jane Mahoney Dynan  
Francis Keeley, MD

**1961**  
Lewis Anthony, MD

**1962**  
Anthony Giampetro, MD

**1964**  
Edward Baranski, MD  
Leonard Rosenfeld, PhD

**1966**  
Louis Centrella, MD

**1967**  
Carl Stanitski, MD

**1968**  
Gerald Kaplan, MD

**1969**  
Marilyn Guidi

**1970**  
Donna Webster Hetrick  
I.B. Keller, MD

**1972**  
Steven Reidenberg  
William J. Thomas Jr., MD

**1973**  
Alexander Hoinsky, CPA  
The Rev. Bruce Maclaughlin

**1974**  
Walter Wrenn III, MD

**1975**  
Rebecca Solomon Brown  
Alexander Pedicino, MD

**1976**  
Jimmy Azizo

**1977**  
Barbara Isard

**1981**  
Jerome G. Buescher, PhD

**1983**  
Joseph Codispoti, MD

**1985**  
William Kocher, MD

**1987**  
Kathryn Anelauskas

**1991**  
Gail Parkinson

**1994**  
Anita Conner

**1997**  
Anna Campbell

**2010**  
Louisa Pruitt, PhD

**2014**  
Gerard Keimer

# JEFFERSON INNOVATOR Magazine

## TRIVIA

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

**1. Elizabeth Avril Barden '25, wrote the University's first official alma mater in its 202-year history. What is the title of this composition?**

- A. Hail, Hail Dear Old Jefferson, Alma Mater True
- B. Jefferson, How We Adore Thee
- C. Glory To Jefferson, Lift Your Voices High
- D. From Jefferson — The World Awaits You

**2. Which pro baseball team did Jefferson alumnus Bob File '98 play for after he was drafted in 1998?**

- A. Toronto Blue Jays
- B. Philadelphia Phillies
- C. New York Yankees
- D. Boston Red Sox

**3. During a hunting expedition, a bird was accidentally shot. Its protective coloring inspired director of the Philadelphia Textile School Edward France to create the color olive drab to meet the needs of the U.S. Army for better uniform camouflage. This bird was a:**

- A. Ruffed grouse
- B. Wild turkey
- C. Mallard
- D. Quail



Submit your answers at [Jefferson.edu/InnovatorTrivia](https://Jefferson.edu/InnovatorTrivia) or scan the QR code with your smartphone camera by May 15, 2026. A perfect score will enter you in a drawing to win a Jefferson T-shirt.



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A large, blue-tinted sculpture of a ram's head with large, curved horns, serving as a background for the lower half of the page.

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