

# 2025 Pillars

A REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF GIVING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND



Welcome to *Pillars*, an annual report dedicated to showcasing the impact of philanthropy at the University of Richmond. This publication illustrates how the generosity of the Spider community carries forward the promise of access and opportunity to the next generation. We hope you are as inspired as we are by the incredible stories within these pages.

**UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND MISSION:** To educate in an academically challenging, intellectually vibrant, and collaborative community dedicated to the holistic development of students and the production of scholarly and creative work. A Richmond education prepares students for lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a diverse world.



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Produced by the University of Richmond Advancement Office, *Pillars* reflects our commitment to transparency and our sincere appreciation for those who give generously to the University through their service and philanthropy. For a PDF version of this publication and to read more stories of impact, visit [giving.richmond.edu](http://giving.richmond.edu).

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Cover photo: *The Class of 2025 enjoys a fireworks display at the Candlelight Ceremony on the night before Commencement. One of the University's longest-standing traditions, graduates line the banks of Westhampton Lake and hold candles as part of this reflective and celebratory community event.*



*“As you read this publication, I hope you feel the pride and excitement that we do.”*

**Dear Spiders,**

Looking back on another fantastic year at the University of Richmond, I am both grateful and inspired by the extraordinary achievements that your support made possible.

During the last academic year, your generosity helped us raise an incredible \$54.6 million. A record-breaking \$2.8 million came from UR Here Giving Day, which saw participation from 4,875 donors (learn more on the next page). This remarkable outpouring of support underscores the strength of our community. Spider alumni, students, parents, faculty, staff, and friends are making a profound difference through their giving.

Your collective commitment and care continue to propel the University forward. In the stories that follow, you'll learn how philanthropy fuels the priorities we are most eager to advance in the years ahead.

- **Access and Affordability:** ensuring that outstanding students from all financial backgrounds can pursue a Richmond education
- **Academic Excellence:** offering academic programs built on inspirational teaching, dedicated mentoring, and ambitious scholarship, research, and creative work
- **Athletics:** bolstering our NCAA Division 1 athletics program, a vital force in uniting our campus and surrounding community
- **Lives of Purpose:** giving students the skills and experiences they need to succeed on campus and as citizens and leaders in the world beyond

As you read this publication, I hope you feel the pride and excitement that we do. Your steadfast commitment to our mission leaves an indelible impact on countless Spiders seeking education, opportunity, and community – and enables our graduates to make a positive impact on the world. Thank you.

With gratitude,

**Martha Callaghan**  
Vice President of Advancement

# Our Culture of Giving

BY GIVING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND, you join generations of Spiders in fulfilling the promise of a world-class education made to every student who comes here while fortifying the University's financial future for years to come.

Each year, our legacy is sustained by the generosity of our caring alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and friends. Gifts of all sizes are essential to Richmond's continued progress. We are grateful to have your support on this important journey.

## DURING 2024-25:

**\$54M** in total gifts and commitments

**16,800+** donors gave back

**\$13.1M** given to Financial Aid

**\$530K** came from gifts of \$100 or less



## UR Here Giving Day

In April, Spiders across the globe showed their support for students during UR's seventh annual giving day. We raised a record-breaking total of \$2,804,269 from 4,875 donors! More than 150 individual funds were represented benefiting every area of campus, including scholarships, the student experience, well-being, academic excellence, athletics, and more.



### INVESTING IN STUDENT-ATHLETES: WOMEN'S SOCCER COACH ADAM DENTON

Adam Denton, head coach of the Spiders women's soccer team, played a significant role in UR Here's success. He personally offered a 1:1 match for all gifts to the team, resulting in a total of \$20,567 given by 98 donors. Overall, Spider Athletics received the most donations of any impact area, totaling more than \$1.2 million from 2,574 donors.

“It's important to me that we recognize our student-athletes for everything that they do,” Denton said. “As coach, by showing my investment in the program, it creates an opportunity to engage the community and share the message

that any amount given really helps.” This was the second consecutive year that Denton has offered the 1:1 match, and he plans to offer it again in 2026. Funds raised this year will be used to purchase recovery equipment and technology for injury prevention. “I feel privileged to work with our student-athletes and be a part of the Spider community,” he said. “It's a very special place, and if you can give back in any way, you should.”

## BY THE NUMBERS

**\$2.8M**  
given by  
**4,875** donors

**33%** increase  
in total donors

**43%** increase  
in first-time  
donors

**\$1.2M** given  
to Richmond  
Athletics by  
**2,574** donors

**15** countries and  
**50** U.S. states  
represented

## Did You Know?

69% OF SPIDER UNDERGRADUATES receive financial aid with an average need-based aid package of \$60,740. Much of this support comes from caring donors like you!



## Spiders Helping Spiders

This annual fall initiative encourages gifts targeting specific areas of financial need. Gifts are directed toward financial aid; the Student Emergency Fund, which helps students who experience urgent and unforeseen expenses; and the Career Opportunity Fund, which provides financial assistance for students to pursue internships, job interviews, or graduate school.

Your support of Spiders Helping Spiders allowed students to afford:

- an emergency root canal
- a winter jacket
- a new pair of glasses
- travel home for a funeral
- professional attire
- housing during summer break
- and more!

**\$410K**

GIVEN BY  
1,493 DONORS  
IN 2024

Senior Legacy Campaign leaders Sam Slater, '25, and Alexia Leca, '25, and Junior Legacy Fellow Braeden Herriott, '26, encouraged their peers to make a gift during UR Here Giving Day.

## Class of 2025 hosts record-breaking Senior Legacy Campaign

The Class of 2025 may have left UR's campus, but their impact carries on through their support of the Senior Legacy Campaign (SLC).

Each year, the SLC gives members of the graduating class an opportunity to celebrate their journey and give back to the place that helped shape it. Seniors are encouraged to donate any amount to support the people and programs that meant the most to them, such as an academic department, athletics team, or campus organization.

The Class of 2025 raised more than \$4,500 with an incredible 76% participation rate (nearly 600 students), the highest in SLC history. The fund that received the most support was the UR Annual Fund, followed closely by the Class of 2025 Scholarship.

Class of 2025 graduates Daniela Perez and Sam Slater led the SLC as part of an internship with the Office of Annual Giving. In recognition of their outstanding service, they were each honored with the H. Gerald Quigg Student Ambassador Award at Commencement.

A first-generation college graduate, Perez gave to the Christopher G. Elvin Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund to honor the donor-funded scholarship support she received, which gave her access to a Richmond education and helped her make the most of her time on campus.

"I had so many great experiences at Richmond," she said. "Students tend to overlook where the funding comes from that allows us to do all these amazing things. If students can donate, even if it's just a little bit, you're making it possible for others to have their own experience."



**\$410K**

GIVEN BY  
1,493 DONORS  
IN 2024

## Gratitude Day

The Spider community came together to celebrate the generosity of donors as part of the sixth annual Gratitude Day in November. Students, faculty, and staff gathered on the University Forum and participated in various activities to learn about the impact of donor giving on campus and thank donors, such as writing down words of appreciation on notecards that were displayed on large webs and writing personal thank you notes.

Scan to watch a video and learn more about Gratitude Day.



The UR SpiderShop hosted the launch of *Along Came the Spiders* in April. The book was written by UR first lady Tina Hallock (right) and illustrated by artist Kaitlin Jones Stasiunas, UR's health promotion coordinator.

## UR first lady publishes children's book

*Along Came the Spiders*, a new children's book written by Tina Hallock, the first lady of the University of Richmond, a teacher by training, and a proud parent of two, tells the tale of how UR came to have the only Spider mascot in collegiate sports.

When traveling with her husband, President Kevin Hallock, Tina is

often asked about UR's Spider mascot, WebstUR. She was inspired to write the book after reading many accounts of how the mascot came to be. All net proceeds from the book will support UR student scholarships.

"The basis of the mascot story is that in 1894, a sportswriter in Richmond used the term 'spider' to describe the baseball team's pitcher, who had lanky arms and legs, and the nickname stuck," she said. "What started as a tale became part of a larger story that celebrates this incredible University community."

Scan to learn more about *Along Came the Spiders*.



# Supporting a Community of Care

*Alumni couple give back to support opportunity and belonging for all Spiders*



Rasheeda D. Chambers, '03, was so certain of her decision to attend UR that she didn't apply anywhere else. "People look at me like I have three heads when I say that, but it's true," she said. "I always knew I wanted to be at Richmond."

The passionate Spider alumna — an accounting graduate who is now assistant director in internal audit with Atlantic Union Bank — has stayed connected through years of philanthropic support and volunteer

service. She was inspired to get involved by her mentor Dr. Tina Cade, who retired from UR in 2022 after 35 years of service, including her most recent post as associate vice president for student development.

"Dr. Cade asked me to revive and lead URBAN (the UR Black Alumni



*In April, Rasheeda Chambers spoke at a consecration and dedication ceremony for The Burying Ground, a permanent memorial to honor those enslaved and laid to rest on the land that became UR's campus.*

*"I believe our charge as alumni is to show that our hearts are still there and we still care."*

*— Rasheeda D. Chambers, '03*

Network)," she said. "I created programs and planned events that offered a community for alumni of color."

In 2019, Rasheeda joined the UR Alumni Association (URAA) Board of Directors. She has remained deeply involved, leading to her election as president from 2025 to 2027.

"I enjoy serving on a board with 20+ alumni who are each amazing in their own right," she said. "It's great to help the URAA continue to serve as a conduit of information between the University and the alumni community and build lasting connections."

During her work with URBAN, Rasheeda became reacquainted with André Chambers, '00, a fellow scholarship recipient. The pair married in 2023. As Robins Circle members, they loyally give to UR each year to support initiatives focused on access, affordability, and student belonging.

"When you're a student, Richmond plants a seed of what it means to be part of a community that's totally supportive," said André, a computer science graduate who co-founded and serves as COO of software and data engineering company Evans & Chambers Technology. "You leave with that seed planted, and then you realize that you have a responsibility to maintain that

same environment for future students."

"If I did not have a scholarship, I would not have been able to come to Richmond," Rasheeda said. "So, for me, maintaining scholarships for students going forward is very important. I believe our charge as alumni is to show that our hearts are still there and we still care."



Rasheeda and André Chambers are proud members of Robins Circle, UR's loyal donor group. Scan to learn more about donor recognition groups.



# The Endowment: Investing in Excellence

## 2025 Endowment Performance

Spider Management had a return of 12.51% for the fiscal year, and the portfolio overall is well diversified to grow and protect the endowment across market environments. The private equity asset class returned more than 18% for the year and was the largest contributor to performance. In addition, Spider's public equity investments generated more than 16% and outperformed both the MSCI ACWI benchmark and S&P 500 Index for the year. Spider's five-year annualized return was 12.13%, outpacing a standard 70/30 portfolio of public stocks and bonds by more than two-and-a-half percentage points per year.

Your giving, coupled with Spider's disciplined investment strategy, enhances the University's long-term financial capacity. It provides a dependable and growing source of support and presents us with important opportunities to strengthen UR in ways that would not otherwise be possible without the generosity of the Spider community.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the endowment?

UR's endowment is composed of more than 1,560 individual endowed funds, designated to support scholarships, fellowships, faculty chairs, and other important activities. Together, these funds provide a permanent source of support for UR's students, faculty, and programs, and represent the University's largest financial asset.

billion over the past two decades thanks to generous donors and Spider Management's unwavering focus on generating strong absolute returns over the long term.

### How do I support the endowment?

Donors may work with University Advancement to establish a fund that aligns with the donor's philanthropic interests, such as a scholarship or faculty chair. Contributions are invested by Spider Management Company, and each year, a portion of the fund's value is withdrawn to support the purpose specified by the donor. Earnings in excess of this withdrawal amount remain invested, building the fund's value to ensure that your gift continues to provide meaningful support for years to come. When an endowed fund is established, a permanent legacy of support is created for UR.

### How does the endowment support UR's annual expenses?

Each year, the University's Board of Trustees approves a distribution from the endowment to fund operating expenses. This spending distribution comprises approximately 40% of the University's annual operating budget, followed by revenue from net student tuition and fees, auxiliary enterprises, and current use philanthropic contributions.

The annual distribution allows UR to pursue unique and critical initiatives, but it can only be spent in accordance with donor specifications. Current use gifts allow the University to provide increased access to the latest technologies, outstanding programs, and excellent facilities. Both annual and endowed giving are critically important to our ongoing success..

### How does UR manage its endowment?

Spider Management is the University's investment management affiliate. It is governed by its Board of Managers, the majority of whom are trustees of the University. The endowment has grown by more than \$2.3

### 2025 ENDOWMENT HIGHLIGHTS

**\$3.49B**

endowment market value

**\$145M**

approximate distribution to support the operating budget

**8.4%**

10-year annualized return

**1,566**

individual endowed funds

### Questions?

#### Contact the Office of Donor Relations

(804) 287-6815

donorrelations@richmond.edu

giving.richmond.edu

# A Symbolic Gift

*Ed and Peggy Pruden dedicate their legacy to the Spider community*



**P**assionate about education, Dr. Edward Pruden Jr., always wanted to be a teacher. He chose the University of Richmond, his father's alma mater, as the first step toward achieving his goal.

Ed graduated in 1972 with a Political Science degree, followed two years later by a master's in Education from UR. He later earned his doctorate from the College of William & Mary. He fulfilled his dream of becoming a high school government teacher before moving into leadership roles as principal and superintendent, working in public education for nearly five decades.

Throughout the years, Ed has remained a devoted Spider. He and his wife, Peggy, are annual donors, and Ed recently completed a two-year term as president of the UR Alumni Association Board of Directors. In addition, the couple has three children — two are Spiders and one is married to a Spider.

While finalizing their estate plans, Ed and Peggy decided to honor their family's Richmond legacy and commitment to education by including the University in their will. "It's a way to say thank you for all the school has given our family," Ed said.

Ed and Peggy's unrestricted planned gift will one day support the University's greatest needs while celebrating their family's deep appreciation for Richmond.

"It will symbolize our lasting connection to the Spider community," Ed said. "It's been a wonderful adventure of a lifetime."



The Prudens are proud members of Charter Associates, UR's legacy giving circle. Scan to learn more about making a planned gift.



# Creating a One-of-a-Kind Experience

*Scholarship funding helps students explore their passions on and off campus*



## MARY KIMBROUGH, '27

- Political Science and Dance double major from Powhatan, Virginia
- Recipient of the Brown Family Scholarship

### What inspired your choice in majors?

I have always been interested in the government and politics sector. I've also done competitive dance all my life, but I wasn't sure if I would be able to continue dancing in college. Then I heard about the University Dancers (UD) program — I auditioned as a first-year student and got in, and I've discovered my love for dance all over again. Receiving scholarship support furthered my decision to double-major because I knew I had the resources to pursue both my passions without having to choose. After graduation, I would like to go to law school or work for the government (I'm particularly interested in doing investigative work) and then go into politics later in life. I would love to incorporate dance into my post-grad life as well, so if an opportunity presents itself, I'll take it.



### What has been the most meaningful part of your Spider experience?

Being a member of UD has given me the strongest sense of community and belonging. Anne Van Gelder, UD artistic director and Department of Theatre & Dance faculty, has created an amazing space for us to work, dance, and collaborate with other faculty and students. I got to participate in UD's

40th anniversary concert as a sophomore — it was amazing getting to work with artists-in-residence Robin Dekkers and Ben Estabrook. We did a short film that premiered at the opening of the concert; it was like nothing I've ever experienced before. It's amazing that this tangible piece of art exists because it's something we created together that we can re-watch and show others in the future.

This summer, I spent a month in New York City furthering my dance training at Steps on Broadway with another UD student. I couldn't be more grateful to have gotten to explore the city with her. After that, I went to the United Kingdom to study abroad at the University of Cambridge as part of the Jepson at Cambridge program. I took two law classes with other Richmond undergraduate students as well as Richmond Law students. I had a great time in and out of the classroom, at Cambridge and traveling to other countries.

### Why is receiving scholarship support important to you?

I come from a middle-class family, and I'm one of three children — my brother just started his first year of college.

So, it wouldn't be possible for me to attend Richmond

without the help of financial aid and scholarships. The security it's provided me as I pursue my studies is unmatched. I am sincerely grateful to caring donors who give to scholarships as well as those who support the arts and students within the arts.



## DANIEL POLONIA, '26

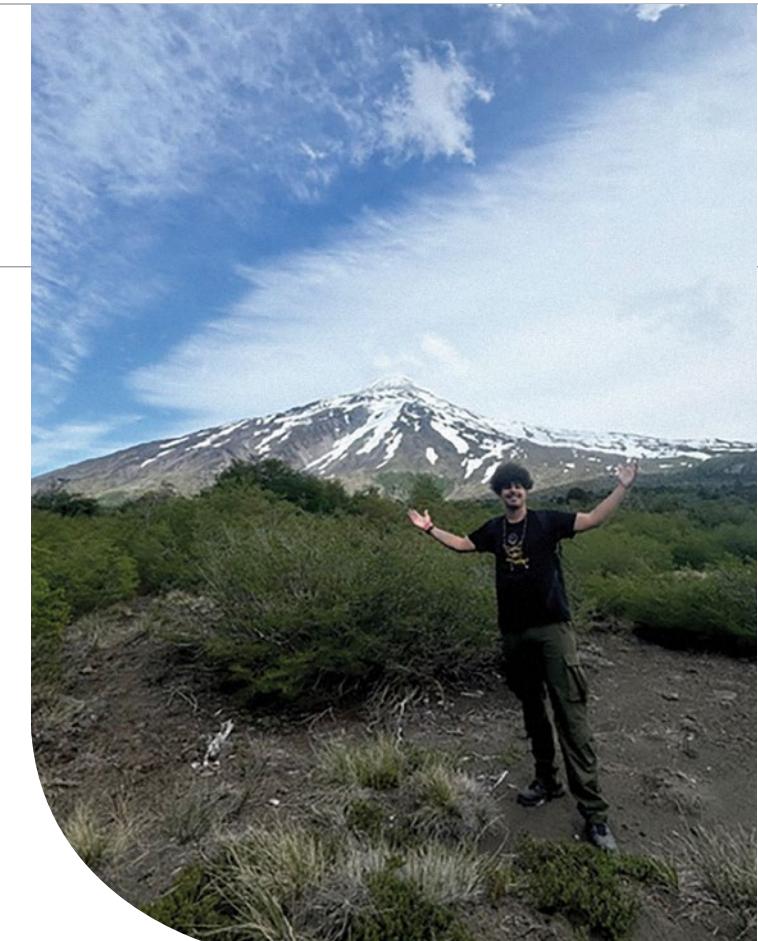
- Leadership Studies and Rhetoric & Communication Studies double major from Baldwin, NY
- Recipient of the Elizabeth Rae Hodkinson Scholarship

### What inspired your choice in majors?

I did the Richmond Endeavor living-learning program and my first-year seminar with Dr. Scott Johnson focused on the narratives of identity and relationships. I also took Media, Culture, and Identity with Dr. Ravynn Stringfield. I liked being able to openly discuss how we formulate identity, and I got to apply what I was learning to some of my favorite television shows. In the spring of my first year, I took Leadership Studies classes taught by Dr. Thad Williamson and Dr. Bo Yun Park that explored the intersections of leadership with the humanities and social sciences. I fell in love with the way we focused on historical inequities, how they've affected the present, and what can be done to create change moving forward. My studies have helped me realize my passion for helping others and connecting them with resources to better their lives. After UR, I'd like to pursue a career in human resources or public relations. I'm also interested in educational administration, whether that's being a high school principal or the dean of a college one day.

### What has been the most meaningful part of your Spider experience?

Last fall, I spent the semester in Nepal, Jordan, and Chile doing a comparative study of human rights through the Vermont-based School for International Training's International Honors Program. I was one of 17 college students from around the country who participated. In Nepal, we examined issues related to migration, the caste system, and women's rights. In Jordan, we talked extensively about the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as the impacts of Orientalism, and in Chile, we studied the effects of authoritarianism on citizens. By going to places where human rights concerns are at the forefront, I saw leadership being built from the bottom up to address these issues. It was very heavy mentally and emotionally at times, but we



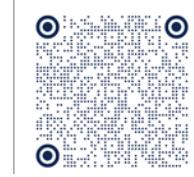
Polonia visited the Volcán Lanín in Chile while studying abroad.

also had fun times, like visiting a monkey temple in Nepal, floating in the Dead Sea, and having empanadas in Chile. It was a deeply impactful experience that I will always remember. On campus, I participate in many meaningful activities such as being a wellness peer educator, resident assistant, rhetoric teaching assistant, and more.

### Why is receiving scholarship support important to you?

I'm very grateful to be a scholarship recipient because I may not have been able to attend UR otherwise. Here, I've been able to form so many meaningful connections. This community has helped me become not only a better person, but more dedicated to the work I do. I am so grateful to every person I have met. I am proud to be a Spider because I would never have been able to form such an amazing community or have so many opportunities elsewhere. Thank you for supporting student scholarships!

Scan to learn more about Daniel's experience studying human rights issues in Nepal, Jordan, and Chile.



# A Case for Support

*Richmond Law dean reflects on impact of Dean's Opportunity Scholarship Fund*



**U**R School of Law Dean Wendy Perdue knows first-hand the impact a scholarship can have — she benefited from one herself while attending Duke University School of Law.

"My scholarship allowed me to worry less about money and focus more on my education," she said. "It's a privilege that I wish were available to each of our students."

Her desire to make a Richmond Law education affordable and accessible to students in need inspired Perdue to create the Dean's Opportunity Scholarship Fund in 2019. She and her husband, David Perdue, established the fund with a generous \$100,000 gift.

"Dave and I come from families who valued education and emphasized the importance of supporting education-

al institutions," Perdue said. "Our mothers were very active in raising money for their alma maters, so we internalized an expectation that as our resources allowed, we should provide support to the institutions that are important to us."

The Perdues continue to support the fund annually. Their generosity has drawn the attention of alumni and friends who are eager to invest in legal education, and together, donors have contributed more than \$2.8 million to the initiative.

*Dean Wendy Perdue, center, on stage with UR President Kevin Hallock at Colloquy 2025*

Dean's Opportunity Scholars are selected based on a combination of financial need, academic excellence, perseverance in the face of adversity, and potential for leadership in the profession. A gift of \$10,000 per year for three years, or \$30,000 total, sponsors a Scholar. To date, 40 students have been sponsored, including first-year law student Jada Smith.

"As a student who is underrepresented in the legal field, receiving this scholarship represents both an investment in my future and recognition of the determination and grit required to enter a profession where few lawyers look like me," Smith said. "Without this financial support, my goal of becoming an attorney would not be possible. This scholarship is a reminder that my voice and presence matter."

As Perdue prepares to step down as dean at the end of the 2025-26 academic year, she hopes that Law School supporters will respond to the evolving needs of today's students.



***"This scholarship is a reminder that my voice and presence matter."***

*— Jada Smith, IL*

"I have been thrilled to see the response to this initiative," she said. "Hopefully this level of support will continue because, with recent changes in federal financial aid policies, I expect to see an even greater need for student support. I would like to be able to assure every admitted student that they can afford a Richmond Law education."



## Changes to Graduate Student Aid

Recent federal policy changes have limited the amount that graduate students can borrow to fund their education. While UR School of Law is committed to maintaining its status as having one of the lowest private tuitions among the nation's top law schools, nearly a quarter of Richmond Law students will not be able to afford their tuition without additional financial aid. The Dean's Opportunity Scholarship Fund will play an important role in meeting this need.



*Scan to learn more about making a difference for future students.*

## DEAN'S OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP FUND BY THE NUMBERS

**\$2.8M**  
raised since 2019

**40** students supported

**94** donors, including 62 alumni and 16 faculty/staff

**32** gifts of \$100 or less

**31** gifts of \$30,000+

# Brothers in Science

*Inspired by their undergraduate research experiences, a pair of Spider brothers are on the path to earning doctorates.*

**W**hen he was a first-year Spider, Justin Airas, '20, never imagined he would one day pursue a Ph.D. in theoretical chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"I really wasn't fond of chemistry in high school," he said. "But UR's incredible professors and undergraduate research opportunities made me fall in love with the subject."

A Richmond native, Justin was a Gupton Science Fellow during his time at UR. He used the summer funding to research computational chemistry — specifically, he conducted simulations to study the behaviors of protein molecules and their potential for treating certain diseases. His work was published in several academic journals.

"That summer was one of the most enjoyable, academically enriching times I had at UR," he said. "The experience helped me have a better understanding of chemistry beyond the classroom.

I truly believe it's why I got accepted to MIT — the research experience helped distinguish my application and made me a stronger candidate."

Justin's doctoral research extends the work he did at UR but focuses on machine-learning methods to improve the speed and accuracy of his simulations. In 2023, he received a competitive National Science Foundation Graduate Research fellowship, which provides three years of financial support to aid outstanding graduate students who have demonstrated the potential to be high-achieving scientists and engineers.

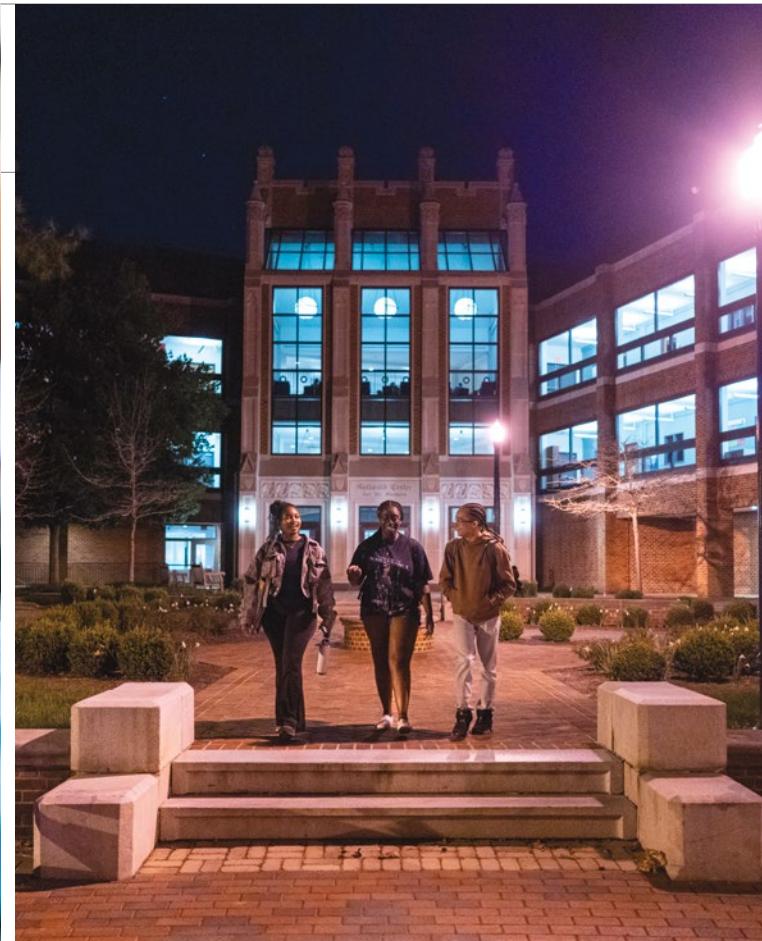
"The NSF grant will take me through the rest of my Ph.D., and I should graduate in 2026," he said. "After that, I would like to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship and eventually get a position doing full-time pharmaceutical research."



Justin's brother, Jacob Airas, '22, was also a Gupton Fellow and a recipient of the F. Dewey Gottwald Scholarship for the Sciences. His journey at UR began with his participation in the URise program for underrepresented students with a passion for STEM, inclusion, and diversity. As a Gupton Fellow, he researched the strength of halogen bonding interactions in helping law enforcement officials detect opioids more quickly and effectively.

"The opportunity to conduct this research was incredibly impactful for me personally and professionally," Jacob said. "Our research was very

*Jacob Airas, '22, and Justin Airas, '20, at Jacob's white coat ceremony*



well supported, and I was fortunate to be in the same lab group as my brother, which was a really special experience."

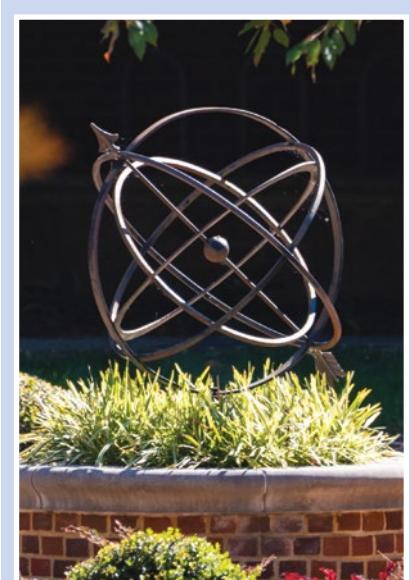
A graduate of UR's biochemistry and molecular biology program, Jacob completed a post-baccalaureate fellowship at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, investigating how molecular machines involved in ribosome biogenesis are regulated. He is now a medical student at Wayne State University in Detroit.

***"Our research was very well supported, and I was fortunate to be in the same lab group as my brother, which was a really special experience."***

*— Jacob Airas, '22*

"I'm thinking my top choice for my medical specialty will be diagnostic radiology," he said. "I'm also interested in looking at family medicine as a second option."

"I'm very proud of my younger brother," Justin said. "We are taking different paths but staying within the sciences, and it all stems from the amazing experiences we had at UR. Our family is very grateful for the opportunities we've been given."

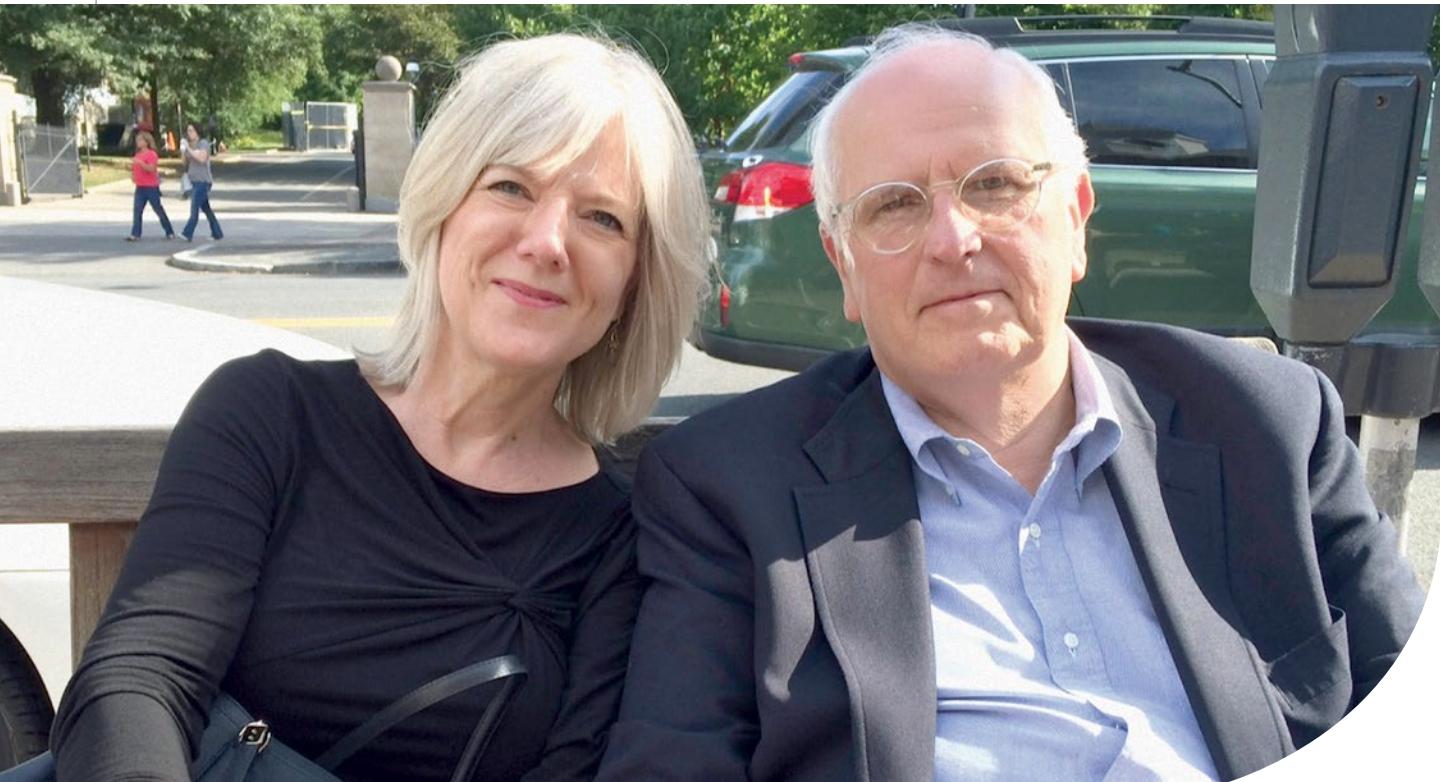


## Gupton Science Fellows

The Gupton Science Fellows program was established in 2019 by the Gottwald family in honor of Dr. John Gupton, professor of chemistry emeritus, former Floyd D. and Elisabeth S. Gottwald Chair in Chemistry, and former department chair. The program funds a summer research fellowship for up to 15 students annually.

# Honoring a Legacy

Brenda McDowell supports Gary L. McDowell Institute in honor of late husband



In the popular HBO series *The Gilded Age*, a pivotal scene depicts the unveiling of Thomas Edison's electric light bulbs as the New York Times building is illuminated for the first time.

To Brenda McDowell, the scene is reminiscent of the impact of education on Richmond students participating in the Gary L. McDowell Institute, named in honor of her late husband and a beloved faculty member of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies.

"I see light bulbs turning on in their minds — they remind me of a young Gary," she said. "These students are on fire, soaking up the wisdom of ancient and modern thinkers and historians."

This year, Brenda generously established an endowed fund to help support the McDowell Institute's mission for years to come. Housed within the Jepson School, the Institute is dedicated to its namesake's values and principles: free inquiry, thoughtful deliberation, and rigorous discussion of classical and modern texts and issues in political economy. Its programs, including guest speakers, seminars, and

***"The things that these students are learning will remain with them always and be passed on again and again."***

— Brenda McDowell



Dr. Terry Price, co-director of the Gary L. McDowell Institute, received a 2025 Outstanding Faculty Award for his creative teaching and scholarship in applied ethics and critical thinking. [Scan to learn more.](#)



conferences, draw on the history of ideas and embrace diverse viewpoints to answer key questions in ethics, law, and politics.

The Institute honors Gary's distinguished career as a constitutional scholar. He served as director of the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London, chief speech writer for U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese during the Reagan Administration, and director of the Office of the Bicentennial of the Constitution at the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Gary joined the Jepson School's faculty in 2003, where he held the Tyler Haynes Interdisciplinary Chair in Leadership Studies, Political Science, and Law. When he retired in 2018, he left a lasting impression on countless colleagues and students. The Institute was named in 2020, and Gary passed away in 2021.

"Gary devoted himself to his students," Brenda said. "He was inspired by great teachers throughout his life and knew the importance of being challenged to grapple with perplexing yet fundamental questions, develop one's own opinions, and seek common ground. He was able to convey complex lessons to his students but also captivate them."

As a tribute to Gary's legacy, Brenda hopes her gift will enrich the academic experience for McDowell Institute students, empowering them to use their knowledge to positively impact the world around them.

"The things that these students are learning will remain with them always and be passed on again and again," she said. "They will become honorable citizens, parents, leaders, and friends as a result. I'm thrilled to strengthen this good cause so that this work continues long into the future."

"We are deeply grateful for Brenda's support," said Dr. Daniel Palazzolo, co-director of the McDowell Institute. "We miss Gary every day, and we are honored to carry on his legacy as a teacher, scholar, and colleague. This is made even more special by Brenda's generosity and the enthusiasm, perspective, and dedication she brings to Institute events."

Greg Lukianoff, president and CEO of the nonprofit civil liberties group Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, visited campus in February.



## A Student Perspective

The Gary L. McDowell Institute's Student Fellows Program enriches the intellectual experience of students interested in political, social, and economic thought. Through participation in a co-curricular reading group and attendance at the Institute's annual Lecture Series events, students engage with leading scholars and influential thinkers from around the country in an intimate, thought-provoking setting.

"Being a Student Fellow has enhanced my education by empowering me to bring the McDowell Institute's values into the classroom setting. I'm more open to different perspectives and aim to create an open environment where students can learn from each other. Thanks to Brenda's gift, more students will benefit by getting to learn and practice these important principles. Fellows will carry what they learn through their academic and extracurricular involvement at Richmond and beyond."

— KATIE SINCLAIR, '26, Political Science and Philosophy double major

# A Numbers Game

*Business major's knack for numbers helps enhance Spider Baseball's on-field performance*



**S**enior Caroline White had two priorities during her college search — the school had to be small and have a baseball team.

A Philadelphia native, White attended a private high school with about 30 girls in her class and desired a similarly close-knit environment for her college experience.

“UR felt perfect,” she said. “It seemed like the type of school that would allow me to know my professors and let me get involved in anything I wanted to.”

“It records every pitch’s velocity, movement, and where it lands in the strike zone,” she said. “I tag every pitch, entering what type it was and what happened on it.”

The coaches use this data to track their pitchers’ development, including changes in velocity and windup effectiveness, to identify opportunities for improvement. It also helps anticipate the opponents’ pitching behavior — does the pitcher tend to throw inside or outside, high or low, and how fast?

Since baseball matchups are played in a multi-game series, UR can analyze opposing pitchers’ data from the

White said that’s exactly how it’s been during her nearly four years at Richmond.

“I came in as an economics major and was also taking math classes just because I like math. Then I took an accounting class and fell in love with it,” she said, which inspired White to double major in mathematical economics and accounting.

White applies the analytical skills developed through her coursework to her passion for baseball. She and her family are fervent Philadelphia Phillies fans, and many of her relatives played Little League. “I grew up going to all my brother’s games,” she said.

White first learned about the role of data analytics in baseball while watching the film *Moneyball* as a preteen. The main character helped revolutionize the use of sabermetrics to evaluate the players on his major league team.

Last year, after meeting with Spider baseball coaches Mik Aoki and Josh Epstein, White joined about a dozen other student analysts who sit behind the home plate at every game. The team uses Trackman technology, which captures detailed, real-time pitch data which White and her peers quickly log.

“The coaches use this data to track their pitchers’ development, including changes in velocity and windup effectiveness, to identify opportunities for improvement. It also helps anticipate the opponents’ pitching behavior — does the pitcher tend to throw inside or outside, high or low, and how fast?”

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*“I came in as an economics major and was also taking math classes just because I like math. Then I took an accounting class and fell in love with it.”*

— Caroline White, '26

first game or two and then coach batters accordingly. “They’re looking for patterns — trying to get a sense of what to expect,” White said.

White’s classes have enhanced her skills for gameday. For example, her Introductory Econometrics class taught her the importance of accounting for skewed data.

“If there’s a wild pitch in the dirt, that can throw off your averages if you don’t record it correctly,” she said. “Little details make a big difference.”

Her Managerial and Cost Accounting class bolstered her skills in Microsoft Excel, which she uses for data input. “I feel much more confident using pivot tables and building out spreadsheets,” she said.

Other extracurricular activities, such as her involvement with the Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity, have helped White further explore this subject matter.

Last fall, she studied abroad at the

University of St Andrews in Scotland, where she took economics electives and explored the local culture.

Afternoons behind the home plate aren’t merely a commitment to White; they’re a refuge

and a way to connect with others. “It’s always something to look forward to and provides a break,” she said. “And the relationships I’ve formed have been incredible.”

When the Spiders win, the experience goes from enjoyable to ecstatic. Few victories are more memorable for White than the March 30, 2024, matchup against George Mason University, in which the Spiders recovered from an 11-point deficit to win 17-16 in extra innings.

“Seeing the joy on the players’ faces is so much fun,” she said.

*This article was previously published in UR Now, the University’s weekly digital news digest.*



# Competing on a National Stage

*Spider women's basketball uses donor funding to travel to USA Basketball 3X Nationals*

Spider women's basketball fans were leaping from their seats last spring as the team made an appearance in the NCAA Tournament for the second year in a row, reached the second round for the first time in program history, and finished 28-7 overall.

Shortly after this historic run, the Spiders received an opportunity not to be missed: an inaugural invitation to compete in the 2025 USA Basketball 3X Nationals.

The 3x3-style tournament is played by top men's and women's teams from colleges and universities across the country. This year, 16 women's teams competed, including players from South Carolina, Florida, Oklahoma State, Vanderbilt, and James Madison.

Head coach Aaron Roussell was thrilled by the invitation but was unsure if the team could afford the trip. "It was late in the school year and we didn't have much left in our budget," he said. "With approval from our administration, we reached out to our donor base to see if there was any interest. One supporter got very excited – she took the bull by the horns and made calls to a few friends, and very quickly we were able to get what we needed."

These generous donors made the experience possible by covering costs for travel, meals, and lodging. Spider seniors Maggie Doogan, Rachel Ullstrom, Sam Dewey, and junior Ally Sweeney were selected to compete and traveled to Mesa, Ariz., in early May.

The foursome had never played 3x3 basketball, a fast-paced version of the game played by two teams – each with three players and one substitute – on a half-court with one basket. The first team to 21 points, or the team leading at the end of regulation, wins.

Luckily, the Spiders' regular-season training paid off – they made it to the quarterfinals and lost by only one point.

"The way we play is very conducive to 3x3 – most of what we do is three-player actions," Roussell said. "We



Photos courtesy of USA Basketball

trained like we normally do before we left, and I think it led to our success. They really knocked it out of the park."

The event also served as an evaluation for future USA Basketball 3x3 national team selections and opportunities to represent the U.S. at major sporting events. Ullstrom was selected to compete with Team USA in the FIBA 3x3 Women's Nations League Americas Title in Chile, and Doogan was invited to the USA Basketball Women's AmeriCup Trials in Colorado.



***"The biggest benefit is getting this international exposure for our program. It shows that we can compete with top schools, and going up against them makes us better players individually."***

*– Maggie Doogan, '26*

"The biggest benefit is getting this international exposure for our program," Doogan said. "It shows that we can compete with top schools, and going up against them makes us better players individually. It's been a cool experience – like nothing I've ever done before."

That exposure extended to the sidelines as well. Roussell, who earned his second consecutive Atlantic 10 Coach of the Year honor this year, was selected to be a court coach for the USA Basketball Women's U19 National Team trials.

"It's been a life-changing experience," he said. "It's amazing that it may not have happened if it weren't for our donors stepping up. We are so grateful."



# A Teambuilding Journey

*Spider lacrosse teams strengthen bonds, serve communities around Europe*



**S**tudying abroad as a Division I student-athlete can be challenging. Demanding schedules, academic pressure, and financial constraints can make it difficult for Spiders to find the time and resources to travel during the school year.

Through the power of donor generosity, the Spider men's and women's lacrosse teams had the opportunity to visit Europe this summer, participating in activities that combined cultural immersion, teambuilding, athletic skill development, and community engagement.

After the spring season concluded in May, the women's team began their international journey in Amsterdam. In addition to exploring the city, the team attended the Dutch Club Nationals tournament, where they hosted a lacrosse clinic and exhibition game. They also coached a youth lacrosse club and hosted P.E. classes at local schools. The trip concluded in San Sebastián, Spain, where they hiked, surfed, and sampled traditional cuisine.

“Traveling with my teammates and best friends was an unforgettable experience,” said junior Jemma Peterkin. “I’m so grateful we had the opportunity to immerse ourselves in different cultures and explore exciting new places.”

Fresh off their first NCAA Tournament victory, the men’s team traveled to Lisbon, Portugal, where they visited the beach, took a cooking class, and volunteered to clean and repaint a community gymnastics club. They also played with the Lacrosse Scotland men’s team (who flew from Scotland to meet the Spiders) before ending with a tour of Seville, Spain, and kayaking in Lagos, Portugal.



*“Traveling with my teammates and best friends was an unforgettable experience. I’m so grateful we had the opportunity to immerse ourselves in different cultures and explore exciting new places.”*

— Jemma Peterkin, '27

“I loved spending time with teammates in a social and non-competitive setting,” said junior Gavin Creo. “It was a very fulfilling experience to be able to do unique activities in Europe, and I will carry those memories with me forever.”

Richmond Athletics teams are permitted by the NCAA to take an international trip once every four years, but the trips are typically not covered by the University’s budget. Dan Chemotti and Anne Harrington, head coaches of men’s and women’s lacrosse, respectively, are grateful for donor support in making this year’s experience possible.

“Ultimately, we wouldn’t have been able to go without their generosity,” Harrington said. “It’s such a special thing we can do with the team, and it only happens once

every four years. I’m not sure I can fully convey how powerful and unique the experience is.”

“Because of donor support, we can offer our Spiders an elite student-athlete experience, and we ask a lot of them in earning that experience each year,” said Chemotti, who was named the 2025 Atlantic 10 Coach of the Year. “These students deserved to go on this trip, and having it made a reality was incredible.”

*Spider student-athletes also have opportunities to travel abroad through EnCompass, the Center for Global Engagement’s award-winning flagship program. Scan to learn more about this impactful donor-supported initiative.*



# Spiders in Toyland

*Business students attend NYC toy fair thanks to grant honoring a Spider alum*



In the spring, eight students traveled with marketing professor Randy Raggio to the North American International Toy Fair at the Jacob K. Javits Center in New York City.

Their travel was funded through a Richard Gottlieb Toy Entrepreneurship Grant, a \$10,000 award created specifically for UR students. The grant, presented by Gottlieb's close friends and colleagues to the Toy Foundation (the event's organizer), honors the late 1969 alumnus and toy industry executive who founded the international consulting firm Global Toy Experts and the trade publication Global Toy News.

UR students became better acquainted with the toy industry and explored internship and career opportunities during the trade show.

"The company reps were excited to talk with the students, who got to see the latest offerings from the largest toy company in the world to a small, one-person single-product startup – and nearly a thousand in between," Raggio said. "The trip was an exciting opportunity to explore an industry they all know about, but most had not considered as a future employment possibility."

Senior Daniel Simes, a business major concentrating in marketing, echoed that excitement. "I wanted to go on this trip because I have always had a strong passion for everything toys," he said. "The Toy Fair was an amazing opportunity to learn about the future of the toy industry, relive a little bit of my childhood experience, and find some potential opportunities for my future career."

Thousands of new toys, games, edutainment, and entertainment-driven experiences were featured throughout the trade

Above, left to right:  
Director of Employer Relations Frank Allen, Rocio Tenorio, Isaac Choe, Leyan Han, Leo Barnes, Adelina Gutic, Laky Simon, Professor Randy Raggio, Zhengyi Lin, Jazwares Chief Brand Officer Jeremy Padawer, and Daniel Simes



show's three stories, which were filled with colorful booths and product displays. Highlights included an expansive display of Barbie paraphernalia and a sighting of well-known television characters, like Barney the purple dinosaur.

"The students appreciated the opportunity to learn about the industry in a fun and interactive way," said Frank Allen, director of employer relations for UR's Office of Career Services, who also accompanied the students to the fair.

The students also attended a private panel featuring representatives from the 900-member Toy Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Toy Association. In the small group setting, students could ask questions and gain insights into the industry.

"One particularly meaningful part of that experience was meeting Richard Gottlieb's wife, Wendy Levey, and realizing how, in a way, we are carrying on his legacy by bringing curiosity, innovation, and fresh perspectives into the industry," junior Rocio Tenorio said.

For Simes, a trip highlight was meeting top executives at Hasbro and representatives from the Lego

Group, two of his favorite brands. "I've been a Lego collector since I can remember, and my first dream job was to be a Lego set designer," Simes said. He was even able to pitch some ideas for Hasbro's Nerf that he'd thought up as a child.

Because the Toy Fair is open only to retailers, wholesalers, and industry insiders, access was highly exclusive. Some of the larger company showrooms were by invitation only. UR students were fortunate to be given personal tours by Lisa McKnight, Mattel's then-executive vice president and chief brand officer (and a Spider Trustee and parent), and Jeremy Padawer, chief brand officer of Jazwares, best known for its

*"The trip was an opportunity to explore an industry [students] know about, but most had not considered as a future employment possibility."*

— Prof. Randy Raggio

popular Squishmallows plush toys.

Tenorio, a business major with a concentration in marketing, described the trip as an eye-opener. "After attending the Toy Fair, I would be interested in working in the industry, and I am looking to further some of the connections I made while in attendance."

*This article was previously published in UR Now, the University's weekly digital news digest.*

# A Space for Plants and People

*Orchard and Food Forest encourages UR community to engage with nature*



**W**hat began as an idea has literally blossomed into reality.

This fall, the Spider community celebrated the grand opening of the UR Orchard and Food Forest. Located next to Abby's Garden in the Eco-Corridor (a multi-use recreational trail that connects campus with surrounding neighborhoods), the new space is open to the public and contains a variety of fruits, shrubs, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and plants.

Daniel Hart, associate director of sustainability and environmental justice, proposed the concept in 2022. Two years later, the Office for Sustainability received a generous unsolicited gift from the Oak Foundation at the direction of a Spider family. With encouragement from the foundation, the office used the funding to pursue Hart's vision.

The orchard represents an ongoing collaboration across campus and with the greater Richmond community. Department of Geography, Environment, & Sustainability students selected trees and shrubs for

the space and determined evaluation criteria to measure its success. Student volunteers from Alpha Sigma Kappa — Women in STEM planted trees and installed planter boxes, which were built by University Facilities. Local high school

*“We call it a ‘living lab,’ and there are so many ways to learn and engage.”*

— Rob Andrejewski

students filled the boxes with soil and planted vegetation. The orchard also welcomes visitors from local nonprofit organizations, including the Blue Sky Fund, which connects Richmond youth with natural environments to promote outdoor education.



With more than 40 species of plants, the orchard will not only enhance biodiversity and increase tree canopy coverage on campus, but it will also provide opportunities for experiential education at UR, said Rob Andrejewski, director of sustainability.

“We call it a ‘living lab,’ and there are so many ways to learn and engage,” he said. “Students who returned from a study abroad to Oaxaca, Mexico, planted a Three Sisters Garden of beans, squash, and corn adjacent to the orchard in Abby’s Garden. I would love for a class studying, say, Italian films to make pizza with our fresh tomatoes and basil as part of a class movie night.”

Andrejewski also emphasized the mindfulness benefits of the space, citing a recent study by the Mayo Clinic on the power of nature for restoring attention span and boosting mood.

“We live in a hyper-focused, way too fast world, so it is critical to design accessible spaces where people can slow down, sit, and relax,” he said. “The orchard is a safe, welcoming place where both plants and people can thrive.”



*In April, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education named Rob Andrejewski, director of sustainability, as a recipient of its inaugural Fellows Award. Scan to learn more.*



*The UR Orchard and Food Forest contains many plant species and varieties, including Concord grape, cherry, apple, blackberry, rosemary, lavender, lemongrass, and more.*

# Excelling at a Business Startup

*Business admin senior puts education into practice at Richmond finance company*



**S**enior Edward Payan feared that an internship would consist mostly of “busy” work and behind-the-scenes tasks. Fortunately, his donor-supported summer internship at FinHolo — a Virginia-based B2B financial advisory service operating through Startup Virginia — offered a hands-on learning experience in a collaborative, supportive environment.

**What drew you to intern at FinHolo?**  
FinHolo offers virtual CFO services to small and mid-sized businesses. They help owners get a clearer

We launched our first two products this summer with Eddie’s help. His marketing and technical skills were vital to the success of these projects. Eddie represents the excellence of a UR education, and I’m grateful for UR donors and Startup Virginia in helping to make this internship possible.

— LINDA HEATH, W’75, *FinHolo founder and CEO*

understanding of their financial position and make better decisions using custom tools and technology. As a business administration major, I was excited to see how financial analysis can be applied in a real-world setting and how startups work with clients to drive long-term success.

**What achievement are you most proud of?**

My greatest accomplishment was creating FinHolo’s master product presentation. It became the core visual used in client meetings to showcase how our virtual CFO platform works. I designed it to clearly explain complex financial tools in a way that was easy for business owners to understand. It helped streamline conversations and made a strong impression on

clients. After hearing positive feedback and seeing the presentation used regularly by the team, I knew I had made a rewarding and meaningful contribution.

**How has this internship impacted your future career plans?**

I’m continuing to work at FinHolo throughout my senior year. I also have the option to stay on with the team after I graduate. The experience didn’t just help me grow as a professional; it truly changed the trajectory of my personal and career development. More than anything, I’ve gained confidence. I now walk into professional interviews with a clearer sense of purpose and the ability to speak to real-world experience, and I can see the difference it makes every time. I’ll carry this experience with me long after graduation.

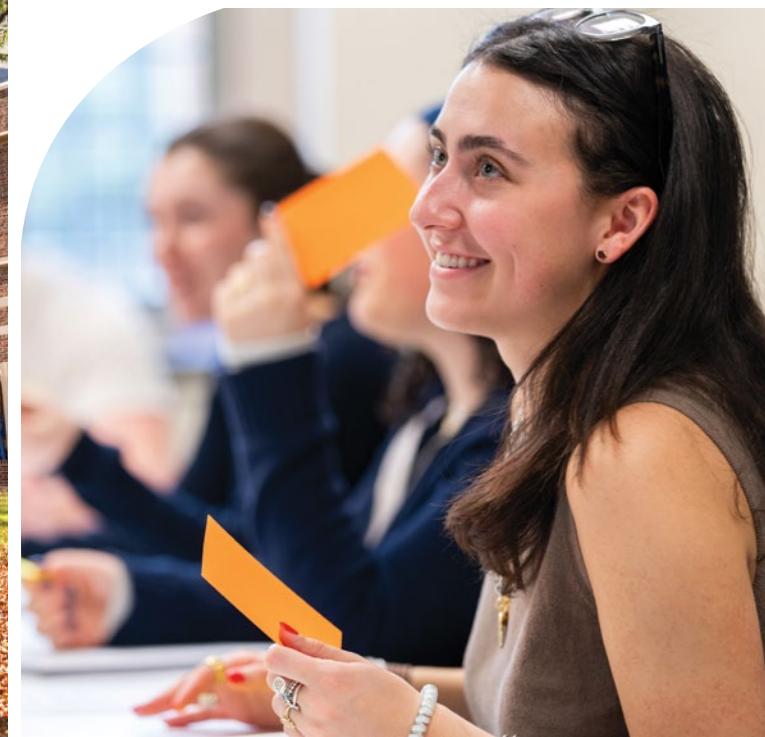
## UR SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS

Since 2013, **6,000+** fellowships have been awarded to **5,000+** students.

In 2025, **more than \$2.5 million** was awarded, supporting nearly **600** fellowship experiences (compared to \$1 million and 250 fellowships in 2013).

**46% of the Class of 2025**

completed at least one summer fellowship.



## Thank You

We are deeply grateful for your generosity to the University of Richmond. With your support, we can continue to reach new heights and unlock doors of access and opportunity for our incredible students.

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND CELEBRATED THE GRAND OPENING** of the UR Orchard and Food Forest in September. Featuring more than 40 species of fruits, shrubs, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and plants, the donor-funded, student-designed space is depicted in this watercolor art created by Haley Herrmann, sustainability communications and engagement specialist in the Office for Sustainability. *Learn more on page 26.*