

Education Exchange

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

2026

PROFESSOR ALEX CORBITT ON

Gaming and Play as Social Technologies for Learning

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- #13** Best Graduate Programs in Education—Private, Four-Year Institutions (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- #29** Best Special Education Bachelor's Degree Schools (College Factual)
- #12** Best Elementary Special Education Schools (College Factual)
- #16** Best Instructional Media Design Schools (College Factual)
- #55** Best Social Work Schools (College Factual)
- #18** Best Social Work Bachelor's Degree Schools (College Factual)

ACADEMICS



- 5** undergraduate majors
- 5** certificate of advanced study programs
- 6** undergraduate minors
- 3** doctoral programs
- 16** master's degree programs

POST-GRADUATION



- 95%** post-graduation placement outcome
- \$51,190** average starting salary
- 100%** NYS Students with Disabilities certification pass rate
- 100%** NYS Educating All Students certification pass rate
- 100%** NYS Content Specialty certification pass rate
- 86%** Licensed Clinical Social Worker Exam pass rate
- 84%** Licensed Master Social Worker Exam pass rate

STUDENTS



- 399** undergraduate students
- 822** graduate students
- 44** states and territories represented
- 23** countries represented
- 65** active duty/military veterans
- 26.5%** students of color

FACULTY/RESEARCH



- 59** full-time faculty members
- \$6.76M** external funding awards
- 2** centers and institutes
- 12:1** student-to-faculty ratio

ALUMNI



- 23,402** alumni
- 53** states and territories represented
- 99** countries represented



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Dear Education Exchange Readers,



My faculty colleague **James Haywood Rolling Jr.** recently wrote to me about a group of graduate students who had just submitted a proposal to a national conference with his help. I often hear such news, but this email was special because it grew directly out of one of my favorite days on our calendar: the **Graduate Research Symposium** (see p20).

Initially proposed by graduate student leaders and held annually each spring since 2023, this daylong event features panels, paper presentations, poster sessions, and a popular raffle of faculty-published books.

It is both interdisciplinary and intergenerational, with attendees including undergraduates, master's students, doctoral students, and faculty across multiple programs. Working with Associate Dean for Research **Beth Ferri**, students help plan and run the event, from shaping the call for proposals, to reviewing proposals and organizing panels, to hosting the final event. That hands-on experience of sharing their scholarship in a supportive setting prepares them to take bigger swings later, such as submitting a proposal to a national conference.

This year's symposium was our biggest and best yet, full of positive energy and provocative ideas. It was also sponsored, for the first time, by a personal hero of mine: Dean Emerita **Joan Burstyn**, along with her family.

A distinguished scholar of history, education, and social change, an award-winning poet, and SOE's first female dean, Joan has long championed exactly the kind of collaborative student research the symposium showcases, including through the **Joan N. Burstyn Endowed Fund for Collaborative Research in Education**. I am grateful for her continued impact on our School, long after her retirement.

People ask me frequently why students should consider a research-intensive institution for a practice-based degree such as teaching, counseling, or social work.

For me, the symposium exemplifies the value of that choice. Not only do SOE students contribute to creating knowledge on the cutting edge of important disciplinary topics such as inclusion, belonging, justice, and learning but they also practice essential skills, including offering critical feedback without being disagreeable. These are skills that cut across fields of study and support engaged community members living in complex and often conflicted times.

As you read this issue, I am sure you will see many other examples of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and collaborators making a difference. If a story ignites your interest in supporting or joining an initiative that aligns with your own values, please let me know. Happy reading!

Warmly,

Kelly Chandler-Olcott

Dean and Laura J. & L. Douglas Meredith Professor for Teaching Excellence

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Gaming and Play as Social Technologies for Learning

by Professor Alex Corbitt

What can a group of teenagers slaying dragons teach us about learning? It turns out, quite a lot!

While games are often dismissed as entertainment or escapism, they can also serve as powerful “social technologies” that shape how people think and make meaning together. From tabletop role-playing games to online gaming platforms, playful experiences create opportunities for people to learn from one another, negotiate shared problems, and imagine new possibilities for themselves and their communities.



“In games...storytelling can become a fundamentally collaborative process.”

My research emerges at a moment when gaming culture has become increasingly mainstream. Over the past decade, interest in board games and role-playing games (RPGs) has surged, fueled by the popularity of media such as *Stranger Things*, online platforms like *Roll20* and *Tabletop Simulator*, and streaming series such as *Dimension 20* and *Critical Role*.

Drawing on my experience as a middle school English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, I investigate what educators can learn from collaborative forms of play. Spanning a variety of playful contexts, my research highlights how games can challenge conventional approaches to teaching and learning by fostering collective thinking and identity exploration.

Disrupting Solitary Narrative Writing

When I was a seventh-grade ELA teacher, I taught narrative writing through a workshop model. During writing workshops, I worked alongside students to identify compelling techniques used by authors they admired.

Together, students analyzed these techniques and practiced incorporating them into their own writing. While developing their short stories, students regularly conferred with me and their peers to exchange formative feedback.

While my students enjoyed the opportunity to create and share personalized stories, the writing process itself remained largely solitary. Indeed, school-based writing—including research papers, essays, and creative storytelling—is often taught through individualistic pedagogies that position

THE PLAY, INTERACTION, AND LEARNING LAB



BUILDING ON his previous research, Professor **Alex Corbitt** now leads new empirical projects at Syracuse University alongside a team of doctoral and undergraduate researchers: **Qitian Jiang G’25, Lourdes Morales ’20, G’22, G’25, Isela Acevedo ’28, Giani Esteras ’29, and Aidan Rogers ’29.**

Together, they form the **Play, Interaction, and Learning Lab (PILL)**, a research collective dedicated to investigating the educational affordances of play. PILL pursues two primary goals:

- Conducting innovative research on play and learning.
- Cultivating a network of educators and researchers interested in game-based approaches to education.

In March 2026, PILL organized and hosted its inaugural **Play, Interaction, and Learning Conference**. Centered on the theme of “Critical Play,” the conference invited participants to consider how educational play spaces can be designed to advance equity and justice.

The five-hour virtual event attracted more than 125 attendees from around the world and featured keynote presentations by Professor Kishonna Gray of the University of Michigan and Professor David DeLiema of the University of Minnesota, alongside 19 additional breakout sessions.

Participant feedback highlighted the conference presenters’ innovative approaches to instruction. As one Syracuse University student reflected, the event “gave me a chance to reflect and think about my own teaching practice and research.” Encouraged by this response, PILL plans to host a second conference in spring 2027.

Exploring AI Bias

In addition to organizing scholarly events, PILL is planning two journal manuscripts that examine how a cohort of 33 graduate students collaborated with ChatGPT to “co-author” fictional narratives.

Drawing on literary theory and narratology, the research team explores the narrative assumptions and biases embedded within large language models when they provide fiction writers with constructive feedback.

By critically analyzing interactions between human storytellers and artificial intelligence, PILL’s work seeks to illuminate what remains distinctly human about storytelling: its grounding in relationships, communities, and lived experiences. Through this research, the team aims to contribute to broader conversations about creativity, authorship, and the future of learning in an era increasingly shaped by generative AI.



composing as a primarily independent endeavor, interrupted only by occasional moments of feedback. In games, however, storytelling can become a fundamentally collaborative process.

RPGs, such as Dungeons and Dragons, invite multiple participants to construct a shared narrative together.

Although there are countless RPG systems with unique rules and settings, most require players to create imaginary characters with distinct ambitions, backstories, personalities, and moral orientations that shape their individual story arcs. These characters are then brought together into a party of adventurers pursuing a common quest.

As RPG stories unfold under the guidance of a facilitator known as the “game master,” players must remain true to their characters while simultaneously collaborating with others to navigate challenges and make collective decisions. These ongoing negotiations between individual goals and group needs often produce rich and unexpected moments of co-authorship.

To support collaboration and prevent chaos, RPGs rely on rules and routines that structure how stories are created together.

For example, gameplay is typically turn-based, giving each character designated opportunities to act, speak, and interact with the story world. Because characters often possess specialized skills and abilities, players are encouraged to share resources and responsibilities in ways that benefit the group—for instance, a thief might manage lockpicks while a wizard oversees spellbooks and magical knowledge.

Additionally, many of the successes and setbacks that shape an RPG adventure are determined by dice rolls, introducing an element of chance into the narrative. This randomness helps distribute opportunities and challenges more equitably among players, preventing any one individual from consistently experiencing disproportionate success or misfortune. Taken together, these rules and routines enable participants to collaboratively build imagined worlds in community.

Beyond the stories players create together, RPGs also foster rich opportunities for participants to learn from one another.

As players collaborate, they witness each other’s storytelling strategies, performance styles, and decision-making processes. The narratives they construct are further shaped by the diverse texts, fandoms, interests, and lived experiences that participants bring to the table.

In this way, RPGs create an environment in which knowledge, ideas, and interests circulate organically through social interaction. I observed these phenomena firsthand while teaching a year-long RPG course. Throughout the year, students regularly recommended books, discussed favorite authors, and drew upon their hobbies to enrich the worlds they created together. What began as a collaborative game became a vibrant literacy community imbued with robust citational and analytic practices.

(continued on next page)

“Role Playing Games create an environment in which knowledge, ideas, and interests circulate organically through social interaction.”





“Play is not merely a vehicle for storytelling; it can also serve as a powerful medium for self-discovery and personal growth.”

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Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture*. The Beacon Press, 1949.

Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT Press, 2003.



Constructing Identity Through Characters

In addition to fostering collaboration, game-based learning environments invite participants to engage in meaningful identity work.

Many game studies scholars have argued that play occurs within a “magic circle”—a temporary social space in which the rules and conditions of the game world are distinguished from those of everyday life (Huizinga, 1949; Salen and Zimmerman, 2003). As a result, players are generally able to distinguish in-game actions from out-of-game identities.

For example, if a player portrays a villainous character during a role-playing game, fellow participants typically understand that the character’s antagonistic behavior serves a narrative purpose rather than reflecting the player’s personal values or dispositions.

The boundaries between players and characters, however, is not always clear-cut.

At times, aspects of a player’s identity may shape the characters they create, and experiences within a game can influence how players understand themselves beyond play.

In these moments, the distinction between imagination and reality becomes more fluid, producing liminal spaces of identity exploration. Such moments can create opportunities for individuals to experiment with new ways of being and imagine alternative futures for who they might become. In this sense, play is not merely a vehicle for storytelling; it can also serve as a powerful medium for self-discovery and personal growth.

My research examines how children and adolescents navigate their identities across the fluid boundaries between play and everyday life. My doctoral dissertation, for example, explored how high school students created RPG characters that challenged conventional gender norms and binaries.

In follow-up interviews, participants described how these fictional characters provided opportunities to explore and express their own relationships with gender identity. Through the process of role-playing, students authored narratives through which they understood themselves. In this way, the game world became a space for both storytelling and identity exploration.

Play’s Transformative Potential

In a separate project, I collaborated with my colleague, Professor Mariana Lima Becker of the University of Georgia Mary Frances Early College of Education, to investigate how a group of Brazilian American children played together on an online gaming platform called Roblox.

Specifically, the children played in Brookhaven, a virtual town designed around predominantly US-centric and consumer-oriented assumptions about daily life. Rather than simply reproduce the narratives and values embedded within the game, however, the children strategically reimagined the space to tell stories about their experiences growing up in Brazil.

Through collaborative play, the children incorporated cultural practices and perspectives that were largely absent from the game’s design.

Their storytelling demonstrated that digital environments are not deterministic; young people can collectively author alternative narratives that reflect their own identities and ways of knowing.

Across both projects—the high schoolers role-playing beyond gender binaries and the children representing their lives in Brookhaven—my research highlights the transformative potential of game-based storytelling.

These studies demonstrate how play can be a site where personal experiences, cultural knowledge, and collective imagination converge. By creating stories together, young people do more than entertain themselves; they explore who they are and who they aspire to become.

As educational systems grapple with rapid social, technological, and cultural change, games offer more than an engaging instructional tool.

They provide powerful spaces for people to learn with and from one another. Whether students are co-authoring fantasy adventures, or representing their lived experiences in digital spaces, play-based learning invites people to become social participants in the construction of knowledge and meaning.

By treating play as a serious site of inquiry and human connection, my research with the Play, Interaction, and Learning Lab (see sidebar on p4) continues to explore how games can help educators design more collaborative, equitable, and imaginative learning environments. ■

Bulletin Board

Find these stories and more on our website.



The 2025 Italy study abroad cohort at the Pantheon in Rome.

SOE Launches Fully Inclusive Study Abroad Experience in Italy

Launched in summer 2025, the University's first inclusive study abroad trip has redefined what inclusive higher education looks like, blending immersive cultural experiences with academic exploration of inclusive education across borders.

The two-week program, led by the **School of Education** in partnership with Syracuse Abroad and the Syracuse University Florence Center, brought together 14 matriculated and current and former **InclusiveU** students, reflecting the University's commitment to making global education more accessible.

From the bustling piazzas of Rome to the quiet charm of Padua, students explored how Italy's long-standing commitment to inclusive education plays out in classrooms, universities, and community spaces.



Otto Says, "Don't Punt on Reading!"

SOE, Syracuse Athletics, and Visions Federal Credit Union scored another touchdown with the fall 2026 edition of **Otto's Fall Reading Kickoff**, a program to motivate a reward good reading habits in schoolchildren across Central New York.

This year, a impressive 8,800 students and 83 teachers and staff signed up to keep track of their reading in 13 schools across seven CNY counties.

Participating students and teachers received free tickets to attend the Orange vs. Boston College football game on November 29 at the JMA Wireless Dome. Thank you to Kassie Kleine, second grade teacher at Bolivar Road Elementary School in Chittenango, NY, for the photo.

Lender Center Fellows Join Data Warriors

In December, five new fellows of the Lender Center for Social Justice joined Mathematics Education Professor **Nicole Fonger's Data Warriors Project**, a community-engaged initiative that helps Syracuse City School District youth use math and data to investigate issues in their neighborhoods.

Under Fonger's guidance, the fellows are advancing youth-led research on topics such as housing conditions, lead exposure, and local policy, while strengthening University-community partnerships.

CDI Awarded Disability Advocacy Training Network Grant

In October 2025, the **Center on Disability and Inclusion (CDI)** was awarded \$250,000 per year for three years from the New York State Council on Developmental Disabilities to launch a pilot advocacy training program and establish a statewide peer-led advocacy network for people with developmental disabilities and their families. The initiative will expand access to tailored advocacy training, strengthen collaboration among advocates, and amplify the voices of individuals and families across the state.



Legislative Policy Day Addresses Educational Inequities

The 26th School of Social Work James L. Stone Legislative Policy Day, held at the Onondaga County Legislature in October, tackled an urgent theme: the hidden costs of disinvestment in educational support structures.

Keynote speaker **Rachael Gazdick '93**, CEO of NY Edge, made a compelling case for centering people and relationships as the engine of social change. Drawing on her organization's work with 35,000 students across 140 New York City schools, she challenged attendees to move beyond diagnosing problems and start to "imagine something better."

State Senator Rachel May (D-48) and Assemblyman William Magnarelli (D-129) joined faculty and community professionals to map the on-the-ground consequences of recent cutbacks, such as mental health services, food assistance, and after-school programs. The message was consistent: social workers are the critical link between policy decisions and the communities they affect.



THANKS TO HANKS

When you teach through the **Bridge to the City** program in Manhattan, you never know who might show up in class as a special guest. On December 12, none other than actor Tom Hanks was a guest reader for Bryan Andes' and **Hanna Lee '26's** first-graders at Midtown West (PS 212).

Explains **Thomas H. Bull G'89, G'19**, Bridge to City Program Director, "Hanna's host teacher uses a theater theme to deliver cross curricular content. He has had an extensive list of Broadway stars in his classroom over the years."



SOE Wellness on Ice

Students, faculty, and staff came together for "Wellness on Ice" at the University's Tenny Ice Skating Pavilion in November. Participants enjoyed not only skating but also off-ice wellness activities, a raffle, and plenty of laughter, making it a fun celebration of well-being for the School's community.

Genovese Scholars Program Receives Historic Gift

The School of Social Work received a landmark \$1.8 million gift in January, to expand the **Genovese Social Work Scholars Program**, the largest scholarship investment in the school's history.

The donation includes \$1 million for a permanent endowed fund, a \$500,000 Syracuse Promise match, and \$300,000 in immediate support for incoming M.S.W. students, building on a pilot gift that currently supports 13 scholars. The program is named



GANDERS LECTURE SERIES 2025-2026

Perfect Harmony

For the fall 2025 Ganders Lecture on October 9, Eugenia Cheng brought her popular mix of mathematics and music to Hendricks Chapel as part of her mission to rid the world of "math phobia."

Cheng is currently the Scientist in Residence at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In "The Logic of Creativity: Music, Mathematics, and Expression," she explained—in words and music—how the world's most well-known compositions exhibit mathematical principles that only add to their beauty.

Eco-Crip Intersections

In April 2026, the **Center on Disability and Inclusion**, along with Syracuse University Art Museum and College of Visual and Performing Arts, welcomed Colombian-American artist and Wynn Newhouse Award recipient Francisco echo Eraso to campus for a two-day artistic residency, which included a lecture and community workshop.

In "Eco-Crip: Exploring the Intersections of Disability Identity and the Environment Through Artistic Practice," Eraso addressed the intersections of disabled identity and ecological crisis, challenging the idea that disability is "unnatural" and therefore eradicable. The next day, Eraso—a ceramics and textile artist—offered a community workshop on stimming (self-stimulation behavior) and craft practices.



for Associate Teaching Professor **Jennifer Genovese G'83, G'13**, in recognition of her decades of teaching, mentorship, and community service.

The gift is designed to widen access to the profession at a time of national social worker shortages, supporting students who demonstrate academic excellence, leadership, and a commitment to community-centered practice. Genovese Scholars are embedded in placements ranging from VA hospitals and domestic violence services to substance abuse treatment and community schools.



In December, Social Work students and Genovese Scholars **Lily Grenis G'27**, **Tyler Vitallo G'27**, and **Shakir Thomas G'27** organized a food drive, delivering three carloads of donations to the Huntington Family Center food bank in Syracuse.



Learning Disguised as Play

On March 16, SOE's minor in **Atrocity Studies and the Practices of Social Justice** co-sponsored a talk by alumna **Amanda Greenbacker-Mitchell '17, G'22**, Assistant Professor of Music Education at Northeastern Illinois University. Drawing on her dissertation research, Greenbacker-Mitchell explored how children imprisoned in the Nazi-controlled Terezín ghetto during World War II engaged with music, an aspect of life that has received less scholarly attention than the musical activities of adults.

The talk, held in Bird Library, categorized children's music experiences at Terezín into formal, non-formal, and informal practices, offering new insight into the creation of educational structures under extreme

conditions. It was part of a broader series of campus events surrounding the Syracuse Orchestra and SU Oratorio Society's rendition of *Defiant Requiem*, a choral work composed by Verdi and once performed by the prisoners of Terezín.



Advocating in Albany

InclusiveU students and staff visited the New York State Capitol in March 2026 advocating with and for students with disabilities and talking with legislators about access to higher education.

Observes **Brianna Shults G'20**, Director of **InclusiveU**, "We discussed employment outcomes, Tuition Assistance Program funding, and what equity looks like within New York's college systems. These conversations matter."

ATROCITY STUDIES LECTURE: STANDING WATCH

The minor in **Atrocity Studies and the Practices of Social Justice** presented its 2026 Annual Lecture on January 28, featuring retired US Navy Commander Jeffrey Sizemore, former Senior Advisor on Atrocity Prevention for the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Speaking at the University's National Veterans Resource Center, Sizemore offered a firsthand account of how atrocity prevention infrastructure operated within the US government, including its mechanisms, its achievements, and its limitations.

"Atrocity Prevention in Practice in a Contested World" arrived at a charged moment: the current federal administration has shuttered state department atrocity prevention and early warning programs, including the position Sizemore himself held.

Professor **Julia M. White G'05, G'07** framed the stakes plainly: with atrocity violence ongoing and authoritarianism intensifying globally, the talk addressed how individuals and organizations can fill the gaps left by the United States' retreat from its post-World War II commitment to human rights and democracy-building. The lecture series is supported by **Laura '77** and **Jeffrey Zell '77**.

(Left) Students enrolled in the credit-bearing Atrocity Studies and Human Rights immersion course spent Spring Break in Washington, DC, meeting with international law experts, genocide scholars, and human rights advocates. The weeklong experience is a cornerstone of the SOE's minor in Atrocity Studies and the Practices of Social Justice.





Moses-DeWitt Wins Appreciation Week Contest

Moses-DeWitt Elementary School in the Jamesville-DeWitt Central School District was named winner of SOE's annual Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week contest, which recognizes outstanding educators across Central New York during the week of May 4-8.

SOE asked community members to nominate a school and a staff member who goes above and beyond. In addition to Moses-DeWitt's award—SOE treated the school to donuts and coffee—educator Stacie Fitzgerald received the most individual recognition for her impact on students and families.

Exploring AI's Role in Mental Health Diagnosis Training

In May 2026, an interdisciplinary research team from SOE's **Counseling and Human Services** and **Social Work** programs received a 2026 Small Grant from the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES)—one of just four funded from 40 competitive submissions.

The project, led by Associate Professor **Yanhong Liu** and doctoral candidate **Xihe Tian**, whose dissertation initiated the research, will investigate whether AI simulation can transform how graduate students in counseling and social work learn to diagnose mental health conditions.

Social Work faculty serve as advisors, and professors **Ken Marfilus '11** and **Jennifer Genovese G'83, G'13** incorporated the study in their summer 2026 psychopathology course.

The study addresses a significant gap in the literature. While AI simulation has shown promise as a training tool in health professions, its application to mental health diagnostic competence remains largely unexplored in counseling and social work contexts.

SOE Unveils Revised Degree Programs

In spring 2026, the New York State Education Department gave the green light for SOE to unveil four revised degree programs, spanning the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.

These revisions continue the curricular review initiative outlined in the School's 2023 Academic Strategic Plan, as well as the School's commitments toward offering efficient programming, more versatile and marketable graduates, and courses focused around Signature Areas of Distinction in inclusive, digital, and experiential pedagogy and practice.

At the undergraduate level, the B.S. in Education and Society replaces the former B.S. in Selected Studies in Education program. The revised degree retains an interdisciplinary core and introduces three 18-credit tracks that now will be formally recorded on students' transcripts: Coaching, Disability Studies, and Education and Social Change. Students completing the Coaching track are eligible for a New York State coaching license.

Four graduate teacher preparation programs also have been re-imagined. The M.S. in Adolescent Education replaces separate subject-specific certification programs for grades 7-12—in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies—with a single 30-credit, 13-month program built around a shared pedagogical core and content-area concentrations. The M.S. in Childhood Education, for teaching grades 1-6, has been

revised into a 33-credit program completed over 14 to 16 months. Both programs include two or more supervised field placements and incorporate clinical simulations as part of teacher preparation.

Two Inclusive Special Education master's degrees—Initial and Professional—take the place of grade-specific special education programs. Both offer all courses online and prepare students for New York State Students with Disabilities All Grades certification (the Professional program is for teachers who already hold initial NYS certification in any content area).

At the doctoral level, the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership has been restructured to combine K-12 and higher education leadership preparation within a single program for the first time, replacing what had been a more narrowly focused K-12-oriented degree.

The fully online, 60-credit program is designed to be completed in three years, includes a part-time option for working professionals, and admits students in annual fall cohorts. Students choose between a K-12 Educational Leadership concentration and a Higher Education concentration while completing a shared core curriculum, including a required course on addressing systemic racism in education, and a doctoral capstone project in place of a traditional dissertation. ■

WHAT'S COOKING?



SOE's annual Staff and Faculty Wellness Day in May served up something a little different—a chance to reconnect, recharge, and celebrate the community that makes the school tick. The ingredients were simple: good colleagues, good energy, and good food.

A special thanks goes to the staff at Falk College for rolling out the welcome mat—and the spring rolls—with a cooking demonstration that also featured fresh salsa and fried rice.



Room to Grow



Huntington Hall has been the School of Education's home since 1973, but only in the past few years has the School occupied the entire building. Here's an overview of recent renovations that both expand SOE's footprint as well as its mission.

Suite 150—next to the **Sharon H. Jacquet '72, P'03 Education Commons**—has been transformed into the home of **Academic and Student Services** and **Academic Operations**, providing a welcoming space for student advising, career counseling, admissions, and other services. Oh, and it's a great hang out for students too!

The fourth and fifth floors—formerly home to the Department of Psychology—have been reimagined with community, collaboration, and inclusion in mind. Visit these floors today and you will find new faculty offices, lab and clinical spaces, collaboration rooms, and a new wing dedicated to our graduate students.



Katelyn Hagadorn '27 (left) and **Abby Buffinger '27** table for Kappa Delta Pi in 150 Huntington Hall during Family Weekend in September 2025.

FIRST FLOOR Student Success

Housing our combined student success units, Suite 150 has quickly become a popular place to meet, relax, grab a snack, and hold affinity club meetings. It is also where undergraduates and graduate students meet with advisors and the field placement team and where recruiters welcome prospective students and their parents.

DID YOU KNOW? During renovation, tile floors were uncovered in room 534 (now the **Helen Warren Spector G'72 Graduate Student Community Space**). We know Huntington Hall began as the Hospital of the Good Shepherd, and this presumably hospital-related discovery led us on a fascinating journey through the University archives to learn about the space's former use. What did we find? Turn to p38.



Nadia Morris-Mitchell '24, G'26 debriefs with Professor **Benjamin Dotger**, CEPP Director, in one of the CEPP/counseling lab demonstration rooms. Morris-Mitchell took part in a clinical simulations demo during Banned Books Week in October 2026.

FOURTH FLOOR Clinical Simulation and Counseling Lab

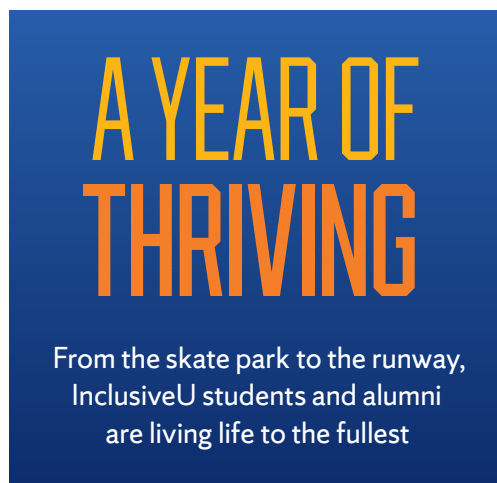
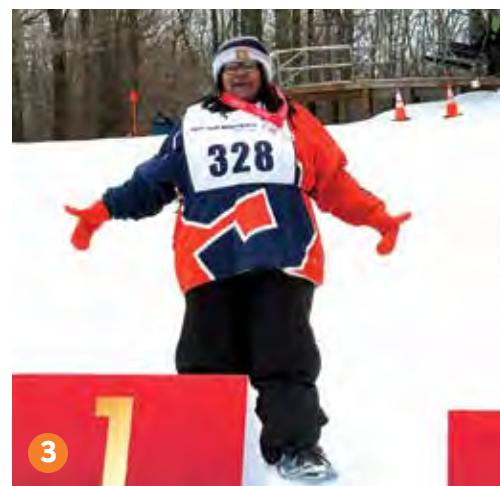
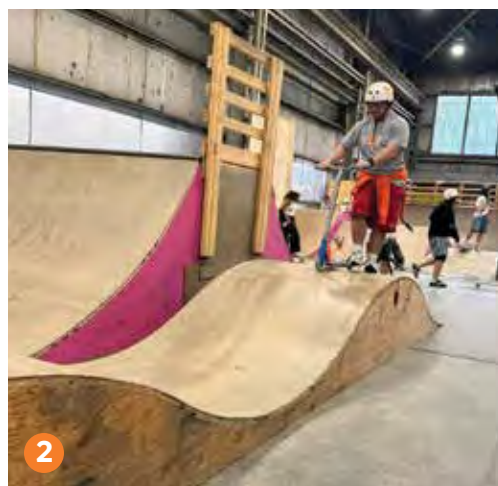
Laboratories and clinical space shared by the **Center for Experiential Pedagogy and Practice (CEPP)** and **Counseling and Human Services** program opened in September 2026. The space features offices, meeting spaces, and a multi-room laboratory where students participate in clinical simulations and counseling training clinics, overseen by faculty in a state-of-the-art control room.



Opened in January 2026, the Graduate Student Wing features dedicated workstations, lockers, collaboration rooms, "Zoom rooms" for online meetings and classes, relaxation areas, and a kitchenette. To honor donations that helped make the renovations possible, the graduate community spaces are named for alumnae **Helen Warren Spector G'72** and **Flora A. Workman '46, G'64**.

FIFTH FLOOR Graduate Student Wing

Part of the "One School" vision, graduate students helped create an inclusive environment on the west wing of the fifth floor to foster collaboration, creativity, and connection across all SOE programs. It's a place graduate students can truly call their own. ■



1 In August, students, supporters, and staff from the **Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education** attended the National Down Syndrome Congress's 2025 Big Game Ball Awards in Atlanta, GA, an event held annually at the College Football Hall of Fame. The Taishoff Center received awards for two of its groundbreaking programs: the **State of the Art Conference on Inclusive Higher Education** and **InclusiveU**.

2 In September, InclusiveU students—including **Jack Anthony '29**—enjoyed some off-campus fun at Syracuse's Black Mamba Skate Park.

3 **Katie Hodell '24** competed at February's New York State Special Winter Olympics, held in Rochester.

4 **Matthew Falanga '26** goes behind the camera during his internship with CitrusTV.

5 **Maia Chamberlain '23**, along with other primarily non-verbal students and community members, consulted on advanced communication tools with the College of Engineering.

6 (L to R) Class of 2026 students **Matthew Falanga**, **Mia Filippone**, **John Rorro**, and **Arif Tookes-Muhammad** attend a spring career fair.

7 InclusiveU students and staff pose with a citation New York Gov. Kathy Hochul awarded the Taishoff Center in May for its work promoting inclusive postsecondary education.

Faculty News and Notes

Find these stories and more on our website.



Seward Awarded East Asia Program Grant

In fall 2025, Professor **Derek Seward** and doctoral student **Kahyen Shin** (Counseling and Human Services) were awarded an East Asia Program Faculty Grant from the Moynihn Institute of Global Affairs in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. The grant supports their project, “Exploring Educational Barriers and Resilience Experienced by North Korean Adult Learners in the US: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study.”

AI Research Receives AECT Recognition

Professor **Jing Lei**, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and **Yang Liu G’26** shared their research on artificial intelligence in education at the October 2025 Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) annual convention in Las Vegas.

Their paper, called “Exploring Pre-service Teachers’ Learning Processes in AI-integrated



LEADING WITH DISTINCTION

Instructional Design, Development, and Evaluation Professor **Rob Pusch** (second from left) was featured on the panel “Veterans and Inclusive Pedagogy” during the University’s “Leading With Distinction” showcase in October 2026. The showcase—which also featured Professor **Benjamin Dotger** speaking on experiential inquiry—explored areas of distinctive excellence and priorities outlined in the University’s academic strategic plan of the same name.

KILINC WINS INAUGURAL ADVISORY BOARD RESEARCH PUBLICATION AWARD

In November, the inaugural **Advisory Board Distinguished Research Publication Award** was presented to Professor **Sultan Kilinc** (pictured here with SOE Research Committee Chair **Julie Padilla ’11, G’12**) for her paper, written with doctoral candidate **Nikkia Borowski**, “They Are Not Losing Anything’: Preschool Educators’ Language Ideologies and Use for Young Emergent Multilinguals Labeled with Disabilities.” Other finalists were professors **Barbara Applebaum** and **Xiaoxia (Silvie) Huang**.



Classrooms: Challenges, Opportunities, and Future Directions,” was selected for the conference’s prestigious Presidential Session. At the same conference, Lei, Professor **Qiu Wang**, and instructional design doctoral student **Yanbei Chen**, received the Teacher Education Division Best Proposal Award for “Teaching Anxiety in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Examining the Impact of Digital Self-Efficacy and Social-Emotional Competence Among Pre-Service Teachers.”

STEAM Powered in Syracuse

In October, Professor **James Haywood Rolling Jr.** won a National Endowment for the Arts grant for “Syracuse STEAM Engines,” a two-year creative placemaking initiative that will bring together local artists, high school students, and city planners to transform neglected urban spaces into vibrant public art installations across the city.

The program is a collaboration among Syracuse University, the Black Artist Collective, the Everson Museum of Art, and Syracuse City School District’s new STEAM High School, the region’s first school dedicated to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. The project also includes Syracuse University artist-in-residence Carrie Mae Weems among its participants.

Rolling describes the initiative as education in action: students will design, fabricate, and install site-specific works at every stage, building real-world skills in a city preparing for a wave of tech industry growth driven by Micron Technology’s major expansion.



Moy Receives Grant for US Birthday Project

In November, Music Education Professor **Wendy Moy** was among nine faculty members and University-wide organizations receiving New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) funding for 2026. May received funding for her project, “We Hold These Truths: Commemorating the 250th Birthday of the United States of America.”



In “Adulting 101,” Camden, NY, teens learn about shopping and other home tasks to help prepare them for college.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE (AND A UNIVERSITY) TO SUPPORT RURAL WELLNESS

In rural Oneida County, the Camden Life Center has become something remarkable: a one-stop hub for residents navigating addiction, mental health challenges, food insecurity, and the pressures of rural life.

A partnership with **Kenneth Marfilus ’11**, Associate Teaching Professor of Social Work, has been central to that transformation. The partnership helped secure an \$839,000 Mother Cabrini Health Foundation grant in September 2025, which funded three new coordinators and launched a teaching kitchen, a youth center, and—for the first time in New York State—a recovery café.

A recovery café is a non-clinical space offering shared meals and small-group circles, designed to welcome people who may not yet be ready for formal treatment but who need stability, connection, and a place to start. Social Work students and alumni work at the center, and the results speak for themselves: since 2019, it has grown nearly tenfold.

The Camden partnership deepened further in May 2026 when Marfilus was awarded an Engaged Communities Grant for “Communications for Community Resilience,” a project to strengthen the center’s public outreach capacity while giving students hands-on, community-based learning grounded in trauma-informed, strengths-based practice.



Storytelling for Change

In February, Mathematics Education Professor **Nicole Fonger’s Data Warriors** project teamed up with Syracuse gallery ArtRage for “Storytelling for Change.”

The workshop provided school-aged participants the chance to meet and converse with their contemporaries in Data Warriors as they shared statistical investigations into locally relevant topics, such as the initiative to tear down the I-81 overpass that runs through the city.

Alongside the Data Warriors’ presentation, Teens with a Moving Camera offered a hands-on animation station where participants could try out stop-motion animation and shadow puppetry.

DeAngelis Rocks Study Away

Music Education Professor **David DeAngelis** was among seven faculty members who received a University Study Away Summer Award in April. The new award provides full-time faculty members with \$10,000 for high-impact summer projects based in Los Angeles, New York City, or Washington, DC.

DeAngelis will deepen partnerships with New York City K-12 schools that are leading the way in popular music pedagogy, focusing on programs that blend modern band and contemporary music approaches with traditional models.

One event resulting from the project will be a spring 2027 music workshop to bring students from partner school to the University’s Fisher Center for jam sessions, ensemble coaching, and songwriting. A goal of the initiative is to broaden field placement opportunities for music education students in NYC, thereby extending SOE’s **Bridge to the City** program, which currently serves inclusive education majors.

Perez Joins CUNY-IIE Cohort

In January 2026, Professor **Mario Rios Perez** was among 10 educators who participated in the CUNY-Initiative on Immigration and Education Faculty Fellows



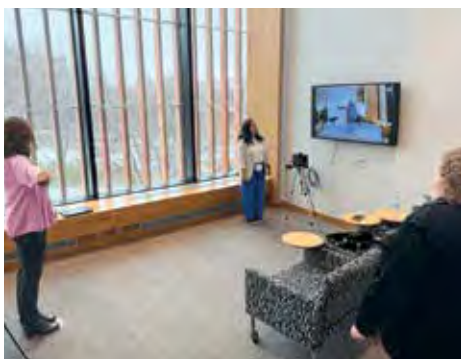
Program. The 2026 cohort collaborated to strengthen how immigration is integrated into teacher education programs across New York State and to support more inclusive, affirming classrooms for all students.

Johnson Elected to Provost Committee

In January, Professor **Dawn Johnson** was one of six faculty members elected to serve on the University Provost’s Advisory Committee on Promotion and



Tenure. Committee members advise the Vice Chancellor, Provost, and Chief Academic Officer, work to ensure consistent promotion and tenure processes, and promote high academic standards. Johnson will serve a two-year term.



SOE Engages with Syracuse Symposium

Doctoral candidate **Hemalathaa K. Yuvaraja** presents her research—developed with Professor **Tiffany A. Koszalka**—on a

proof-of-concept prototype iPad application called “PSLAR: Psychomotor Skills Learning Through Augmented Reality” during the 2026 Syracuse Symposium, hosted by the University’s Office of People and Culture.

The symposium—titled “Engage”—featured the scholarship of several SOE faculty, staff, and students, including Professor **Christy Ashby G’01, G’07, G’08** (advancing access); Professor **Maria T. Brown** (cognitive impairment); Professor **Benjamin Dotger** (clinical simulations); Professor **Yanhong Liu** (student wellness); Professor **Ken Marfilus ’11** (veteran’s resilience); and Professor **Jessamyn Neuhaus** (student engagement), and team members from **InclusiveU**. ■

COUNSELING PROGRAM WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

Alexandra Gantt-Howrey joins SOE from Idaho State University, where she was an assistant professor of counseling. Holding a Ph.D. from Old Dominion University (2022), Gantt-Howrey’s specialty areas include counselor preparation, social determinants of mental health, cognitive complexity, and rural mental health access.

“My primary research interests are counselor preparation to assess for and address clients’ social determinants of mental health and cognitive complexity, which includes how counselors think about their clients,” explains Gantt-Howrey. “I am also committed to interdisciplinary research efforts to improve rural mental health access and outcomes.”



Eunae Han joins SOE from the University of Texas at El Paso, where she was an assistant professor of counseling and special education. Before coming to the United States to pursue her master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Iowa—graduating in 2021 and 2022 respectively—she worked as a certified counselor for more than three years in South Korea.

Han continues her clinical practice as an Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) trained counselor. Her research interests include feminist approaches to counselor education, trauma-informed counseling and supervision, and researcher identity/research mentoring.

“I believe it is important to incorporate multicultural and social justice perspectives into my roles as a researcher, educator, and advocate,” she explains. Han serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Counseling and Development* and *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*.



FACULTY IN THE NEWS

SOE faculty were sought out repeatedly by regional and national media this year to weigh in on some contemporary education and social policy debates.

Professor **George Theoharis** spoke to *The Hill* about the brewing legal battle over religious charter schools, warning that publicly funding religious schools risks reversing the foundational American principle that government takes no position on religion.

He also weighed in for *Syracuse.com* on two contrasting school policy questions: the implications of recent Supreme Court religious freedom rulings for public schools, and the growing use of gift card incentives to combat chronic absenteeism, which he observed are no different in principle from the sports, music, and clubs that schools already use to keep students engaged and coming through the door.

Professor **Christy Ashby G’01, G’07, G’08** addressed federal decisions that, she argued, put disabled people at a disadvantage. Speaking to WAER public radio, she challenged federal government claims linking acetaminophen use during pregnancy to autism, calling the statements damaging and urging the public to seek information from autistic people themselves.

In *The Washington Post*, Ashby discussed a Department of State directive banning Calibri typeface in communications in favor of Times New Roman, a move framed as ending government waste, but which Ashby argued reflects “a broader pattern of dismissal of the needs of disabled people.” She noted the switch would create genuine barriers to accessing federal documents for those for whom certain typefaces present visual challenges.

Professor **Ken Marfilus ’11**, a US Air Force veteran and mental health expert, offered practical guidance to Spectrum News ahead of the Fourth of July on how veterans and others affected by trauma can prepare for and cope with fireworks displays, from grounding techniques and safe-space planning to the importance of staying connected rather than isolating.



SELECTED ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

A selection of faculty scholarship published in 2025-2026, including in collaboration with alumni and graduate students, organized across SOE's Signature Areas of Distinction, as well as mental health and wellness, an area led by faculty in SOE's Counseling and Human Services and Social Work programs.

Inclusive Pedagogy and Practice

Christy E. Ashby. "Dreams of Welcome: Listening to Degree-Seeking Neurodivergent College Students at a Fully Inclusive University." In *Neurodivergent Education and Lifelong Learning*. (IGI Global Scientific, 2026). (With **N. Hughes**.)

Maria T. Brown. "Relationship Between Accelerated Biological Aging, Race, Perceived Discrimination, and Limitations in Activities of Daily Living." *International Journal of Geriatrics and Gerontology*, 9 (2025). (With M. Mutambudzi and N.W. Chen.)

Alex Corbitt. "Relational Bleeding, Bending, and Diffraction: Brazilian Transnational Children's Transgressive Digital Play on Roblox." *Children and Society* (2025). (With M.L. Becker.)

Alan Foley. "Disabling AI: Power, Exclusion, and Disability." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* (2025). (With **F. Melese G'25**.)

Nicole L. Fonger. "Re-Imagining Algebra as a Tool for Modeling Historical Injustices in Our City." In *Teaching Core Curriculum with College and Career Readiness in Mind* (Routledge, 2026). (With K. Keech, W.A. Raja, and B. Routhouska.)

Bong Gee Jang. "When Science of Reading Meets Equity: Understanding and Applying Equity-oriented Models to Enhance a Phonics Intervention." *Reading Research Quarterly*, 61 (2026). (With **K. Franz G'26**.)

Sultan Kilinc. "Educational Trajectories of Refugee Children with Disabilities: The Unique Case of the

Turkish Context." In *Forced Migration, Disability, and Education* (Routledge 2025). (With E. Karsli-Calamak.)

Heather F. Lavender. "The Sociocultural Practices in a Science Classroom and the Influence on Black Girls' Girlhood." *Cultural Studies of Science Education* (2025).

Yehyang Lee. "Contradictions of Inclusion: Cultural-historical Legacies and the Struggle for Inclusive Education." *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (2026). (With D. Ko and I. Stepaniuk.)

Beth Myers. "Instructor Experiences Providing Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Intellectual Disability in Inclusive Higher Education." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 29 (2025). (With **P.S. Smith G'23**.)

Derek X. Seward. "Addressing the Missing Piece: Developing Inclusive Programmatic Structures, Modules, and Coursework." In *The Handbook of Disability-Affirmative Systemic Therapy* (Routledge, 2025). (With **K. Shin** and **B.A. Williams G'17**.)

George Theoharis. "Toward a Framework of Inclusive, Socially-just, Disability-centered District Special Education Leadership: Scope, Strategy, and Action." *Educational Administration Quarterly* (2026). (With **C.P. Tracy-Bronson '07, G'14, G'18**.)

Julia M. White. "Inclusive Education in Central Europe: Systemic Segregation and Disablement of Romani Children." In *Understanding Inclusive Education* (Edward Elgar, 2026).

Digital Pedagogy and Practice

Moon-Heum Cho. "Learning with AI: Student Intentions for Academic Use and Broader Perspectives on AI." *Technology, Knowledge, and Learning* (2026). (With S. Lim, E.G. Park, and H. Yu.)

Alan R. Foley and **Beth A. Ferri.** "DISCO-Tech: A Framework for Resisting Ableism in Emerging Technologies." *Teachers College Record*, 128 (2026).

Alan Foley and **Micah Fialka-Feldman.** "Accessing Community: Speaking With and Through Mobile Technology." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 14 (2025).

Xiaoxia (Silvie) Huang, Jing Lei, and Yanhong Liu. "The Effect of Immersive Virtual Reality-Enhanced Experiential Learning on Middle School Students' Knowledge Retention, Creativity, and Perceptions." *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange*, 18 (2025).

Tiffany A. Koszalka. "Enhancing Pre-Service Teachers' Reflective Thinking Skills Through Generative AI-Assisted Digital Storytelling Creation: A Three-Dimensional Framework Analysis." *Computers and Education* (2025). (With L. Lee et al.)

Yanhong Liu. "Help-Seeking in the Age of AI: Cross-Sectional Survey of the Use and Perceptions of AI-Based Mental Health Support Among US Adults." *JMIR Mental Health* (2026). (With M. Birnbaum et al.)

Stefanie R. Pilkay. "Navigating Safety in Digital Spaces: Mobile Dating App Use Among MSM Communities." *Families in Society* (2025). (With C.E. Gerena.)

Qiu Wang and **Jing Lei.** "Adopting Generative AI in Future Classrooms: A Study of Preservice Teachers' Intentions and Influencing Factors." *Behavioral Sciences*, 15 (2025). (With **Y. Liu**.)

Experiential Pedagogy and Practice

Benjamin H. Dotger. "Faculty Engagement in a Clinical Simulation: Illuminating Approaches and Opportunities for First-Generation Undergraduate Research." *Journal of First-generation Student Success*, (2026). (With **A.B. Robles**.)

———. "Resisting Exclusion: Exploring Advocacy as a Core Practice Through Simulation." *Midwest Journal of Education*, 3 (2026). (With **J. Fundalinski G'26** and **J. Harnett '18, G'19**.)



In 2025-2026, Professor **Alan Foley** published articles at the intersection of disability studies and emerging technology, including "DISCO-Tech: A Framework for Resisting Ableism in Emerging Technologies" (*Teachers College Record*), with Professor **Beth Ferri**.

Foley has joined a call for tech companies to not just design for people with disabilities, but to design *with them*. That is a participatory approach Foley addresses in "Accessing Community: Speaking With and Through Mobile Technology" (*Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*), written in collaboration with **Micah Fialka-Feldman**, Outreach Coordinator in the **Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education**.

Alex Corbitt. “The Reader-Player Interactivity Framework: How Do Readers Navigate Diverse Varieties of Narrative Texts?” *Reading Research Quarterly*, 61 (2026). (With T. Aleo et al.)

David R. DeAngelis. “Employment Preferences of Preservice Music Teachers: A Critical Quantitative Analysis.” *Journal of Music Teacher Education* (2026).

Duane Graysay. “Learning from Simulations of Student Thinking in Mathematics: SiSTiM and the Case of Kristy.” *Mathematics Teacher Educator*, 14 (2025). (With **H. Bermudez G’25**.)

Yanhong Liu. “Artificial Clients, Genuine Interactions? Assessing ChatGPT4’s Process-Level Performance in Clinical Simulations Using Qualitative Content Analysis.” *Counseling and Psychotherapy Research*, 25 (2025). (With **S. Litt**, et al.)

Melissa Luke. “Experiential Andragogy Within a Supervision-Focused Doctoral Internship: A Collaborative Autoethnography.” *Counselor Education and Supervision* (2026). (With **S. Litt**, **X. Tian**, and **K. Shin**.)

Joanna O. Masingila. “Using Video Case Studies to Provide Prospective Secondary Teachers in Kenya Opportunities to Notice and Reflect on Pedagogical Practices.” *Teaching Education*, 36 (2025). (With L. Kamau et al.)

———. “The Interrelated Mathematics Learner Identities and Mathematics Teacher Identities of Preservice Elementary Teachers.” *School Science and Mathematics* (2026). (With **S. Caviness G’25**.)

Wendy Moy. “Choral Music in Paraiba, Brazil: An Exploratory Case Study.” *Choral Journal*, 6 (2026). (With J. Calvar, E.M. Dekaney, and J.F. Warren.)

David Pérez II. “Success Is Not Just About Grades:” Exploring Scholar-Practitioners’ Informal Theories on Student Success in Higher Education.” *Journal of College Student Development*, 67 (2026). (With K. Taylor.)

James H. Rolling Jr. “NAEA ‘Connected Arts Networks’ Policy Storytelling Interventions.” *Arts Education Policy Review*, 127 (2026). ■

Mental Health and Wellness

Moon-Heum Cho. “The Effects of Playing an Action Video Game on Reducing Anxiety and Depression: A Comparison with Journaling.” *SAGE Open*, 15 (2025). (With S. Hwang, D.H. Lee, and Y.J. Kim.)

Ryan D. Heath. “Project TEACH School-focused Consultation and Community Collaboration: A Multidisciplinary Pilot Intervention to Reduce Mental Health Disparities in Upstate, NY.” In *Healthcare*, 14 (2026). (With J. Hoff et al.)

Yanhong Liu. “Psychological Well-being and Distress Among College Students: The Mediating Role of Resilience as a Dynamic Process.” *Journal of Counseling and Development* (2025). (With E.T. Beauparlant, M. Ueda, and Q. Yu.)

Fei Pei. “Linking Perceived Community Violence and Parenting Stress from Early Childhood to Adolescence: A Parallel-Process Growth Model.” *Journal of Family Psychology* (2026). (With X. Li, K. Maguire-Jack, and N. Pangelinan.)

Stefanie Pilkay. “The Costs and Benefits of Striving: Subclinical Cardiovascular Disease, Depression, and Hostility as Children Navigate Adversity.” *Health Psychology* (2026). (With N.H. Atallah-Yunes et al.)

———. “Adolescent Depression and Cognition Risk for Suicide: An Investigation of Risk Factors and Gene Environment Interactions.” *Brain and Behavior*, 15 (2025). (With A.M. Carroll et al.)

Visit soe.syr.edu/research for more faculty publications.



Faculty Books

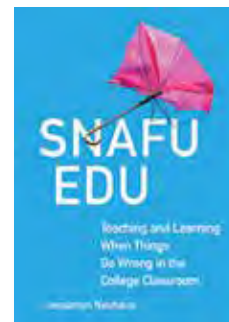
Snafu Edu: Teaching and Learning When Things Go Wrong in the College Classroom

Jessamyn Neuhaus

University of Oklahoma Press, 2025

Snafu Edu offers college educators a roadmap for anticipating and navigating classroom challenges. Offering practical wisdom for any higher education instructor, Neuhaus is clear-eyed about the rarely acknowledged foul-ups that teachers confront.

The book identifies five major reasons for systemic and individual snafus in the field—inequity, disconnection, distrust, failure, and fear—and shows how understanding underlying causes can help educators perceive the problem and take appropriate measures.



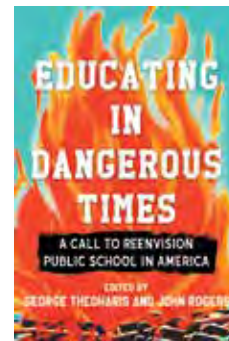
Educating in Dangerous Times: A Call to Reenvision Public School in America

George Theoharis and John Rogers (Eds.)

Beacon Press, 2026

At a time when public schools again have become a primary site of political contention, *Educating in Dangerous Times* raises the central question, How should we collectively create the public schools we need?

Issues addressed by leading education scholars—including professors **Christy Ashby G’01**, **G’07**, **G’08** and **Beth Myers**—range from supporting marginalized youth to rethinking English language arts and mathematics instruction. Each chapter re-envision a future beyond current constrictions and proposes a path toward schools that affirm the value of each student, support their aspirations, and foster feelings of safety and belonging.



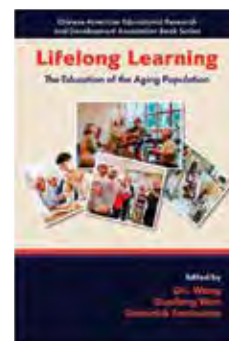
Lifelong Learning: The Education of the Aging Population

Qiu Wang, Dominick Fantacone G’21, and Guofang Wan (Eds.)

Emerald, 2025

Lifelong Learning unites expert researchers, educators, advocates, policymakers, and community leaders from various countries to offer insights, key trends, theories, and practices in education for the aging population, aiming to positively influence lifelong learning for this group globally.

The book includes studies representing a variety of perspectives and research methods; informative analysis of the topic under country-specific social, cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts; and strategies to improve lifelong education of an aging society. ■



Intelligence++ Delivers with SOLACE Collective



Launched in 2020 through a transformative gift from industrial designer and Syracuse alumnus **Gianfranco Zaccai '70, H'09**, **Intelligence++** is built on a deceptively simple but radical premise: that the most powerful innovations for people with disabilities come from designing with them, not simply for them.

The interdisciplinary program—a partnership spanning the College of Visual and Performing Arts' School of Design, the School of Education's **Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education** and **InclusiveU** program, Syracuse University Libraries, and the Whitman School of Management—brings together students from across the University each year to identify real-world challenges facing the disability community and to develop entrepreneurial solutions from the ground up.

For several years, the program has produced impressive student work and competition-winning concepts. Now, with the multiple award-winning SOLACE Collective, **Intelligence++** has another success story.

Founded by a team of Syracuse students that met through the **Intelligence++** course (see below, "Exploring"), SOLACE designs sensory-friendly loungewear for neurodivergent individuals, a population that makes up an estimated 20% of the global population but that has long been overlooked by the fashion industry.

Shop for loungewear built alongside neurodivergent adults at solace-collective.com.



Exploring

Central to **Intelligence++** is a two-semester course available to all students across the University—including students in **InclusiveU**—that encourages students to imagine and create products, devices, and services for persons with disabilities.

The course is team-taught by Professor Don Carr, College of Visual and Performing Arts; Professor **Beth Myers**, Executive Director, Taishoff Center (above, center); Professor **Alan Foley**, School of Education; and Linda Dickerson Hartsock, Strategic Initiatives Advisor, Martin J. Whitman School of Management.



Collaborating

Intelligence++ insists that genuine inclusive design solutions only emerge when the insights, experiences, and perspectives of disabled people are embedded in the design process from the very beginning, not added as an afterthought.

SOLACE took that ethos seriously. Chief Product Officer **Carolyn Fernandes '25**, who is neurodivergent herself, conducted a survey finding that 97% of neurodivergent people experienced discomfort from their clothing. The team supplemented that data with interviews and cross-campus try-on events to understand what textures, fits, and fabrics neurodivergent individuals found comfortable or distressing.



Prototyping

Once opportunities are identified, student teams develop a working prototype of their design. By taking this build-to-learn approach, students gain real-time feedback while continually evolving their design.

SOLACE Collective developed four prototypes that are seen in the main photo: a sweatsuit with hidden interior fabrics for discreet sensory engagement; a distressed set with tactile cutouts for visible fidgeting; a minimal-stitched set for those sensitive to seams; and a crewneck set with adjustable elastic cuffs that let wearers control tightness and comfort.



Commercializing

The inclusive design course culminates in a pitch competition in spring, judged by design and business leaders, which helps students develop a commercialization roadmap.

Since taking part in the spring 2025 **Intelligence++** competition, SOLACE Collective has earned first place in the Syracuse University Social Impact competition, second place in the 2025 New York State Business Plan Competition (Product/Hardware), and third place in the 2025 Syracuse University Panasci Business Plan Competition (also awarded the Gilded Prize). ■

Student News and Notes

Find these stories and
more on our website.



WELCOME TO KDP

In February, SOE initiated 32 new members of **Kappa Delta Pi (KDP)**, the international education honors society. These education students—including **Katie Barth '28** (pictured), welcomed by Dean **Kelly Chandler-Olcott**, Assistant Dean for Student Success **Huey Hsiao**, and Professor **Alex Corbitt**—join a thriving community dedicated to educating the future generations and advancing inclusion for all learners.

That community spirit was on full display in March, when 19 KDP members came together at OttoTHON 2026, Syracuse University's 12-hour dance marathon in support of Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. Students brought in \$1,327 and earned recognition as one of the event's Top 10 fundraising teams, part of an extraordinary \$115,182 raised on the day.

In April, SOE's KDP chapter won the Syracuse University Greek Awards prize for Philanthropy/Community Service of the Year, and chapter President **Abby Buffinger '27** was named Professional Fraternity Council Member of the Year.

McGhee Named an AAUW Dissertation Fellow

In September 2025, Cultural Foundations of Education doctoral candidate **Atiya McGhee** was awarded an American Association of University Women (AAUW) Dissertation Fellowship, recognizing their commitment to advancing equity and dialogue in education.

McGhee's scholarship and leadership have also been honored with multiple University and SOE awards, including a 2025 College of Arts and Sciences Joan Lukas Rothenberg Graduate Service Award, reflecting their impact as a community facilitator and educator.

Counseling Students Win National Accolades

In February, **Sara Litt** and **Xihe Tian**, doctoral candidates in the Counseling and Counselor Education program, earned prestigious national recognition for their leadership and research excellence.

Litt was selected as a 2026-2027 Leadership Intern with Chi Sigma Iota, one of the largest professional counseling honor societies in the world, while Tian received the highly competitive Best Practice in Research Award from the American Counseling Association.

Higher Ed Students Shape NODA Conference

While still graduate students in the **Higher Education** program, **Alexis Alfaro G'26** and **Alexa Jones G'26** took their classroom learning into the profession by joining the planning committee for NODA's Spring Learning Conference, a nationwide series of events organized by the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education (known by its original acronym, NODA).

Serving on the Attendee Experience Committee alongside seven colleagues from institutions across the country, the pair were responsible for shaping the conference held at Towson University in Maryland, by designing social events, icebreaker activities, and a service-learning project to foster connection and community among attendees.

Chen Awarded for AI in Education Project

In February, Instructional Design, Development, and Evaluation doctoral candidate **Yanbei Chen** was one of nine graduate students honored with the Graduate Dean's Award for Excellence in Research and Creative Work. Chen was praised for her research project, "Preparing Future Teachers for Responsible AI Use: AI-Related Teaching Anxiety, Protective Resources, and Implications for Teacher Education."



Undergrads at AERA

Eliani Jimenez Merino '26 (left) and **Vera Wang '26** presented their SOURCE-funded undergraduate research on women of color in school administration at the April 2026 American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting in Los Angeles.

"Every single woman of color in the audience commented on their excellent work or came up to them afterwards and shared their appreciation and admiration," observes Professor **George Theoharis**.

In addition to Merino and Wang's presentation, SOE's presence at AERA 2026 reflected a spectrum of the School's scholarship, from AI tools in instructional design and the experiences of queer and trans students in inclusive postsecondary education, to racial disparities in digital reading, Black girl aesthetics, and student-athletes of color navigating racism in high school sports.



LET'S THRIVE!

April saw the inaugural **THRIVE Week**, dedicated to nurturing health, well-being, and community belonging across the School during a busy time of year. Students, faculty, and staff were invited to stop by the Jacquet Commons for activities, intentional pauses, and wellness tips from SOE faculty, focusing on five themes:

- **TH—Thank Your Host**
(activity: send a gratitude card to a mentor)
- **R—Rooting for You**
(activity: send a PlantGram to a friend or colleague)
- **I—Inspire Yourself**
(activity: create a reflection journal)
- **V—Vitalize**
(activity: grab a healthy refreshment)
- **E—Envision Your Future**
(activity: create a vision board)



Talking TED

A Syracuse University TEDx event in April, held at the National Veterans Resource Center, featured School of Social Work student **Michael Nedrick G'27** among eight presenters exploring the theme “What Matters Next.” Nedrick is a multi-media journalist, content creator, digital personality, and student counselor. His TEDx talk addressed “Who Matters Just as Much as Why.”

Burley and Kincaid Named Remembrance Scholars

In April, two SOE students were named among the 2026-2027 Remembrance Scholars, a group that honors the 35 SU students lost in the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing through leadership, scholarship, and service. **Mason Burley '27** (Inclusive Adolescent Education, History, and Disability Studies) and **Sydney Kincaid '27** (Music Education) will help carry forward this legacy while contributing to the University's annual remembrance efforts.



Take a Bow

On April 24, the School of Social Work held its annual ceremony to honor students involved with the **Genovese Scholars**, **Evidence-based Practice**, and **Assessment Project** programs; bestow graduate and undergraduate Convocation awards; and induct new members into the **Phi Alpha** honor society.

In the photo, **Uma Lama G'26** accepts the **Kenneth J. Marfilus Student Veteran Award**. Originally from Nepal, Lama served in the University Army ROTC program. Alongside her military responsibilities, she also completed an internship at the Syracuse



A SHOWCASE OF SCHOLARSHIP



The fourth annual **Graduate Research Symposium**, held in April and sponsored by Dean Emerita **Joan N. Burstyn** and her family, brought together graduate students to share innovative scholarship through panels, poster sessions, and roundtables.

Centered on the theme “Resistance, Refusals, Ruptures—Innovations Toward Liberatory Futures,” the event explored topics ranging from inclusive teaching and literacy to global education, public health, and STEM identity.

VA Medical Center. In May 2026, she commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Medical Corps.

Dehaiman Wins UNM Foundation Prize

In April, **Layla Dehaiman G'18, G'26**, a lecturer in the University of New Mexico's (UNM) College of Education and Human Sciences, received the 2026 Career Achievement award part of the Paul Bartlett Ré Peace Prize, administered through the UNM Foundation.

This prize honors individuals whose work "advances harmony, healing, and nonviolent approaches within their communities." Dehaiman's dissertation is focused on the school-to-prison pipeline and the use of restorative practices.

Board of Trustees Taps Kehoe

In May, **Thomas Andrew Kehoe III '27** (Higher Education) was named one of four student representatives to the University Board of Trustees for the 2026-2027 academic year. A graduate assistant for academic and career advising in the College of Arts and Sciences, Kehoe was recognized for his commitment to student advocacy, leadership, and student success in higher education. ■



SALT OF THE CITY

Doctoral students, Syracuse City School District administrators, and **Baldanza Fellows Program** seminar instructors **Nicole Heath '07, G'10, G'11, G'21** and **Jasmine Price G'21** have developed a tradition of taking current and former Baldanza Fellows to Salt City Market for their final seminar of the school year.

"They really have built a lovely community spanning years of fellows," says Professor **George Theoharis**. The program helps recruit and retain teachers committed to educating underserved and underrepresented students in Syracuse-area schools.

AND BATTLE MAKES IT A THREE-PEAT!

For the third consecutive year, a School of Education student has won the Renée Crown University Honors Program's David Orlin Prize—awarded annually for the most outstanding honors thesis across the University.

This year's winner is **Bobby Battle '26**, a Selected Studies in Education graduate whose thesis, "The Miseducation of Black Kids in White Schools," argues that Lauryn Hill's music functions as a contemporary form of what scholars call "fugitive pedagogy," the covert, subversive, liberatory teaching tradition practiced by Black educators since slavery in the United States. It is also the second consecutive year the Orlin winner was advised by Professor **George Theoharis**.

The prize caps an extraordinary senior year for Battle. She was named a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Spain for 2026-2027, served as an SOE Class Marshal at University Commencement, and received the School of Education Scholar designation, the school's highest undergraduate honor.

She joins recent SOE Orlin winners: **Alexis Wilner '24**, who examined barriers to inclusivity for disabled theater artists, and **Morgan Meddings '25**, whose thesis took on censorship and the teaching of banned books in American schools.



The Student Becomes the Teacher

Dylan Gwilt '17 (right) walks the halls of STEAM at Dr. King Elementary School with Syracuse University student **Will Baker '27**.

Visible from the classroom windows, Syracuse University's JMA Wireless Dome sits just up the hill from STEAM at Dr. King Elementary School. For fourth-grade teacher **Dylan Gwilt '17**, the view is a reminder of his journey that began in the Syracuse City School District (SCSD).

Raised in Syracuse, Gwilt attended Syracuse schools before earning a bachelor's degree from SOE, supported by a Say Yes Syracuse Tuition Scholarship. Now back in the district as an educator, he inspires the next generation of students to dream big, while mentoring future teachers, including undergraduate **Will Baker '27**.

Figure It Out

Gwilt always knew he wanted to be part of that spirited community at Syracuse University. "Even though I didn't have the vision of what I wanted my career to be, I was like, whatever it is, I'm going to figure it out while I'm there," he says.

"[SOE] got me into schools right away, which was something I was really interested in, and something other schools just didn't offer."

Will Baker '27

Entering his sophomore year, Gwilt's mom planted a seed. "She said, 'I always thought you'd be a good teacher,'" he recalls. When he thought about it, it made sense. He always loved school. "Whatever was going on in my life, it was always a safe space—adults who cared about me, kids I could get along with," he says.

As an Inclusive Elementary and Special Education major, Gwilt was by chance assigned to his home elementary school for one of his student teaching placements. "It was just awesome to be part of the Salem Hyde culture again," Gwilt says. "I got to see some of my old teachers and connect with them as peers."

After graduating, Gwilt taught at a private day school in Connecticut, but it didn't feel right. "I missed Syracuse," he admits. "I felt like I had more to give as a teacher, and I wanted to give it to the district that shaped me." He has been teaching at Dr. King since 2019.

Beautiful Places

Baker joined Gwilt's classroom as a pre-service student teacher at the start of the spring 2026 semester. "We just immediately clicked," Baker says. "Having somebody who understands what I'm going through, who's been in my shoes before—it's incredible."

Growing up near Boston, Baker knew in high school that he wanted to be a teacher and chose Syracuse University for its welcoming environment: "After touring and talking with the Dean, I was drawn in by how closely connected

SOE was. I was already meeting professors during Welcome Week, and they got me into schools right away, which was something I was really interested in, and something other schools just didn't offer."

As Baker's supervising teacher, Gwilt draws on what he learned from the mentor he had as a Syracuse undergraduate: "You want the student teacher to not just copy what you do. At the end of the day, you want the student teacher to feel confident. You want them to feel like they've developed their own skill set."

"It was hard having to say goodbye to the students," says Baker, an Inclusive Adolescent Education major, who wrapped up his placement in May 2026, and he hopes he made a lasting impact: "If I can show them that there are people out there who care about them—that stays with a kid. That's what someone did for me, and it's the reason I want to be a teacher today."

"It was very apparent that he loves the profession of teaching—he's going to be a really solid teacher," Gwilt says of Baker. "The kids ask about him every day."

For now, Gwilt loves his role as an SCSD teacher and mentor to SOE students, although he wonders what it would be like to have a school-wide perspective and lead as a principal someday.

For Baker, his time at Dr. King has him considering whether to stay and teach in Syracuse after graduation: "I've loved working in SCSD. I think it's one of the most beautiful places I've ever experienced." ■

Advanced Topic: Albany

Capitol Action Day gives M.S.W. students a crash course in social work policy and politics

Capitol Action Day is the National Association of Social Workers-New York's (NASW-NY) annual advocacy event, connecting social workers directly with the legislators whose decisions shape the profession and the communities it serves.

For students in the School of Social Work, it is also a vivid, hands-on introduction to macro practice, the systems-level work that complements personalized, clinical care.

In February 2026, among the students making the School-sponsored trip to Albany—led by **Joseph L. Smith**, Associate Teaching Professor in the School of Social Work—was **Jessica Edwards G'26**. Edwards is a graduate of the online, part-time M.S.W. program and serves in the Office of Institutional Equity at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse.

As Edwards describes, she is exactly the kind of advocate NASW-NY is hoping to cultivate: someone who came to social work through personal experience, found her voice in a graduate policy course, and then showed up to make her profession's case to her elected representatives.

What drew you to social work?

Around 2016 I became really interested in social work because my mom was suddenly debilitated. I found myself navigating systems such as disability services, and it was a social worker who was really helpful. She helped me understand what resources are out there—often you need someone who can communicate that information to you.

Through that experience, and through my own work in the therapeutic space, I realized I really enjoyed helping people. I worked at the Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy in California, where I placed students in clinical rotations. I realized I needed to



Jessica Edwards G'26 (second from left) and her social work program colleagues (including Professor **Tracy Walker G'12**, far right) visits with New York State Sen. Chris Ryan (D-50, center) during Capital Action Day 2026.

understand their backgrounds too, such as did they have other complexities going on? I got a real passion for helping people and making sure they knew resources were available.

When I became Executive Assistant to the Cornell University Dean of Students, working with undergraduates, I realized I wanted to be the person they came to for support and not just an administrative assistant. I felt comfortable in crisis situations, probably because of my past experiences. So I decided to go to school for this kind of work.

Why did you become interested in policy and advocacy?

A lot of people feel like processes are just in place and don't ask, "Why?" or "Is this process in place because someone made a decision?" In his welfare policy course, Professor **Steven Bush** would ask, "If your clients were in this situation, how would it affect them? Who does this impact?"

(continued on next page)

FOUR PRIORITIES OF CAPITAL ACTION DAY 2026

School Mental Health Support (NY S0376/A8390)

Expand access to mental health resources for students.

Social Work Loan Forgiveness Expansion (NY S1113/A6016)

Support recruitment and retention within the social work profession.

Payment for Placement (NY S7894/A9397)

Address financial barriers faced by social work students during field education (practicums).

AI Oversight in Mental Health Care (NY S8484/A9106)

Ethical safeguards as AI technology becomes more integrated into care.



A lot of us were scared of the word “policy,” but we found we actually had a lot of opinions and experience. We were already engaging with policy every day, whether in our workplaces or our communities. We kept leaving class asking how do we talk to who is making these policies?

Even though it was dispiriting to learn about policies impacting vulnerable populations, being aware was so valuable. It humanized policy. We created presentations that gave us practice formulating ideas, thinking about language, and how to approach someone who doesn’t understand social work.

Why join Capital Action Day 2026?

Professor Bush told the class, “Don’t be afraid to show up in policy spaces. Run for political positions.” So when Professor **Yvonne Smith** emailed saying the School is offering a free bus ride to Capital Action Day, I thought, “Okay, maybe I’ll go.”

I attended the preparatory meetings telling myself maybe I might pull out. But I’ve learned to move through fear and just do things anyway. Before I went, I emailed Pamela Hunter (D-128), my assembly member, and asked if I could meet to talk about some priorities NASW-NY is working on.

One of the best parts of the day was meeting other students, including residential M.S.W. students. Just listening to their perspective was great. The atmosphere at the Capitol was spectacular. There were so many kinds of professionals: doctors, pharmacists, students advocating to let 17-year-olds vote. All different ages, all different causes.

Inside the building, we made posters and got to meet other social workers. I think it was so

“We were already engaging with policy every day, whether in our workplaces or our communities. We kept leaving class asking how do we talk to who is making these policies?”

important for us to be in the same space together because as a student, you are often learning about what’s wrong with the system. Seeing everyone so energized was really powerful.

Which NASW-NY issue seemed to get most traction?

When we met with Sen. Chris Ryan (D-50), what struck me was that many representatives already have personal connections to the issues. They have family members who are teachers and who work with students with special needs, so they aren’t unfamiliar with what we were advocating for: making sure social workers can show up fully supported and ensuring students have access to basic mental health services.

I shared what I had learned in my research: that for many students, services provided at their public school are the only mental health services they will ever receive. Not every school in Syracuse has a social worker, and that has a real impact, especially for parents working multiple jobs who are dealing with their own mental health challenges. That message wasn’t hard to land with the representatives.

I also met with Assemblymember Sam Berger (D-27), co-sponsor of several of these bills. He is incredibly open to working with social workers, so that conversation wasn’t about proving a point, it was about sharing experiences. One thing he said really stuck with me: personal stories stay with representatives. When someone emails and says, “A social worker helped me through this specific situation,” those stories matter.

Have you had any follow-ups since the event?

Although I couldn’t meet with Assemblymember Hunter on the day, a few weeks later her office reached out and asked if I still wanted to meet with their legislative coordinator to discuss the NASW-NY priorities. I said absolutely! I had support from NASW-NY’s Advocacy and Government Relations Committee because it was my first time meeting with a legislator’s office, and it was a little intimidating.

I also was invited to join the NASW-NY Advocacy and Government Relations (AGR)

Committee and to participate in a follow-up meeting with Assemblymember Berger, who is drafting legislation to address the shortage of social work supervisors, which affects practicum placements, an issue he raised during our discussion.

One bill that did seem to generate real engagement was the artificial intelligence oversight bill, which came out of a heartbreaking case involving a young person who took his life following disturbing conversations with AI. The child’s mother came to speak about it, and that personal testimony clearly landed with the representative. ■

MICRO VS. MACRO SOCIAL WORK

A strength of the School of Social Work’s graduate degree program is that it prepares students to understand both the “micro” and “macro” levels of social work practice, with immersive experiences such as Capital Action Day introducing the latter. **Jessica Edwards G’26** explains the difference between the two in her own words:

Micro Social Work is individual, one-on-one work. Those moments of direct engagement with people, and I’d say a lot of other professionals are doing micro social work, such as student support staff and advocacy workers. They may not have the M.S.W. degree, but they’re doing that work.

Macro Social Work is about how systems operate, as well as policy, legislation, and rules that shape how we manage those small individual interactions.

“I love both sides,” says Edwards. “But we really do need more social workers—and people in related support fields—operating at the macro level, because sometimes we lose sight of individual complexity and uniqueness when writing policy, which can end up being very broad.”

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P'XX denotes the parents of a Syracuse University student or graduate.

Dear School of Education Alumni and Friends,

Serving as Chair of the School of Education **Advisory Board** has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my career. When I took on this role, I hoped to help strengthen the bond between our alumni, our students, and the School we all love.

Looking back, I am so proud of what our Board built together: deeper alumni engagement, stronger support for students, and a renewed sense of pride in everything SOE represents.

None of that would have happened without the Board—a committed team who showed up, again and again, simply because they believe in this school's mission. I'm endlessly grateful to my fellow Board members and to the faculty and staff who welcomed our ideas and partnered with us at every turn.

As I step down, I do so with complete confidence in **Deborah A. Little '14, G'16**, who will lead this Board into its next chapter with the same energy and heart she has brought to every project so far. I have no doubt the best is still ahead.

To every alum reading this—thank you for staying connected to the School. Your support, whether through your time, your ideas, or simply staying in touch, is the heartbeat of what makes this community special.

It has been a tremendous honor to represent you. I look forward to continuing to cheer our School on for many years to come.

With sincere appreciation,

Deborah A. Knoblock '88, G'90

Immediate Past Chair, SOE Advisory Board



Honored to Serve. Inspired to Lead.

I am deeply honored and incredibly excited to have been appointed Chair of the **Advisory Board**. I step into this role with tremendous gratitude for the extraordinary leadership of **Deborah Knoblock**. Deb leaves behind an incredible legacy, and I am both humbled and energized to build upon the strong foundation she and our Board have created.

My own connection to Syracuse University and the School of Education has shaped so much of who I am. As a proud three-time graduate of Syracuse University, I have experienced firsthand the transformative power of education, and I have carried that belief throughout my life's work of empowering young people, strengthening families, and creating opportunities for others to discover the greatness within themselves.

As Chair, I want our Advisory Board to be a bridge, connecting the school's vision and ambitions with the extraordinary community of alumni, friends, partners, and supporters who believe in its mission. I look forward to listening, learning, and finding meaningful ways to engage our community, whether through mentoring a student, sharing expertise, supporting innovative programs, or simply reconnecting with the School that gave so many of us our start.

Through my work as Founder and Chairwoman of Foundation 44, I am also blessed to continue honoring the legacy of my late husband, Pro Football Hall of Famer **Floyd Little '67, H'16**, who believed deeply in education, opportunity, and our responsibility to reach back and help others move forward.

There are tremendous momentum and opportunity before us, and I could not be more excited about what we can accomplish together. So, consider this your invitation. I would love to hear from you—your ideas, your hopes for the school, or simply a hello. I am grateful for the trust placed in me and look forward to serving with a servant's heart and a commitment to inspiring minds and changing lives.

With gratitude and great expectation,

Deborah A. Little '14, G'16

Chair, SOE Advisory Board



ALUMNI ROUNDTABLE

The Orange Ripple Effect

The 2026 edition of Syracuse Giving Day took place on Tuesday, March 24, which happens to be the University's—and Otto the Orange's—birthday! Once again, thanks to our amazing community, SOE's numbers were among the University's best.

The theme for this year's philanthropy—led by Development Coordinator **Jessica Puccia**—was the “Orange Ripple Effect.” We asked SOE students and alumni to mark the day by saying something kind to a friend, teacher, or colleague; complimenting a stranger; or texting a loved one to let them know they're appreciated—creating a ripple of positivity to lift everyone's spirits.

Some of those affirmations are re-printed here, to keep the Orange Ripple spreading across the globe!

To all faculty, staff, and students: keep up the great work and keep fighting the good fight.

—Derek Delvalle '01

Students, faculty, and alumni, you are the richness that makes our University a special gift. We bleed orange forever! And together, we nourish the world. Happy Giving Day! The season is ripe for change.

—Kofi B. Dormah '15

To SOE faculty and staff,

Thank you for the dedication, passion, and care you bring to your work each day. Your commitment to preparing future educators and leaders does not go unnoticed.

The impact of your work extends far beyond the classroom; it lives on in every student you inspire and every community they will serve.

With sincere appreciation for all that you do.

—Karen A. Mineo G'82

 **Hanna Lyons G'82**

32 mins ago

I am so grateful to the faculty and administrators of Syracuse University. Even now, more than 40 years later, I am aware of how my graduate studies shaped me, and I am grateful for the caring shown me by the professors with whom I was lucky to work.

We have given again because Syracuse is such an important part of our lives and does great work in the community. We appreciate the expertise, education, talents, and skills of all faculty, staff, and students.

—Ronnie F. Bell G'92

Dear SOE Colleagues,
As the Syracuse lake effect snow and clouds start to give way to the sun, remember how important you are in and out of the classroom and in the many roles you take on campus and off as educators. You matter and you make a difference each day no matter how small the act.

—Sheila E. DePaola '04, G'05

Students,
The education of children is one of the most important and rewarding careers you can pursue. As Whitney Houston sang, "I believe the children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way." You are embarking on a noble and fulfilling profession. I wish you well.

—Barb Geistwhite '68

Students: Whatever field calls you, education or social work, know that what you do truly matters. Best of luck in your endeavors!

—Leesa Latulipe '81

For students: You are taking necessary steps to secure your future. The world needs you! Keep pushing!

For faculty and staff: Your commitment to students is commendable. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience.

—Nakia M. Gray-Nicolas G'08, G'09

SOE's inclusive approach to education profoundly shaped me as an educator, making me a more thoughtful, reflective, and responsive teacher. The commitment to equity and community reminds us that the impact we all have extends far beyond the classroom. What you do truly has the power to shape a more just and compassionate society!

—Kate Macaulay '01

 **Jeffrey L. Gray G'81**

44 mins ago

Dear Students: The profession you have chosen is noble and necessary. Good teachers, education administrators, and role models are in short supply and desperately needed, now more than ever, in our academic institutions and by our young people who will be your students.

Always be confident in the fact that the profession of education needs good people, your work is vital and impactful, and you will make a positive difference. I wish you all the best.

My experience at Syracuse was exceptional and had a huge part in preparing me for impact roles in my field. Thank you to my faculty mentors, peers, friends, and the entire Syracuse community for your goodness.

—Mark Hawkes G'98

(continued on next page)

Thanks for all you do.
Happy Birthday Syracuse!

—Karen Achtman '11

Students—It's stressful but it's also a gift to devote much of your attention to study and growth and discovery. Relish it.

Faculty—Thank you for deciding that helping others achieve their dreams is a worthwhile path for your life.

—Stephanie Kadel Taras G'96

Alice Rosen '83

8 mins ago

Students: Study, have fun, do something outside your comfort area, create lasting friendships and take pleasure every moment! Your days at Syracuse are fleeting while the memories will last a lifetime!

Students,
Stay rooted in your purpose—your work in education and social work has the power to transform lives, uplift communities, and create a more just world. Even on the hardest days, remember that your compassion, resilience, and commitment to others are exactly what this world needs.

—Desiree Moore '00, G'05



THE GIVING DAY SCOREBOARD

\$40,377

total raised

2nd Place

in donor participation
among all schools and colleges

School of
Education

317

total donations
(159% of goal)

School of
Social Work

41

total donations
(273% of goal)

Center on Disability
and Inclusion

74

total donations
(123% of goal)

Center for
Experiential
Pedagogy
and Practice

31

total donations
(155% of goal)

Five Questions

Ronald Taylor '15, G'16



In April 2026, Social Studies Education graduate **Ronald J. Taylor '15, G'16** received the Generation Orange Award, which recognizes recent graduates for their career success, community engagement, and commitment to Syracuse University.

Taylor has built a career at the intersection of education leadership, youth development, and technology policy, including a role on TikTok's global product policy team focused on youth safety. He serves as the inaugural Executive Director of the New York Collegiate Institute.

1 Describe your current role and its responsibilities

I am completing an accelerated M.B.A. program at Columbia Business School, where I have concentrated in impact investing and venture philanthropy, with the intention of applying my education sector experience to investing, ideally working with emerging managers or capital allocators who have an impact on marginal social groups.

Before business school, I was TikTok's lead subject matter expert on strategies to protect and empower young people online. I was able to perform this role because I brought a decade of experience serving as a teacher, school leader, and nonprofit director within New York City schools and the New York Collegiate Institute.

2 How did the School of Education prepare you for these roles?

My master's program focused—beyond instruction—on how to ask good questions. My career has not been linear because of the nature of the questions I have asked. I learned to translate my skillset across multiple contexts, most notably when I made a very atypical jump from traditional school leadership to one of the world's largest tech firms.

Professor **Jeffery Mangram's** media literacy course has applied to every role I have held since 2016. While in tech, it was sobering to see how media illiterate young people were on a global scale. Leveraging my training and professional experience, I supported internal teams on mitigation strategies and strategic partnerships so that schools and local NGOs can prepare young people for a digital world.

3 What current trends do you see in your specialty and how are you addressing them?

Educating youth is increasingly becoming subject to macroeconomic and systemic factors that extend beyond the control of a single school, district, or state. As such, it is important for those who are concerned about education to think about how to preserve the core function of American schooling.

Specifically, misinformation and its impact on youth—particularly youth of color—has implications for our country's ability to maintain a democracy that works for all people. I have dedicated my career to leveraging the private sector to invest in programming that insulates democratic systems while also empowering young people through information and leadership development. I have chosen this focus because I realize there is often a lack of interest at the fund allocation level when it comes to social impact.

4 Which professors stood out for you most as a student at SOE?

Professors **Marcelle Haddix** and Jeff Mangram were two of the most impactful professors I had at SOE. Professor Haddix taught me to think about literacy as an antecedent for democratic participation. She pushed me in ways that can only be described as “intentional sharpening.”

Professor Mangram is a deeply serious educator who valued looking at the systemic context of how we educate students about history in particular. The twin influence of these two master educators gave me the foundation to challenge, question, and ultimately show up in multiple contexts.

5 Make a pitch for SOE—why should a prospective student choose the School of Education?

If you desire to produce a bench of skillsets under the guidance of faculty who have the time and desire to produce principled leaders, SOE is the right place. The most rigorous education I have received came from SOE, and that foundation allowed me to accomplish all that I have.

School is not about choosing what is the easiest or most comfortable environment, it is about investing in spaces that will be a force multiplier for your potential. SOE has the bench of faculty and resources to treat students as individuals and prepare them for the deepest career meaning. ■

Alumni News and Notes

Find these stories and more on our website.



Nabors Joins Pitt Leadership Team

In summer 2025, Cultural Foundations of Education graduate **Marlin U. Nabors G'02** was appointed Associate Vice Provost and Dean of Students at the University of Pittsburgh. He brings two decades of experience in higher education to this role, including his leadership of Pitt's Community and Inclusion, Wellness and Student Engagement, and Professional Development teams.



Snabon-Jun Wins Top Nevada Award

Alexandra Snabon-Jun '03, G'04, a music educator of more than two decades at Tyrone Thompson Elementary School in Las Vegas, was named the Nevada State Teacher of the Year in September. She was honored for building thriving music programs, mentoring fellow educators, and inspiring more than 900 students every year.



Social Work Alumnae Attend WHO Meeting

In December, social work alumnae **Kirstin Hock G'25** and **Nicole Corrente G'25** represented Syracuse University at the Sixth Global School on Refugee and Migrant Health at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, joining leaders from more than 140 countries to advance health for displaced populations.

The conference strengthened leadership and collaborative approaches in refugee and migrant health, connecting their global insights to their trauma-informed work supporting vulnerable communities in CNY.

Dann Named SAANYS Principal of the Year

In January 2026, Saranac Lake High School Principal **Joshua Dann G'07** was named the 2026 High School Principal of the Year by the School Administrators



Association of New York State (SAANYS).

During his 13 years as Principal, Dann has led a student-centered transformation focused on relationships, equity, and community engagement. His initiatives strengthened school culture, drove graduation rates as high as 99%, and generated more than \$300,000 for student needs through the school's annual Turkey Trot fundraiser.

Carr-Chellman Named Pace Provost

In January, Pace University appointed Elementary Education and Instructional, Design, Development, and Evaluation graduate **Alison Carr-Chellman '86, G'88** as Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Formerly Dean of the School of Education and Health Sciences at the University of Dayton, Carr-Chellman also served as Dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Idaho and spent more than 20 years at Penn State University in faculty and administrative roles. Her research explores systems thinking, instructional design, organizational change, and learning technologies.

Althen Wins a SAMMY

In February, Westhill (NY) High School band director **Erin Althen '03, G'04** was named Music Educator of the Year by the Syracuse Area Music Awards, recognizing a 23-year career during which she has built a student-centered music program that serves as a safe haven for young musicians and that extends into the community through more than 1,400 hours of music-related service.



(L to R) Chancellor J. Michael Haynie with three of the six 2026 Alumni Award winners: **Akima H. Rogers '92, P'29**; **Diana Wege '76**; and **Ronald J. Taylor '15, G'16**.

Taylor and Wege Win Alumni Awards

Two members of the SOE community represented SOE at the 2026 Syracuse University Alumni Awards Celebration on April 23. **Ronald J. Taylor '15, G'16** received the Generation Orange Award, honoring his career achievements, community engagement,

and dedication to SU. He has worked at the intersection of education leadership, youth development, and technology policy, including roles on TikTok's global youth safety team and as the inaugural executive director of the New York Collegiate Institute. Read Taylor's answers to our Five Questions on p29.

Lifetime Advisory Board member **Diana Wege '76** received the Melvin A. Eggers Senior Alumni Award for her service and loyalty to the University. A New York-based conceptual artist, curator, and activist, her work on environmental destruction and nonviolence is held in several collections, including at the US Department of the Interior Museum.

Belanger Records a First

In April, the Oneida (NY) City School District appointed Music Education graduate **Erin E. Belanger '06, G'07** as Principal of Oneida High School. A dedicated educator and the first woman to hold the role in the school's history, Belanger was chosen for her deep community roots and student-centered vision.



Alice G. Kendrick '70, G'79, G'93 with her children and grandchildren outside Hendricks Chapel.

Kendrick Receives 2026 Tolley Medal

Central New York educator **Alice G. Kendrick '70, G'79, G'93** accepted the William Pearson Tolley Medal for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning at the One University Awards on April 17.

Kendrick retired in 2018 after a 40-year career with the Jamesville-DeWitt (NY) Central School District, where she served 23 years as Superintendent. She has also been a member of the **SOE Advisory Board** for more than two decades.

SUPER(INTENDENT) ALUMNAE

Strong SOE leadership in the community continued in 2025-2026 with the naming of three alumnae as superintendents of Central New York schools.

In August, Syracuse City School District announced that Deputy Superintendent **Pamela Odom G'03** would accede to the district's top position upon the retirement of **Anthony Q. Davis G'03** in November. As Davis replaced **Jaime Alicea G'88** in 2022, Odom becomes the third SOE alum in a row to lead the district.

Asked how SOE prepared her for her leadership role, Odom said, "Syracuse was wonderful in that it prepared me through doing hands-on scenarios. I was prepped how to work with a team to find solutions. After 31 years in education, it's as fulfilling to me as when I was a freshman. You get back threefold what you put in."

In October, LaFayette Central School District announced that **Kara Lux G'94, G'00** would move from the Marcellus Central School District to become Superintendent. A Syracuse native, Lux says she was drawn to LaFayette's strong community, commitment to educational excellence, and valued relationship with the Onondaga Nation.

In April, the Cato-Meridian Central School District named **Dee Froio '98, G'00, G'08** as Superintendent. Froio began her teaching career at Cicero-North Syracuse High School, teaching social studies, before she moved into administrative roles in Baldwinsville and Hannibal schools. "The future is bright, and I look forward to shaping it alongside this incredible community," said Froio upon accepting her new position.



Pam Odom G'03 is the third SOE alumna in a row to hold Syracuse schools' top position.

Ocampo Named Exceptional Woman

In April, **SOE Ambassador** and Inclusive Special Education alumna **Kelly Ocampo G'08** was presented the 2026 Exceptional Woman of the Year award by New York Assemblymember Pamela J. Hunter (D-128). Ocampo was awarded for her leadership, for revitalizing HOPE for Bereaved as its Executive Director, and for expanding grief support services across Central New York.

LeMura Given Honorary Degree

At the 2026 University Commencement in May, **Linda M. LeMura G'83, G'87** was one of six individuals awarded an honorary degree, receiving a Doctor of Humane Letters for her distinguished career in higher education leadership, scientific research, and commitment to educational equity and access.

Specifically, she was honored for her pioneering work in pediatric physiology, historic presidency of Le Moyne College, and lasting impact on regional economic development and opportunity for future generations.

Fanelli Recognized by New York State

In May, **Michelle Fanelli G'05** was honored with a New York State Senate Educator Recognition Award for her outstanding contributions to student success, innovative teaching, and leadership. A science teacher at Liverpool High School, Fanelli was recognized for going above and beyond in her commitment to her students and school community. ■



SOE SPORTS TICKER



Coughlin Honored by Syracuse Sports Hall of Fame

Former NFL head coach and Orange football standout **Tom Coughlin '68, G'69** was inducted into the Greater Syracuse Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2025 in October.

Coughlin—who led the New York Giants to victory in the 2007 and 2011 Super Bowls—called the honor “very meaningful” and said Syracuse and Central New York was “where it all started.” Coughlin began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Syracuse in 1969, during which time he earned his master’s degree in Social Studies Education.



Lee's Jersey Retired

Fifty years after helping lead Orange basketball to its first Final Four, Mathematics Education graduate **Jim Lee '75** had his No. 10 jersey retired during Syracuse's game against North Carolina on February 21.

Lee was honored, in part, for the famous 1975 game-winning shot—also against North Carolina—that sent Syracuse to its first Final Four, a moment former coach **Jim Boeheim '66, G'73** called “the greatest upset in Syracuse basketball history.”

Off the court, Lee carried the discipline and foundation he built as an SOE student into a career spanning teaching, coaching, and business, while remaining deeply committed to mentoring and community.



Powless Inducted into American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame

In summer 2025, Syracuse University Ombuds **Neal Powless G'08** (Onondaga, Eel Clan) was inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame. Powless, an alumnus of the School Counseling master's degree program and member of a legendary lacrosse family, was recognized for his decades of dedication and contributions to the game.



Hosoyamada Represents “Smile Japan”

Akane Hosoyamada '15 represented Team Japan in women's ice hockey at the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics, her third Olympic appearance. Known as “Smile Japan,” the team finished third in Group B with a 1-2 record, recording a notable win over France in their first game.

During her time at Syracuse, Hosoyamada played five seasons and served as team captain during her redshirt senior year. She played 151 games, tallying 10 goals and 51 assists. Hosoyamada credits her time with the Orange for teaching her how to compete, lead, and persevere.



Local Roots, New Role

Taylor Bennett Van Fleet '20, who graduated with a B.S. in Health and Exercise Science and a minor in Coaching and Physical Education, was named head coach of the Division 1 (Northeast Conference) women's soccer program at Syracuse-based Le Moyne College.

Van Fleet arrived at Le Moyne in January after four seasons as an assistant at SUNY-Binghamton, where she helped the Bearcats win three America East regular season titles and was part of a staff named America East Coaching Staff of the Year in both 2022 and 2025.

A four-year starting defender for the Orange, Van Fleet also played professionally in Iceland for three seasons.

Team Canada Taps Buchanan



Former Syracuse midfielder and Health and Physical Education student **Tajon Buchanan '21** was named to Canada's 2026

World Cup roster in late May, his second World Cup after competing for Les Rouges in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Buchanan played at Syracuse in 2017 and 2018, tallying 12 goals and six assists. After being selected in the first round of the 2019 Major League Soccer draft, he began his pro career with the New England Revolution and now plays for Villareal in Spain.

“Take a Little Syracuse with You”

As President of Global Theatrical Distribution, Warner Bros. Pictures, Convocation speaker **Jeff Goldstein '77** oversees all aspects of the film studio's worldwide movie distribution activities.

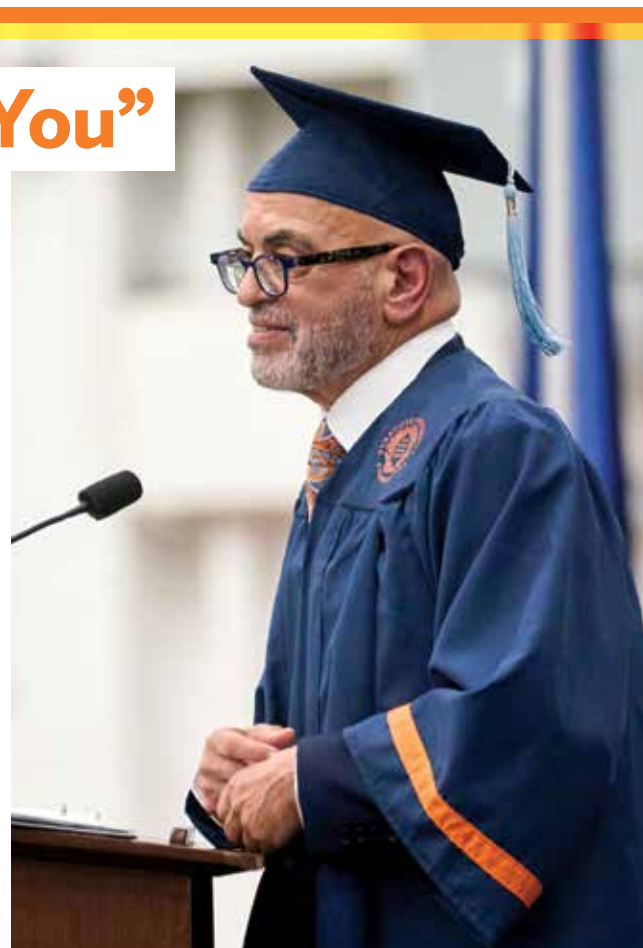
His work has been central to recent global box office success. In 2025, the Warner Bros. Motion Picture Group surpassed \$4 billion at the worldwide box office across 11 releases and delivered nine consecutive No. 1 openings. Highlights include *A Minecraft Movie*, *Sinners*, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, and *Barbie*, the highest-grossing film in Warner Bros.' 100-year history.

When asked what connects his special education degree to his success as a movie executive, Goldstein observes: “I got my entrepreneurial spirit by working jobs in the dining hall, as a residence advisor, and in the business affairs office. While at Syracuse, I realized I had a bent for business, as well as the ability to teach others, mentor others, [and] be curious.”

In his May 9 speech, Goldstein reflected on how these experiences shaped him, and he urged graduating students to “trust yourself to figure things out. And wherever life takes you next, take a little Syracuse with you.”

Offering another lesson from his path from movie company intern to C-suite executive, Goldstein reminded graduates to not “put pressure on yourself to plan out the rest of your life. Life finds a way, and if you trust your instincts and choose happiness and joy, you'll be rewarded with incredible experiences and stories for the rest of your life.”

“Rise above the cynicism that can feel so present in the world today,” Goldstein added. “The future has always been shaped by people who chose to participate in it rather than step back from it. Choosing optimism isn't naive. It's powerful.” ■



“The future has always been shaped by people who chose to participate in it rather than step back from it.”

50TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION STATISTICS

Convocation 2026 was the first to include the School of Social Work!

80

bachelor's degrees

270

master's degrees

15

doctoral degrees

20

InclusiveU graduates

32

certificates of advanced study

SOE Commencement Marshals

Bobby Marie Battle '26
Zachary Setzkorn '26

Undergraduate Speaker

Jennifer Duque G'26
(Higher Education)

Graduate Speaker

Amaya Saintal '26
(Social Work)



Four Gifts, One Big Dream

Acts of generosity help fulfill the promise of inclusion at Syracuse University

When **Kathy and Capt. Robert P. Taishoff, JAGC, USN (Ret.) '86** issued a \$2.5 million matching challenge on behalf of the Taishoff Family Foundation, they weren't simply making a gift, they were extending an invitation for the Syracuse University community to rally around a shared conviction: that every student deserves the chance to harness their full potential.

The **Dream Big** campaign, supporting the **Center on Disability and Inclusion** and **InclusiveU**—the largest fully inclusive college program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the nation—has answered that call in full, surpassing its \$5 million goal to reach \$5,564,256.

Syracuse University and generous donors met the Taishoffs' challenge dollar for dollar, adding \$2.5 million in matching funds that together with gifts to the campaign will expand InclusiveU's capacity by 25% over five years, enhance transition supports and student experience, and strengthen CDI's research, technical assistance, and advocacy work.

The campaign has set its sights beyond the \$5 million mark, seeking an additional \$1.5 million to transform CDI's physical home in Huntington Hall into a state-of-the-art hub for inclusion, innovation and student success. The gifts described below reflect the spirit that have made Dream Big more than a campaign—they have made it a movement!

THE EACHUS FAMILY

Planting Seeds for Autism Research



Rev. Dr. Elaine B. Eachus '61, G'64 met future husband Alan C. Eachus '60, G'64, known as Ace, on the Syracuse campus in 1958.

It was 1958 when **Elaine B. Eachus '61, G'64**—then a freshman—walked up Crouse Avenue and paused outside the Gebbie Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic. The moment stayed with her: the idea that a place dedicated to communication could open the world to those who struggled to be understood. More than six decades later, Rev. Dr. Elaine and her husband **Alan "Ace" C. Eachus '60, G'64** have turned that enduring conviction into legacy, establishing the Eachus Family Foundation Fund to support CDI's research into the needs of individuals with autism.

The endowment will advance CDI's work across disability studies, neurodiversity, inclusive post-secondary education, and teacher preparedness. Professor **Christy Ashby G'01, G'07, G'08**, CDI Executive Director, notes that Syracuse has a long history of cutting-edge research with autistic and neurodivergent individuals and that the Eachus gift will help ensure the University remains at the forefront of advancing access, equity, and opportunity.

For Elaine, the potential of autism research echoes her lifelong love of gardening: kids who face developmental challenges, she says, "can grow in ways that astound and integrate them into the world."



Amy P'26, David P'26, and Kate Allyn '26

THE ALLYN FAMILY

Building Community Beyond the Campus Gates

When her daughter **Kate '26** was in middle school in Skaneateles, NY, **Amy Allyn P'26** found herself researching options for students with intellectual disabilities. She discovered InclusiveU. Ten years later, Kate, who has Down syndrome, is an InclusiveU graduate, and the Allyn family has transformed their personal journey into a \$1 million gift to CDI that will help future graduates build full lives beyond the campus gates.

The combined gift—from Amy and husband **David P'26**; grandfather **William "Bill" F. Allyn G'59**; and uncles Scott, Mark, Eric, and his wife Meg—will strengthen career services, an alumni network, and access to

community resources for InclusiveU graduates wherever they put down roots. In other words, the gift addresses support not just in securing employment, but in maintaining the social connections, housing resources, and community ties that make for a fulfilling life after college.

As Professor **Beth Myers**, Executive Director of the **Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education**, puts it: “There’s more to life after graduation than just the job.” Amy, a longtime advocate who serves on the **Taishoff Center Advisory Council**, agrees: “It’s about connection and community and all the things they’ve learned in their years at Syracuse.”

Kate, for her part, is looking forward to travel and new adventures, and her mother is excited to watch her show the confidence she found at Syracuse.



The Fialka-Feldman family: (L to R) Alyssa Hughes, Emma Fialka-Feldman, Micah Fialka-Feldman, Richard Feldman, and Janice Fialka.

THE FIALKA-FELDMAN FAMILY

Opening Doors for InclusiveU Students

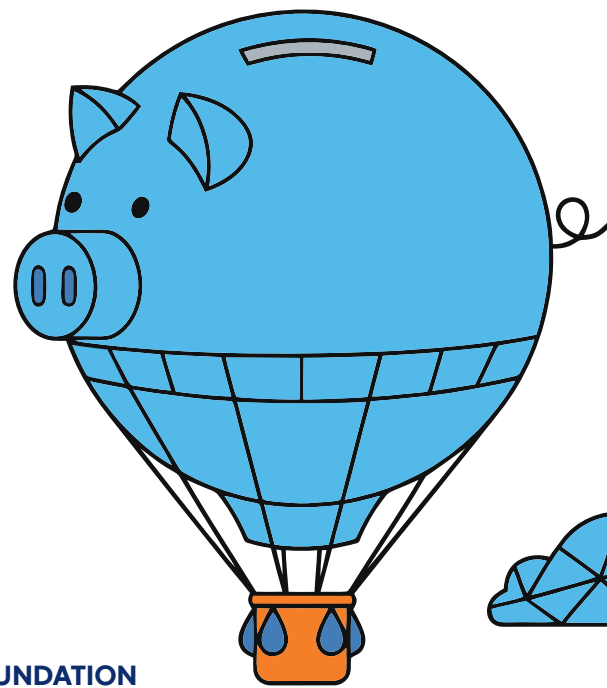
When **Micah Fialka-Feldman** entered his first-grade special education classroom, he noticed he had to use a different door than his classmates. He came home with a simple request to his parents, Rich and Janice: “I want to go through the same door as my friends.”

That moment became the family’s guiding principle—and the inspiration for the Opening Doors Fund for InclusiveU, established as part of the Dream Big campaign to ensure that students with intellectual disability can pursue their college dreams without financial barriers standing in their way. The fund will support housing, meals, textbooks, and other essential expenses that help students remain enrolled and succeed in the program.

Micah’s own journey to Syracuse is a testament to the power of persistence. He became the first student in the country to win a lawsuit securing access to university housing—a landmark victory that opened doors for students with disabilities nationwide. Today, Micah is Outreach Coordinator for InclusiveU and co-author of *Opening Doors* (Inclusion Press, 2025) in which he tells his story of advocacy, disability pride, circles of support, and determination.



Dream Big is more than a campaign. It’s a movement!



GOLISANO FOUNDATION

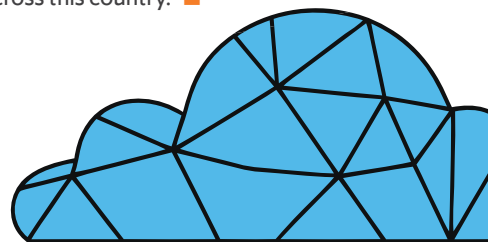
Taking Inclusion on the Road

InclusiveU may be the nation’s premier inclusive postsecondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but as CDI Director Ashby puts it, “We can’t be the only place, nor should we be.”

A new \$1 million grant from the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation will allow the Taishoff Center’s **Inclusive Higher Education Technical Assistance Center** (IHETAC) to scale up its work helping other colleges and universities build and strengthen inclusive programs. The grant builds on a successful 2024 pilot, funded by an initial \$200,000 Golisano Foundation grant, in which IHETAC provided coaching, assessment, and professional development to three New York institutions: Hartwick College, Daemen University, and Roberts Wesleyan University.

The need is urgent. Recent state data indicates that while more than 130,000 New York students receive special education services, fewer than 0.5% access inclusive college programs, and of 472 colleges and universities in the state, only 24 offer them. The new funding will support five additional pilot programs, a statewide Community of Practice, and a resource library of best-practice toolkits.

“This is the first generation of college students with intellectual disability,” says Taishoff Center Executive Director **Beth Myers**. “We still simply do not have enough programs or slots across this country.” ■



A Gift of Music

When **Vincent “Vinny” P. Longhi Jr. ’78** began thinking about giving back to Syracuse University, two people came to mind: his father, Vincent Sr., who died of a heart attack in 1960 when Vinny was just 7 years old, and his son, **Matteo Longhi G’15**, who followed his father to Syracuse and earned master’s degrees in both violin performance and music education.

To honor them both, Longhi created the \$135,000 **Vincent Paul Longhi Sr. Endowed Scholarship** for students in the dual Bachelor of Music degree in music education, offered jointly by the College of Visual and Performing Arts and the School of Education. Combined with a 50% match through The Syracuse Promise, the total scholarship value exceeds \$200,000.

Direction and Community

Growing up in a working-class neighborhood in Yonkers, NY, Vinny had little in the way of financial security after his father’s death. His mother, Tullia, supported the family on her salary as a dental hygienist. When Vinny enrolled at Syracuse in 1972, he initially planned to study journalism before finding his calling in the SOE’s special education program. “That’s the reason the scholarship is named after my father,” he says, “because he really didn’t have anything to look back on in terms of recognition of his life.”

At SOE, Vinny found both direction and community. He was mentored by some of the school’s most distinguished figures, including former Dean **Burton Blatt**, a leader in humanizing services for people with intellectual disabilities, and Dean Emeritus **Douglas P. Biklen G’73**.

Vinny spent more than 40 years as a special education teacher in public schools in Yonkers and Pearl River, NY. Along the way, he met his wife, Kwang Ja Lee, while serving in the Peace Corps in Seoul, South Korea. Together they raised three children: Matteo; Caterina, a violinist with the Cincinnati Symphony who trained at The Juilliard School; and Mariantonia, a schoolteacher in Michigan.

Matteo grew up in a household where music was encouraged, and he developed into a talented violinist with the New York Youth Symphony. After earning a music degree from Ithaca College, he came to Syracuse for the dual master’s in Music Education program and found, like his father, a circle of mentors, including Associate Professor **John Coggiola**, who shaped his development as both a musician and an educator.

After graduating, Matteo spent five years leading the orchestra program at Chittenango, NY, middle and high schools before joining West Genesee High School in Camillus, NY, as Director of Violin and Orchestral Studies.

Creating Opportunities

The scholarship matters beyond individual recipients. Professor John F. Warren, Director of the Setnor School of Music, notes that through the leadership of Coggiola and current Music Education Chair **Wendy Moy**, the program has achieved 100% placement for graduates in recent years. “I want to express my gratitude to Vinny and his family for paying it forward,” Warren says, “creating opportunities for students to get fantastic training and have this great experience at Syracuse.”

For Vinny, the scholarship is rooted in something personal and straightforward: gratitude for what Syracuse gave him and his son, and a desire to extend that to others. “In both my case and Matteo’s, Syracuse was a place where we fulfilled our potential through some special teachers,” he says. “If it weren’t for Syracuse, maybe it would be a little different story. So, this is just something to give back.”

Warren puts it simply: “I know it’s kind of corny, but it’s the gift that keeps on giving. It’s the impact on the current students, but it’s also the impact that they’re going to have on their students. And this gift will make that possible.” ■



Thank You, Ambassadors

Since the School of Education **Ambassador Program** launched in October 2024, an incredible 147 SOE community members have signed up to champion our mission—sharing stories and achievements on social media, mentoring students and alumni, participating in events, and recruiting new Ambassadors.

Our Ambassadors amplify the impact of our unified School, while honoring the unique strengths of each discipline. We always welcome alumni, parents, and friends to join the program—learn more and sign up at the links on this page.

Thank you for your commitment, advocacy, and generosity throughout 2025-2026. We are grateful for all you do to support our School!

Scan the QR code
to sign up, or visit
[go.syr.edu/soe/
ambassadors](https://go.syr.edu/soe/ambassadors)



AMBASSADORS as of June 2026

Karen E. Achtman '11; Anita E. Adelman; Emily Ades '89; Hafiz Awais Afzal G'22; Mel Allan '15; Gregory Allen '72; Rachel M. Allen G'24; JeanMolly Ameru G'18; Addie Antshel; Christopher Arboleda '15, G'17; Lindsay L. Atkinson '22; Jessica K. Bacon G'07, G'12; Marcia Baldanza '86; James A. Balducci G'69; Adele Baruch-Runyon G'90, G'05; Aumma Begum G'23; Ronnie F. Bell G'92; Nkenge A. Bergan '95; Allen Berger '57, G'66; Stuart L. Berman '23; Arthur Bloom '71, G'72; Thomas M. Brennan G'75, G'82; Raquell Carpenter '23, G'24; Nora Carrol '71, G'91; Tanya G. Cervantes '24; Xi Chen '23; Shoshanna L. Cohen '23; Frank Comfort '67; Lindsey M. Conrad '10, G'11; Brian M. Coonley '09; Rebecca C. Cory G'03, G'05; Derek E. Delvalle '99, G'01; Sheila E. DePaola '04, G'05; Christopher DeVoe '78; Kofi Dormah '15; Beth Anne Dorman G'05; Katie E. Ducett G'22, G'23; Brent Elder G'14, G'16; Beth A. Elenko; Linda J. Elliott '98; Rebecca F. Evans '24; Caitlyn M. Ferber '13, G'14; Micah Fialka-Feldman; Autumn Figueroa '04, G'06; Timothy W. Findlay G'22; Carly A. Fowler G'24; Nate J. Franz G'14; Amy Friers G'24; Douglas S. Garfield G'77; Jaime S. Gartenberg '23, G'24; Sofia Gartland '23; Jessica Gherardi G'23; Nan P. Gordon '72; Jeffrey L. Gray G'81; Nakia M. Gray-Nicolas G'08, G'09; Mariely R. Guzman '14, G'15; Michele L. Haiken '96; Cayla E. Halloran '22, G'23; Andrew L. Hanrahan '23; Brenna R. Hart '21; Mark Hawkes G'98; Meghan R. Hendricks '24; Rachel N. Hershan '15, G'16; Fallon A. Hiller '17; Marjorie J. Huhn '73; Jiayu Jiang G'24; Ziyun Jin '23; Vanessa M. Jones '22; Elyse Spector Kalmans; Rebecca Luyao Kang '23; Sharanya S. Kanwar G'23; Renee Keane '08, G'09; Lea Keating; Alice Kendrick '70, G'79, G'93; Hamid Kermanshah G'80, G'85; Callie R.

Kniffin '23; Deborah Knoblock '88, G'90; Jessica E. Lament '07, G'09; Stephen C. Lando '83; Samuel L. Leitermann G'14, G'17; Sophie Levine '23; Jaclyn Levy G'23; Elizabeth C. Lewis '93, G'96, G'08; DeBorah Little '14, G'16; Elena A. Ludwig G'24; Tricia Lyman G'12; Rovenia Manor '91; Raquel-Ann (Roxi) Nurse McNabb '98, G'99; Sebastian L. Melendez '24; Noel C. Miller '95; Karen A. Mineo G'82; Kamille J. Montgomery '24; Desiree Moore '00, G'05; Nadia Morris-Mitchell '26; Victoria Munley '21, G'22; Elizabeth K. Novak '25; Samantha A. Nowrang '23; Susan Oberwager; Kelly M. Ocampo G'08; Joshua Orlinsky G'03; Julie J. Padilla G'11, G'12; Philip J. Pagnoni '76; Nicholas W. Piatto G'22; Sharlene B. Pinto G'23; Jingzhe Qi '23; Gloria A. Quadrini G'77, G'80, G'90; Amelia J. Reis '24; Tracy Reis P'24; Zoe Rennock '24; Raphael Richard G'12; Sydney Ringel '22; Ariana M. Rosario G'18; Alice Rosen '83; Laura H. Del Rosso '17, G'18; Stacey S. Rothfarb '88; Joanna C. Royce-Davis G'01; Lori L. Saile '88, G'92, G'10; Rachel Salmon G'24; Tara K. Sanchez '98; Mark H. Savage '91; Kathryn E. Scarpulla '02; Shannon H. Schantz G'21; Nancy A. Schulman '73; Sara L. Scribner '10, G'11, G'20, G'21; Rachel Setek G'23; Tyrone Shaw '10, G'12; Mahesh Uttam Shriram G'23; Jordyn R. Sisenwine '24; James D. Smith II '02, G'03, G'25; Kathryn E. Smith '94; Savannah N. Stocker '23; Kimberlee Straceski G'06; Lawrence J. Swiader '89, G'93; Deborah Taub G'96; Katelyn L. Tavalacci '07; Bailey Tlachac G'23; Gladasia Trotman '05; Lindsey E. Turner '19; Matthew T. Vogt '03, G'05; Felicia Walker '87; Rosepisey Webb G'23; Jordan S. West G'17, G'18; Carol A. Willard G'15; Angela Woods '05; Roosevelt R. "Rick" Wright, Jr. G'93; Victor Z. Yang '16; Lauri Zell '77 ■

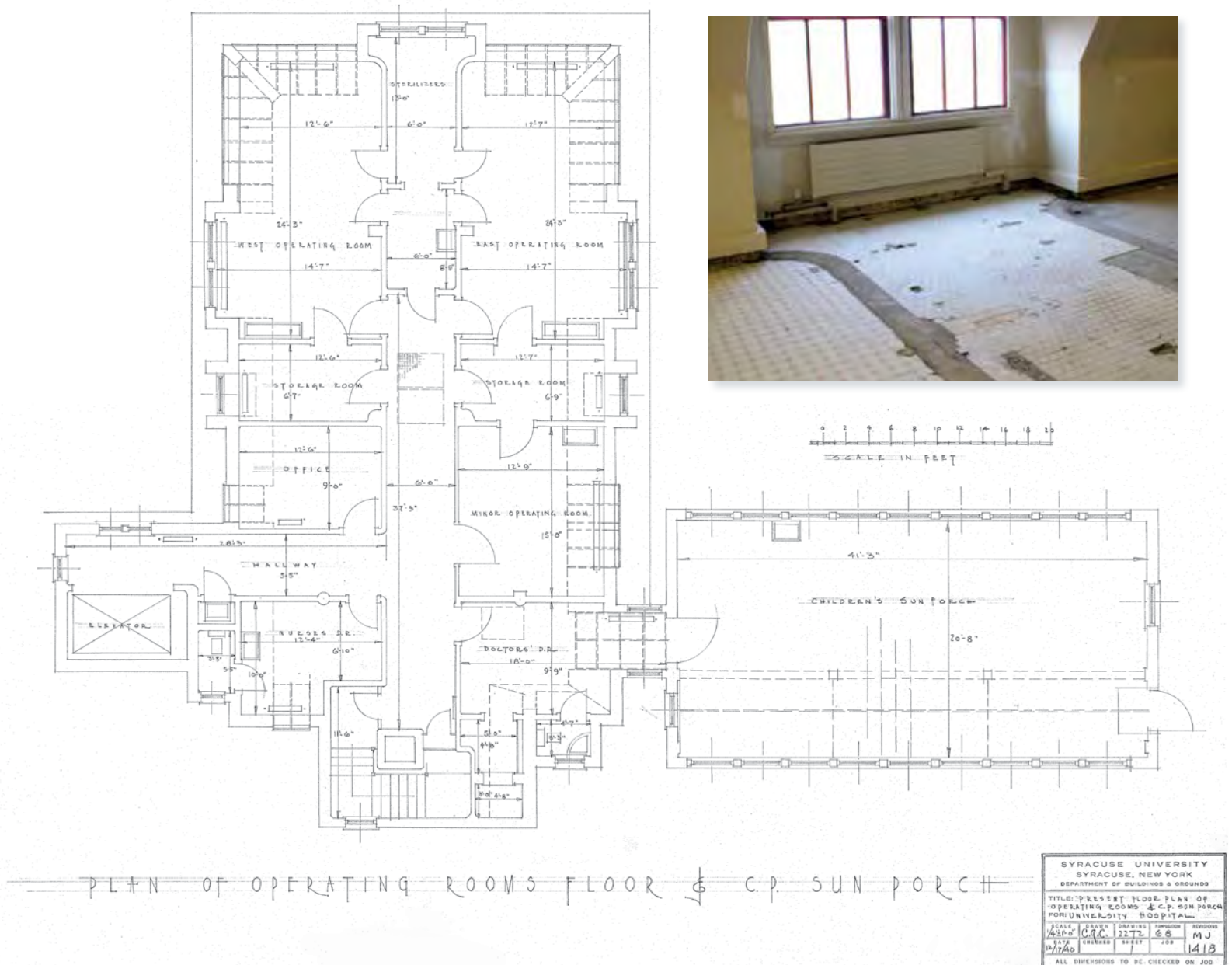
FAREWELL, CHANCELLOR SYVERUD



In November, the **Advisory Board** met with outgoing Chancellor **Kent Syverud**. His parting words included urging SOE to lean into its status as a professional school and to introduce new Chancellor **J. Michael Haynie** to its greatest asset: the students. Syverud accepted a gift from then-Chair **Deborah A. Knoblock '88, G'90**, who was replaced by new leader **Deborah A. Little '14, G'16** (fifth from left) in July 2026.

From the Archive

It's time for history class! In this feature, we dip into the School of Education's archive to uncover our fascinating and groundbreaking past.



It started as a mystery, but some dedicated sleuthing led to a fascinating discovery about Huntington Hall's past. During renovations of the fifth floor's west wing (see p11), tile floors were uncovered in room 534, now part of the **Graduate Student Wing**.

That was interesting enough, but the mystery was that the floor had three distinct types of tile, as if the room had once been divided into three or had been built in three phases.

Enter intrepid marketing and communications intern and Selected Studies in Education graduate **Nick Trivelpiece '26**, who was asked to track down any hospital floor plans that might shed light on the room's former use.

The search led him to the archives of the University's Office of Campus Planning, Design, and Construction. Luckily, they had an old plan on file for not only room 534 but the whole of the fifth floor west wing.

Dated December 1940, the plan shows that room 534 was indeed split into three: west and east operating theaters and a sterilizing room between. We also learned that the bridge between the fifth floor Graduate Student Wing and the building's east wing was once a "children's sun porch," either a recuperation or play room, or both.

If any readers would like to share memories or knowledge of Huntington Hall when it was a hospital, please contact us at SUSchoolofEd@syr.edu. ■

In Memoriam

The School of Education mourns the passing of two of our beloved community members.

Gerald M. Gross G'77

(1943-2025)



Gerald M. Gross G'77 passed in October 2025. He was born in Doylestown, PA, and earned a baccalaureate degree from Goshen College and master's degrees from Case-Western University and Syracuse University (Instructional Technology).

Originally a social worker at university hospitals in Cleveland, OH, in 1968 Gross became a professor in the School of Social Work. He taught in

the School's graduate and undergraduate programs, served as a director of its baccalaureate program, and initiated a study abroad program in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. In 1988, he became the School's Acting Dean, a position he held for one year. He retired in 1998.

A member of the Council on Social Work Education, Gross served multiple terms on CSWE's commissions on accreditation and educational planning. He was also a consulting editor for the Journal of Education

for Social Work, a member of the National Association of Social Workers, and a charter member of the New York State Social Work Education Association, for which he held leadership positions.

Peter Knoblock

(1934-2025)



Professor Emeritus Peter Knoblock, a champion of the inclusive schools movement, died in December 2025 at aged 91. Born in Passaic, NJ, he was among the first University of Michigan students to receive a combined Ph.D. in Education and Psychology. After a decade on the faculty at Michigan, he joined the School of Education in 1962, strengthening its expertise in special education and its ties to the community.

Knoblock will be best remembered for joining with a small group of families to create Jowonio School in 1969. This Syracuse-based, alternative "free school" began by providing a learning environment in which children could pursue self-directed learning. Later, children with disabilities—at that time excluded from public schools—were fully included in Jowonio's classrooms.

"Peter was a shining beacon in the field of special education. He understood the principles and importance of inclusion long before it was a term," remembers Professor Emerita Mara Sapon-Shevin.

Following retirement from Syracuse University, Knoblock opened a private psychology practice and served as a docent at the Everson Museum of Art. He was active in many organizations, including Parents for Public Schools and the Early Childhood Alliance. He received a Mary Ficchi Lifetime Achievement in Education award from Parents for Public Schools and a Syracuse Post-Standard Achievement Award for his leadership in education. ■

IN MEMORIAM



Includes alumni whose passings were reported to the School of Education from June 1, 2025, to May 31, 2026.

- 1947** B.E. Madison **1948** Lois F. Anderson **1949** Lois C. Lord, John R. MacCallum **1950** H. L. Thomas **1951** Lila G. Croen, Barbara Olum **1952** Lee Beltzer, Michael J. Salotto, Donald E. Scott **1953** Lois A. Fisher, Nancy L. Snyder, Doris F. Sutliff **1954** Barbara R. Burton, Ethel T. Pratt, Marilyn L. Racha **1955** Jane E. Anuario, Gloria A. Serling, Barbara L. Sleight, Robert H. Tucker **1956** Adele DiBiasio, Shirley S. Thompson **1957** Marcia S. Bachman, Paul H. Bell, Barbara B. Grant, Susan J. Noonan **1958** Donald J. Butler, Joanne A. Federchuck, Shirley R. Goldstein, Adrienne A. Hayes **1959** Bertram G. Butlin, Marjorie A. Laidman, Martha C. Manilla **1960** Walter G. Norris, Stuart E. Smith **1961** Robert G. Aks, David J. Giusti, Joan S. Hirsch, Donald M. McLaughlin, William M. Pastreich **1962** Richard C. Baggett, Linda C. Mass **1963** James H. Carney, Mary H. Casper, Joseph V. Druzba, Debora D. Grace, Francesco S. Graziadei, Mary H. Wilczynski **1964** Donna J. Cardillo, David Cummings, Alida B. Dohn, Linda R. Stundtner **1965** Peter A. Deangelo, Thomas G. Eldred, Mary L. Pritchett, Arthur H. Smith, Diane E. Spear **1966** Martha E. Blankenship, Mary W. Breithaupt, Maxine B. Giacobbe, Dorothy L. Szarka, Albert E. Wright **1967** Betsey A. Edwards, Philip P. Gauthier, Donna S. Kiddney, Amalia S. Tio **1968** Sylvia U. Alksnis, Lois V. Benevento, Mary F. Craven, Carlton R. Crittenden, Harold R. Hogstrom, Thomas A. Jordan, Donald J. Nojaim, Jean M. Rommes, Paul G. Sandberg **1969** Leslie B. Church, Robert M. Kitts, Cheryl A. Miron, Susan G. Taylor **1970** Frederick J. Alexander, James J. Carroll, William W. Endorf, Frank J. Lodato **1971** Barry C. Balonek, Barbara J. Crandall, Judith C. Ivey, Peter W. McElvein, Camille M. Murphy, Aldona C. Skrypa, Robert J. Wylie **1972** R.K. Bacher, Ellen B. Barnes, Susan Colligan, Evy W. Damsky, Jayne A. Humbert, Linda A. MacMillan, David G. Montgomery, Marian E. Norton, Joyce S. Parker, Jaak Rakfeldt, William H. Rowland, Merle M. Trogman **1973** Yvonne F. Narr, Stephen J. Thompson **1974** Teri A. Barnes, Laurence W. Boynton, Kathy A. Brodsky, John F. Dhayer, Nicolas Habayeb, Dennis N. Shaffer **1975** Alice M. Garrison, Howard Kligerman, Richard J. Midlam, Donald L. Patterson **1976** Alethia T. Brutcher, Elizabeth J. Pristera **1977** R. L. Bowen, Raymond L. Farrington, Beverly A. Gordon, Phyllis A. Scherbert **1978** Kenneth S. Abramczyk, Helen K. Henson, Shelley S. Houlihan, William P. Rhudy, Jane H. Sutton **1979** Renee M. Delatizky, Mary S. Herzog, Robert H. Hunter **1980** Steven F. Feinberg, Susan V. Rezen **1981** Judith Fazio, Rania K. Munoz **1982** Rebecca L. Sandel **1983** Frances C. Burton, Patrick J. Dempsey **1984** John D. Longuil **1985** Frances M. Knorr **1987** Betty J. Dubose, Helen Q. White **1988** Linda M. Yarwood **1990** Marilyn R. Greene, Kimberly A. Jolls **1991** Elsa U. Longres, David G. Nasser **1992** Amy L. Good **1993** Marcia S. Bulger, Connie S. Burch, Eileen L. Cash, Kathleen E. Walker **1994** Thomas R. Salva **1995** Jonathan S. Loomis **1998** Patrick M. Clark, Mary E. Ewing **2001** Nancy E. Rice, Talitha J. Ridley-Gorea **2002** Joshua D. Smith **2007** Jean M. Edley, Deborah A. Mather **2008** Donna L. Mosher ■

A Gift Already Written Into Your Plans

The Simplest Way to Leave a Legacy for the School of Education

As a School of Education alumna and the University's Director of Gift Planning, I am often asked, "What is the easiest way to make a lasting gift to SOE?" My answer is usually the one I gave myself: a beneficiary designation.

This is the most overlooked tool in estate planning—and often the simplest. Most of us already have a beneficiary form on file for a retirement account, life insurance policy, bank account, or investment account. Updating it to name SOE costs nothing today, requires no attorney, and takes just minutes.

I made this gift myself because it let me support the School that shaped my career without changing a single line of my will. It sits quietly alongside everything else in your financial life until it is needed, and then it does exactly what you intended.

Is a Beneficiary Designation the Right Choice for You?

A beneficiary designation could be right for you if you would like to:

- Support SOE without touching your will or living trust
- Keep full control of the asset during your lifetime
- Update your designation anytime, often online in minutes
- Give an asset (like a retirement account) tax-free to SOE rather than passing it on to heirs, who may be burdened by the tax bill

How Beneficiary Designation Works

1. Log in to your retirement account, life insurance policy, bank account, or investment account and search for "beneficiaries." Meeting with an advisor in person? Just ask for a beneficiary designation form.
2. Name Syracuse University as a full, partial, or contingent beneficiary, and let us know you would like your gift to benefit the School of Education.
3. That's it. Your form is updated, your assets stay fully yours during your lifetime, and your generosity is already in motion.

WANT TO CHAT?

If you have questions about naming SOE as a beneficiary, want to talk through what makes sense for your situation, or have already made this gift and have yet to tell us, please contact me at 315.559.3734 or avdygert@syr.edu.

Go Orange!

Amy Vanderlyke Dygert Esq.
G'03, L'06

Director of Gift Planning



SOE AMBASSADORS MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

School of Education Ambassadors play a vital role in enhancing our students' experiences, supporting our faculty, and boosting our recruitment and marketing efforts.

Becoming an SOE Ambassador is easy! We offer a variety of volunteer opportunities to suit your availability, and you get unique recognition.

Just follow the QR code on p37.

Join us and other dedicated volunteers in our mission to provide our students with the best academic experience and to help them launch stellar careers.

This is one of the many ways to support SOE and get involved. Contact Development Coordinator **Jessica Puccia** at jlpuccia@syr.edu with any questions.



You can make a gift today
at givetosu.syr.edu/EducationExchange26
or scan the QR code.

