Rensselaer at Hartford’s 53rd Commencement is Out of this World!

The Fifty-Third Commencement Exercises at the Hartford campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute took place on Saturday, June 5, 2010. The 337 graduates of the Class of 2009-2010 celebrated with their families, friends, and loved ones, and were applauded by the faculty, staff, and administration of Rensselaer. It was a picture-perfect day for the pomp and circumstance.

The Honorable Shirley Ann Jackson, Ph.D., President, Professor of Physics, and Professor of Engineering Sciences, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, presided over the ceremony. She said to the graduates: “Like the great explorers who sailed the oceans centuries ago, you chose to expand your horizons—despite the difficulty and sacrifice required, in order to achieve greater things. Today marks the finish line of this challenging academic journey—one that may have taken you several years to complete, and one that—by virtue of its duration, its hurdles and its relentless pursuit of a goal—is not unlike the journeys upon which all great explorers have embarked throughout history.”

Three students were honored for their remarkable accomplishments during the presentation of the Outstanding Student Awards (OSA). The Hartford Chapter of the Rensselaer Alumni Association (RAA) sponsors these annual awards. Faculty members submitted nominations for the awards based on graduating students who had distinguished themselves from their peers through superior academic achievement, extraordinary student projects, demonstrated leadership skills, works published and/or patents and patents pending, contributions to Rensselaer, and new material development in major fields of study.

The OSA winner in Management was Nicholas A. Keune. He earned an M.S. in Management completing his studies with a 3.91 G.P.A. Keune is a Government Business Analyst with the Winvale Group. He volunteered as an intern for Corporate Social Responsibility Value Management, and he was a member of Rensselaer’s International Scholars Program (ISP) Class 2. Lally School of Management and Technology Clinical Associate Professor, Kevin Wall, Ph.D., nominated him for the award.

The Engineering OSA winner was Darryl C. Stein, PE, who earned an M.E. in Electrical Engineering with a 4.0 G.P.A. He is a Principal Engineer with the Advanced SUMMER 2010 REVIEW RENSSELAER EDUCATION FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS

Alumnus Returns to Space

NASA astronaut Richard “Rick” Mastracchio (87 M.S. Mechanical Engineering), returned to space in April aboard space shuttle Discovery, as part of the STS-131 mission to visit the International Space Station. During the 15-day re-supply mission, the crew dropped off more than 27,000 pounds of hardware, supplies, and equipment, including a tank of ammonia coolant, new crew sleeping quarters, and three experiment racks. Mastracchio conducted three successful spacewalks in which he performed critical space station assembly tasks. He also supported the commander and pilot on the flight deck as the flight engineer during the launch and ascent to space.

In 2007, Mastracchio became the first Rensselaer alumnus to walk in space when he also conducted three spacewalks while aboard the shuttle Endeavour. His first spaceflight was in 2000 on the shuttle Atlantis. Mastracchio attended the Hartford campus of Rensselaer while working as an engineer at Hamilton Standard in the system design group. He was selected as a NASA astronaut in 1996. “The astronauts are just a lucky few who get to finish off that mission and actually execute it from orbit,” Mastracchio said. “So, there’s not a day that goes by that I don’t realize how lucky I am to...”
Alumni News
1980s
Katherine “Kate” H. Emery (’85 M.S. Computer Science), Owner, CEO, and founder of Walker Systems Support, was a panelist at the forum Beyond Business as Usual, which explored Social Enterprise as a business model. The forum, held June 2, was sponsored by reSET, the Social Enterprise Trust, a nonprofit organization started by Emery.

Anthony “Tony” Rauseo (’87 M.S. Mechanical Engineering) was promoted to Chief Operating Officer at FuelCell. He will be responsible for meshing the company’s manufacturing operations with its supply chain, while overseeing product development and quality. Prior to his promotion, Rauseo served as Vice President of Engineering and Chief Engineer.

1990s
Yvette (Thiesfield) Meléndez (’90 HGC M.S. Management, Corporate Fellows Class 10) has been appointed Vice President, Government and Community Alliances, for Hartford Hospital. In this role, she will provide strategic leadership in government affairs at the local, state, and federal levels, and will oversee Hartford Hospital’s strategic community outreach programs.

2000s
Susan G. Townsley (’00 MBA) was the guest speaker at the 40th Annual Opportunities Industrialization Center of New London County graduation held on June 17. Townsley is the Executive Director of the Literacy Volunteers of Eastern Connecticut.

In Memoriam
Alumni
David “Dave” F. Talevi (’68 M.S. Mechanical Engineering), of Wells, Maine, originally from Waterbury, died on July 2. He worked at Pratt & Whitney before moving to Maine as the developer and owner of Sea-Vu, Sea-Vu South, and Sea-Vu West Campgrounds.

Roseann (Russo) Suraci (’03 MBA), of Hamden, died on July 17. She spent more than 11 years as a Supply Chain Manager with Pratt & Whitney, and later held the same role with Sikorsky Aircraft. Suraci was very passionate about her career and truly loved her job.

Faculty
Guido H. Slangen, Ed.D. (’75 M.S. Management), of Glastonbury, died on July 18. He retired from Rensselaer in 2003 as Associate Chair and Clinical Professor in the Lally School of Management and Technology, after twenty-three years of outstanding service to the Institute. With his expertise in human resource management and adult learning, Professor Slangen worked to share his knowledge and experience with graduate programs and corporations around the globe. He was one of the students’ favorite instructors and a very popular colleague.

Commencement
Continued from page 1

Rensselaer was honored to have NASA astronaut and one of its own, Richard “Rick” A. Mastracchio (’87 M.S. Mechanical Engineering), as the Commencement speaker. Mastracchio began his career with Hamilton Standard as an engineer while earning his master’s degree at the Rensselaer Hartford Campus. An experienced astronaut with NASA, he has been a crew member of three successful space flights since 2000. He addressed the graduates saying: “There are a lot of ways to achieve success. I achieved it by one, putting in the day-to-day hard work to achieve my goals. Two, by persevering even when I failed or when I was told I could not do something. And three, finding something I enjoyed and believed in and I made a career out of it. Through all of this remember that your family is still your first priority and be sure to spend time with them and take care of them.”

Among the members of the outstanding Class of 2009-2010 were twelve students receiving a second advanced degree from Rensselaer; 13 students from ISP; one married couple, John and Tara Picard (he is the Mayor of West Haven); and one member of the Rensselaer Hartford Campus staff, Michael Bozzi, Senior Program Manager, Marketing and Business Development, who earned an M.S. in Management. These most recent Rensselaer alumni join a global network of over 90,000 strong. A reception followed the conferral of degrees. To view photos from the event, please see the Commencement Scrapbook at: www.ewp.rpi.edu/news_and_events/events/commencement2010/index.html.
When I first entered the Rensselaer at Hartford M.S. Management program in the spring of 2008, I would never have predicted the world events that would unfold in the next two-and-a-half years; events that would make the experiences of my graduating class like no other in recent history. First, there was turmoil in the financial sector. As financial firms were failing and the Dow Jones Industrial Average experienced 500+ point swings in one day, I was in Investment Analysis class analyzing and discussing the unprecedented events of the past week. Mortgage foreclosure rates were increasing, the US economic recession was unofficially announced, and accompanying high unemployment rates were directly affecting friends and co-workers. These were the times when theory was tested. In fact, there were days when professors put aside the syllabus for a portion of the class to allow for proper discussion of the financial and economic news of the week. As I was learning about Market Portfolio Theory, Collateralized Debt Obligations, and the definition of risk, so too was the American public every night on the news. This made for a unique educational opportunity that has left me with additional questions and a desire to pursue doctoral studies in the fields of economics and finance.

My background is in engineering. I earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering in 2006 and had been working at Otis Elevator for one-and-a-half years before entering Rensselaer at Hartford. But upon taking the initial Financial Management I class, I was “hooked” into the world of finance. I pursued the “Finance Concentration” in the M.S. Management program, taking courses such as Investment Analysis I and II, Advanced Corporate Finance, Financial Markets and Institutions, and Sustainable Business Development. I concurrently opened up an equity trading account and have this job.”

Scott Boynton has demonstrated unique technical competency in math and robotics, offering many breakthrough achievements for this small but rapidly growing business. ■

The Enrollment Management and Marketing team is pleased to welcome two new Senior Program Managers, Amy Hewitt Cunningham and Roger E. Lavallee. Their responsibilities include interfacing with high-level, key executives in Fortune 1000 companies to identify corporate leaders for career development and enrollment at Rensselaer. To contact Amy, please call 860-548-5346 or e-mail: cunnia2@rpi.edu. To get in touch with Roger, please call 860-548-2477 or e-mail: lavalr@rpi.edu. Pictured here in the Enrollment Management wing at the Hartford campus are Lavallee (left) and Cunningham. ■
began to pragmatically apply my education—I had discovered an academic interest like never before. I was fortunate to take several classes with Professor Stodder and Professor Peteros, who were the catalysts by which I decided to continue my education to the highest possible degree. In fact, a 2005 study by Ronald Ehrenberg shows that one of the largest factors contributing to students pursuing graduate education in economics is due to inspiration by an outstanding teacher or mentor. This, I believe, is one of the most auspicious aspects of education; the reality that just one course or even one single class may compel a student or change the course of his/her life. I was fortunate to find this inspiration at Rensselaer at Hartford.

When I initially had the thought of applying for a Ph.D. in Economics, I approached Professor Stodder to get some advice and discuss his personal experience of obtaining a Ph.D. Approximately 80% of economics Ph.D. students have economics undergraduate degrees; thus, I was uncertain of my ability to compete against these students for the limited Ph.D. spots. Professor Stodder was extremely helpful in cementing my decision. I obtained recommendations from three professors at Rensselaer at Hartford and began the application process. Ultimately, I applied to nine economics programs and was accepted into seven. This was far beyond my expectations. I accepted the offer from Brandeis University for a Ph.D. in International Economics and Finance—a program with only a 14% acceptance rate. This was the perfect means to continue my study of economics and finance that began at Rensselaer at Hartford.

Many of my friends and family ask what I plan to do with this degree in four (…to six) years. My typical answer is, “I will let you know as soon as I figure it out.” I say this only because there is so much more to learn in these upcoming years. Economics is increasingly intersecting with other disciplines, such as psychology and statistical analysis. In the Brandeis program, approximately one-third of students go into academia to become professors, another third work for the government and NGO’s, and the final third work in the private sector. Whichever path I take following this degree, I will always remain appreciative to the Rensselaer professors that helped me to form and achieve my goals. When an educational institution alters the course of a student’s life for the better, this is education at its finest.

Robert R. Albright, II, Ph.D., Clinical Associate Professor, Lally School of Management and Technology, was interviewed for an article about CEO transitions and succession planning entitled, “Middlesex Hospital Invests 4 Years Grooming Next CEO,” in the June 14 issue of the Hartford Business Journal.

Professor Albright was also featured in an interview by reporter Matt Dwyer on WTIC NewsTalk 1080 AM Radio several times during the 3 - 6 p.m. Total News show on August 3. Dr. Albright, an expert on conflict resolution, commented on the workplace violence incident at Hartford Distributors. Insights by Professor Albright were included in every news segment about the incident throughout the three-hour show.

Ernesto Gutierrez-Miravete, Ph.D., Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Engineering and Science, attended the 2010 Gordon Research Conference (GRC) on Tribology entitled, “Challenges at the Buried Interface,” held June 27 - July 2, in Waterville, Maine. The GRC promotes discussions and the free exchange of ideas at the research frontiers of the biological, chemical, and physical sciences. Scientists with common professional interests come together for a full week of intense discussion and examination of the most advanced aspects of their field.

John A. Miniasian, Ph.D., Vice President and Dean, Rensselaer at Hartford, was the Director of the Mozart Requiem performed by the Rensselaer Festival Chorus on April 10 in the Concert Hall in the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC). Donald E. Pendagast III (’07 B.S. Industrial and Management Engineering), Program Manager, Marketing and Business Development, co-produced the event and performed as a tenor in the Rensselaer Festival Chorus. The concert was part of Grand Marshal (GM) Week on the Troy campus. Rensselaer President Shirley Ann Jackson, Ph.D., attended the near sell-out performance.

Tunnesia Owens, Associate Technical Coordinator, Technical and Information Services, Southeastern Connecticut Site, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work from Eastern Connecticut State University on May 23.

James P. Stodder, Ph.D., Clinical Associate Professor, Lally School of Management and Technology, presented his paper entitled, “The Macro-Stability of Swiss WIR-Bank Spending: Balance versus Velocity Effects” at a seminar at the CERMi (Center for European Research in Microfinance), Solvay Business School, University of Brussels, on June 18. Professor Stodder’s paper concerned the stabilizing effects of a community or “complementary” currency known as the WIR introduced in Switzerland 75 years ago. Bernard Lietaer, a former researcher at Belgium’s Central Bank well-known for his studies of community currencies, commented on Dr. Stodder’s paper. Present at the seminar were a number of people working with community currencies in Europe, and students and faculty including Professor Marek Hudon, co-director of CERMi.

Kevin F. Wall, CPA, LLM, Clinical Associate Professor, Lally School of Management and Technology, presented his paper, “How the Convergence of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Will Impact the International Practice of Law,” at the 2010 Law and Society Association (LSA) Annual Meeting held in Chicago, May 27-30. Professor Wall’s paper was part of the panel, Challenges in International Tax Law. This panel examined some of the key technical rules of international taxation—rules that, despite their technical nature, continue to vex scholars and policymakers in international tax law. These issues include sourcing rules, reporting rules, and residency issues. Both design and equity issues were addressed.
Students in the International Scholars Program (ISP) Class 3 have completed 40 percent of the requirements for a Rensselaer Master’s degree after finishing the summer term with a week spent in Troy; four weeks in Rome, Italy; four weeks in Shanghai, China; and a final week in Hartford. The nineteen students concentrated on one of two tracks—Global Enterprise Management or Energy Systems. ISP participants were immersed in a global learning experience abroad which included site visits and tours, distinguished expert guest lecturers, and work on real-world company projects. Projects were sponsored by Best Buy, Kodak, IBM, and the Joint U.S.-China Collaboration on Clean Energy (JUCCCE).

Cara Riverso ('10 B.S. Chemical Engineering), a Senior Reporter for The Rensselaer Polytechnic, wrote a feature article entitled, “When in Rome, do as the RPI students.” She offers a firsthand account of her ISP experience in Rome. To read the article, visit: http://poly.rpi.edu/?p=1557.

[Editors Note: Eric Patenaude, Data Analyst, Office of the Vice President and Dean, will share his perspective on ISP as a videographer in the next issue of the EWP@Rensselaer newsletter.]