It has been a good year for the Drexel Paintball Club, which in April became the No. 1 team in the country after winning the 2019 National Collegiate Paintball Association College National Championships. In addition to paintball, there are 32 other club sports teams offered to students at Drexel. And while you can probably guess some of the sports available, like soccer, basketball or volleyball, you might be surprised by some of the others. Nowadays, there are Dragons working up a sweat playing cricket, badminton and Quidditch, too.
The news that Drexel has joined the top-tier research institutions in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education marked an important milestone for the University.

Being known as a major hub for research activity is an exciting development for your alma mater, and our new designation as an R1 Doctoral University by Carnegie is a coveted distinction. It is reserved for universities with the highest level of research activity, and Drexel was one of just 34 private institutions making the list.

I view this not only as the latest indication of the impact of Drexel’s research, but as recognition of the talent and commitment of our faculty. Drexel researchers are making their mark in so many ways, buoyed by an impressive, 15 percent increase in sponsored research awards last year, to nearly $124 million.

It’s at times like these that we can step back and look at the big picture showing the outpouring of entrepreneurial ideas and inspiration from Drexel researchers. We rightly take note of exceptional achievements, like the invention of the iBreastExam cancer detection device, or the progress made toward creating a unique type of atoms-thin MXene material that may make possible portable dialysis.

Our Office of Research reports that, all told, Drexel researchers currently have received more than 600 grants in support of their work, while securing 46 U.S. patents last year. Annually, the University’s research activities regularly result in more than 100 invention disclosures. In support of our research enterprise, we just named the first director of the Human Research Protection Program within the Office of Research. In her new post, Gabrielle Rebillard will ensure that we uphold the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research with human subjects.

Drexel’s strong record of success in driving ideas from the research stage to real-world application tells faculty and student innovators that the University is the right place for them to connect to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. For our alumni, I hope it also builds upon your own sense of pride.

Sincerely,

John Fry / President
Editor’s Letter

It’s graduation time and thousands of new alumni will now reap the greatest gift of a Drexel degree: a lifetime subscription to Drexel Magazine. Smile emoji.

I’m not too proud to face the fact that most alumni are not close readers. I mean, there’s too much to do and not enough bandwidth. But for those who make a point of checking out every issue, I think it’s safe to say that you do so because, even years after graduation, you feel attached to your alma mater. (Also: Hi! And thanks!)

This letter is for you, and for everyone who left Drexel but stayed close. Having been this editor for six years, I’ve seen that many of Drexel’s alumni have attachments that go beyond the usual college connection. Many, many alumni were not only students of Drexel, they were also its employees, its researchers or its teachers. They launched careers that began directly with their experiences here, formed companies with ties to Drexel, or took inspiration from some campus hobby. Similar things happen at every university, but I like to think that Drexel’s experiential model dishes it up to 12.

Page 34 of this edition, “The Making of a Biomed CEO,” features a living example of how someone can embed themselves deeply in the spirit of Drexel and ride it to stunning success. Mihir Shah ’00 came to Drexel as an international student, knowing no one, with only an idea in his mind that he would make the most of what the school had to offer. Today, he’s the founder and CEO of US Life Sciences, a young biomedical company that is providing life-saving breast cancer screenings to women in the developing world, using incredible Drexel technology that he commercialized. He did it by staying engaged in the University for decades after he graduated, lasting to this day. While an undergraduate, he took inspiring classes, he attended networking events, he allied with like-minded students, he got to know influential faculty, he learned how Drexel tech-transfer works, he tried to start a business and failed, and tried again, then again. He was the first tenant in the Close School’s new Baiada Institute for Entrepreneurship, and he used everything he knew, everyone he met and all of the resources available at Drexel to bring something meaningful to market. I hope that you’ll read about his journey and come away impressed with what he accomplished. I’m not sure if his story would have ended the same at any other university.

And while you’re at it, read about 2012 LeBow grad Stefan Seltz-Axmacher, who is And while you’re at it, read about 2012 LeBow grad Stefan Seltz-Axmacher, who is...

Thank you for reading.

Sonja Sherwood / Editor

What’s Your Story?
What does it take to be named one of Drexel’s 40 Under 40?

Past honorees include authors, filmmakers, fashion designers, and founders of companies and nonprofits. They are leaders, inventors, scientists and athletes. We’re incredibly proud of their stories, because they show how far a person can go with a great mind and a solid education. We’re looking for our next group of accomplished young alumni. If that’s you, or someone you know, we want to hear from you.

Eligibility
• Must be 39 years or younger as of March 15, 2020.
• Must have received a degree.
• Should have achieved demonstrated success in business, the private or nonprofit sector, the arts, community involvement or advocacy.
• Must submit nominee’s high resolution photograph and résumé.

Nominations can be submitted at drexelmagazine.org/40under40 or sent to the following mailing address by Aug. 30, 2019.

Drexel Magazine
40 Under 40 Nominations
3141 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-4094

For the health care needs of you and your family, go to the name you trust — Drexel Medicine. By providing compassionate, personalized care from a renowned network of more than 240 physicians working in 18 areas of primary and specialized medicine, we proudly advance Drexel University’s legacy of innovation and excellence.
Who Says Restaurants Are Tough?

Chengdu Famous Food, serving some of the city’s most authentic Sichuan dishes in Powelton Village, was created, launched and sold by two LeBow College of Business students over the span of just a few months. By Beth Ann Downey

Nathan Chan and Mark Rao remember the longest all-nighter of their college career, but it wasn’t to complete school work.

The two friends were in the midst of opening their restaurant, Chengdu Famous Food, in summer 2016. It was July 1 — already a month behind their planned opening date — and they were still setting up at 3635 Lancaster Ave., preparing menus, checking in with staff and making sure they could best serve first-day customers. They stayed up for 72 hours straight.

“In the afternoon right before our break, both Mark and I were passed out on the couch upstairs…” says Chan, a marketing major in the LeBow College of Business.

“…Next to a lot of empty cans of Red Bull,” adds Rao, a fourth-year finance student in LeBow, finishing his friend’s sentence.

The restaurant was a success, but their time as business owners didn’t last long. In early 2017, just a few months after opening Chengdu and when they were already into the planning stages for its next-door sister business, Woosa Bubble Tea, they received an unsolicited offer to sell both entities. They sold out, making a profit they say tripled their investment.

Rao and Chan met in 2015 during their freshman year in a LeBow class, where they were assigned to present a viable business idea.
At first, their idea was to create a food delivery app, but market research revealed too many competitors. It also revealed something else: There were few authentic Sichuan restaurants in Philadelphia. Both Chan and Rao are self-professed “foodies,” and also both grew up in China — Chan was born in Los Angeles but grew up in Hong Kong, and Rao was born and raised in Chengdu, the capital of Chongqing.

They decided to shift their sails. Delivering quick, affordable, delicious Sichuan food to the market was their niche, and even from as far away as New York City.

The Triangle restaurant opened by noted restaurateur Marc Vetri ’90, received a new makeover over the past summer. Not only was the space redecorated with new rugs, walls, art, tables, chairs and lighting — but the updates incorporated the student’s relationships within the industry in Philadelphia.

Now wall art includes photographs shot by Jason Varney, RT photography ’01, a local food and lifestyle photographer and notable Drexel alumni who recently exhibited a show at his alma mater.

The accent wall of wooden wine crates was built by Paul O’Neill, an assistant clinical professor of hospitality, who took apart wine boxes and nailed them together to resemble a previous installation that is currently on display at Otterini’s (a local Italian restaurant opened by noted restaurateur Marc Vetri ’90, who also has taught classes at the center).

The Academic Bistro functions as a restaurant and bar — both of which are regularly used by in-ner Drexel organizations and groups, and also by outside companies. Students in both the Department of Culinary Arts & Sciences and the Department of Hospitality Management also use the space to cook for, serve and host at these events and offerings.
Drexel Expands Opioid Addiction Services

A $1.5 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is enabling clinicians in the College of Medicine to undertake an ambitious project to address the opioid epidemic in Philadelphia, where 1,217 residents died from unintentional drug overdoses in 2017. With the funds, the College of Medicine will create a Center of Excellence providing healthcare for opioid use disorder.

The center will expand addiction treatment services and extend opioid use disorder educational programs to all Drexel health care providers, among other initiatives.

By 2020, the Drexel clinicians are seeking to engage at least 300 new individuals in medication-assisted treatment, to reduce by half the number of patients in treatment who use illicit opioids, and to reduce the number of opioids prescribed by Drexel physicians.

“As a large, community-focused academic health center with 490,000 patient visits in 2017, Drexel Medicine has a significant opportunity to expand opioid use disorder prevention and treatment,” says principal investigator Barbara Schindler, a professor of psychiatry and pediatrics.

Office Decor Made By Dragons

Why line your office walls with corporate prints when there are so many talented artists at Drexel? Last fall the Provost’s Office reception area, conference room and other spaces in the Main Building were remade with more than 40 pieces of art from over 15 Drexel dragons. The call for artwork went out to Dragons across the University and over 400 submissions were received. The selected artwork features a variety of subjects and mediums to come together to represent the talent of Drexel’s community.

“The best way to show support and appreciation for our amazing student and faculty creativity than to highlight their work in plain sight for our visitors and our staff?” For our office, it provides even more motivation to work hard in supporting the academic enterprise,” says Provost M. Brian Blake.

The Latest Thang is Blockchain

In November, Drexel students created a new club aimed at keeping students from all disciplines abreast of blockchain technology.

Drexel Blockchain is aiming to research, educate, communicate and consult around this digital phenomenon in a way that both elevates Drexel and helps the student club’s founders leave a lasting legacy.

The founders range from majors in computer science to finance to graphic design, and its members range from first-year through fifth-year students. It’s this diversity that is not only the club’s seminai building block, but also a key foundation of blockchain itself.

“The trust lies in the community, and that’s how Drexel Blockchain operates,” says co-founder Adit Gupta, a fifth-year software engineering and math major. “It’s very community-driven.”

The goal of Drexel Blockchain, according to its founders, is to operate like a startup group. This includes providing consulting services to companies in Center City and beyond — while giving students the opportunity to learn consulting skills through direct experience.

Drexel Blockchain has big future plans, including hosting “the biggest blockchain conference in Drexel’s history,” according to members.

Blockchain technology is best known as the framework for the digital currency Bitcoin, but it has many potential business uses.

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ATHLETICS

Richard Florida Named First Philadelphia Fellow

Drexel, Thomas Jefferson University and the University City Science Center named Richard Florida, a distinguished scholar known for his groundbreaking research on urban demographic changes, as the inaugural recipient of the Philadelphia Fellowship. The Philadelphia Fellowship—a collaborative program initiated by the three partner institutions—invites thought leaders and scholars to Philadelphia for year-long research engagements focused on pressing urban issues, such as inclusive economic growth, infrastructure renewal and smart infrastructure. Florida will focus on Philadelphia’s affordable housing and human capital gaps, and the role of large-scale local institutions in identifying potential solutions. Findings will be shared at three major public engagements, culminating in a final research publication to be released in late 2019.

“Richard Florida is the foremost scholar on the challenges and opportunities facing cities,” President John Fry says. “At the same time, Drexel’s partnership with the University City Science Center and Thomas Jefferson University underscores the central role that anchor institutions play in ensuring the innovation economy creates opportunities for everyone.”

Vidas Scores a Board

Drexel Athletics received a significant contribution to the Vidas Athletic Complex renovation campaign from Dennis Fink ’78, his wife Dee and family. Fink Family Scoreboard, a state-of-the-art LED display for Vidas Field, will mark the facility’s first phase of the complex’s transformation.

“Fink’s gift was amplified by a $1 million matching gift from Drexel University Trustee Jim Baen ’71 and his wife Christine, who pledged to match all gifts and commitments $25,000 and above. “As a former player, proud father to collegiate lacrosse players and current high school coach, I know how imperative it is to have facilities that reflect the hard work and dedication of the student athletes and athletic staff,” said Fink.

Fink, who has supported Drexel and Drexel Athletics for almost 30 years, graduated as the second-leading scorer in Drexel lacrosse history. His 256 career points currently rank third in program history, and his 126 assists still stand as the most ever by a Drexel lacrosse player. He earned the University’s first-ever Division I All-America honor when he was named Honorable Mention; his senior year, a season in which he led the country in assists (63) and points (98). He was inducted into the Drexel Athletic Hall of Fame in 1985 and was named to the Drexel Lacrosse 75th Anniversary Team last year.

Resting in Peace

The sacred remains of Saint Katharine Drexel (1858–1955), a member of the Drexel family and author of “Saint Katharine: The Life of Katharine Drexel.,” were housed in a shrine at the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, announced the Archdiocese of Philadelphia last year.

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Way to Go, Grads!

Savannah Merceus delivered a powerful rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner” to the 172 new graduates of Kline School of Law on May 13 at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, which also hosted 543 College of Medicine grads on May 17. Altogether, more than 6,300 Dragons celebrated graduation at a number of individual ceremonies, capped by a school-wide celebration at Citizens Bank Park on June 14. Check out more photos at www.drexelmagazine.org.

Rockin’ Around the Clock

The annual WKDU Electronic Music Marathon hosted by Drexel’s independent student radio station has taken on many forms in the name of good causes, and this year it linked up with several donors to break its fundraising record.

This year’s marathon in October brought out DJs spinning everything from ambient music to disco and techno to experimental and house. The station partnered with Philly AIDS Thrift for the second year in a row as well as two organizations they support: The Attic Youth Center and the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania. All three received $1,500 each from WKDU.

“Of course, we appreciate the support from the WKDU community,” says Chris Burrell, an adjunct marketing professor at Drexel and the electronic music director of WKDU, noting that the marathon raised a total of $9,000 — half of which goes to the charities and half of which is used to support future WKDU programming.

“I think it speaks to the momentum that we’ve grown over the years doing the event and building up our relationship with the community of DJs,” he says.

The EMM started as a class project in 1997, but it has grown into a Philly DJ tradition with around-the-clock programming during the marathon weekend and a remote broadcast party series.

“It’s cool how we are able to bring together people from a lot of different scenes, musical styles and different walks of life,” Burrell says.

Regional Medical School Site Selected

Tower Health has selected a location for construction of a 200,000-square-foot building for a four-year additional location for Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health.

The site, which is less than a mile from Reading Hospital, will open for the 2021-22 academic year. When fully operational, the campus will educate 200 students.

College of Medicine’s Senior Vice Dean for Educational and Academic Affairs Valerie Weber says this additional medical school location will provide a different type of environment than Drexel’s Philadelphia campuses, as Reading is a small urban area with a diverse community with growing medical needs.

“Tower Health is a really dynamic health system, and it’s an expanding health system,” she says. “They have a very long history of medical excellence in graduate and undergraduate education. … I think that this is going to be important for our future and their future — they’re now an academic health system and they have a primary affiliation with a medical school campus.”

Color for a Cause

Last October, Drexel’s Office of Equal- ity & Diversity (OED) honored national Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a purple-wearing contest. The winner of the contest went above and beyond in wearing purple every day — even on the weekends and at home. And yes, it helped that purple was already her favorite color.

Monique Mallory, assistant director of operations and data analytics in OED, wore at least one item of purple for each of the 31 days in October — which is even more impressive considering items couldn’t be worn twice.

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence promotes the month of awareness with a purple ribbon to symbolize and honor courage, survival and dedication to ending domestic violence.

Mallory was inspired to support the month because of her own experiences with intimate partner violence in the past.

“After working here and hearing the stories of so many people who suffer with domestic abuse, I decided to start speaking up about my experiences,” she says.

“While it’s true that Monique works with us in OED, that’s not what gave her a leg up,” says Jesse Krohn, formerly associate director of education and prevention in the Office of Equality & Diversity. “It makes sense that Monique would demonstrate such an intense commitment to ending interpersonal violence — she is one of the most compassionate and caring people I have the good fortune to know.”

Act 93: Aid for Clinical Trials

In October, Drexel alumnus and benefactor Dana Dornsife ’83 joined Governor Tom Wolf in Harrisburg for a ceremonial signing of Act 93. The new law is aimed at improving patient access to clinical trials and ensuring that trials have participation from a diverse population.

Dornsife, who is the founder and board chair of the Lazarex Cancer Foundation, worked closely with Drexel leaders (including President John Fry, College of Medicine Vice Dean for Research Kenny Simansky and Vice President in the Office of Government and Community Relations David E. Wilson) and the Wolf Administration and the General Assembly over the past three years to garner the necessary support for this issue.

The law is a step toward addressing race-related health disparities. Consider that African Americans are two to three times more likely than white citizens to be affected by multiple health problems and yet they make up only 4.5 percent of participants enrolled in clinical trials for treatments targeting the cancer.

For many expenses such as transportation and lodging are an insurmountable barrier. Act 93 allows cancer trial participants to be reimbursed for related out-of-pocket expenses, helping to remove barriers for financially burdened patient-subjects.
Show and Tell

CHIRS SIRACUSA
BS BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ’19

Every year, more than 5,700 students discover their careers through the Drexel Co-op program — a signature model of education that balances classroom theory with job experience within a buzzing network of nearly 1,700 co-op employers in 52 countries. What does a Drexel co-op look like? In this regular feature, we ask a student fresh off a recent co-op to show us... — Sonja Sherwood

THE CO-OP

I was a roving photographer on the set of “Saturday Night Live.” On a given day I would take dozens of shots of the cast and guests for the archives and for media outlets to purchase for editorial coverage of the show. The behind-the-scenes images were for posterity, while the film stills I took that week went on Fatetty Images; NBC would push them out at 1:30 a.m. as soon as each night’s show ended. One of my images of Aidy Bryant portraying Sarah Huckabee Sanders ended up on the cover of The New York Times.

THE TAKEAWAY

In a setting that dynamic and unpredictable, you have to be on your toes. You never know who’s around the corner, literally. One moment in particular I was caught between one of the camera frames and the floor seating. I couldn’t move because I was going to be inDon King’s shot. And then Lorne Michaels came over and sat down and then [SNL writer and producer] Steve Higgins came and sat down and then Alec Baldwin was over here and so was [SNL cast member] Beck Bennett and I’m holding the updated script and he’s like, “Can I read this with you?” It was just a really cool moment for me. You know you’re just so little in this whole thing and you’re right there. There’s nothing more real than that. You don’t really have your skills in a situation like that, but you learn what you’re not good at, and you learn how to adapt.

THE OBJECTS

This is one of the cameras I used on the set of “Saturday Night Live.” It’s my eye. And this is a typical call sheet I used. It’s important because it outlines everything that goes on for a given assignment: what’s going on, who’s in the shot and where the shoot is.

CO-OP PROGRAM

Gift Expands Community Legal Services

A $1.65 million gift from two prominent members of the Kline School of Law will enable the newly named Andy and Gwen Stern Community Lawyering Clinic to expand its free legal assistance locally and to support Kline’s commitment to social justice. The transformative gift reflects Andy and Gwen Stern’s passion for community engagement, and it provides for the hire of an additional staff attorney to extend the clinic’s programs under its director, Rachel López.

“Andy and Gwen’s generous gift will allow us to realize the clinic’s full potential,” López says. “Not only will it mean that we can provide more high-quality legal assistance to some of Philadelphia’s most vulnerable, but it will also create new opportunities for innovation that will facilitate a more collective and holistic approach to legal problem-solving.”

Andy Stern is an accomplished partner and trial lawyer known for obtaining record-setting verdicts at Kline & Specter, which was founded by the Kline School’s naming benefactor, Thomas Kline. Gwen Stern is director of the Kline School’s Trial Advocacy Program.

“The transformative gift reflects our commitment to supporting the educational mission of the Kline School,” said Thomas Kline. “We are thrilled to see Andy and Gwen’s generosity translate into tangible opportunities to expand our programs.”

Andy and Gwen Stern have supported the Kline School’s community legal assistance programs and have been active in the School’s alumni events. The $1.65 million gift is the largest given to the Kline School and will be used to create the Andy and Gwen Stern Community Lawyering Clinic.

Which Drexel Dragon Do You Remember?

Today, Drexel University’s mascot is a dragon named Mario — but he wasn’t always called Mario, and he wasn’t always a dragon.

Mario has only been “Mario,” or “Mario the Magnificent,” since 1997, and the Drexel Dragon has only been a Drexel Dragon since 1928 — before that, teams from the then-Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry were actually called “The Engineers.” In the 90 or so years since the dragon was hatched at Drexel, the look of the mascot has changed a lot. We dove into the University Archives to show just how much.

In 1928, the Dragon made its debut at a pep rally before a big game, and a year later, was outfitted with the ability to emit smoke resembling the traditional fiery breath of the historic monsters. A few years later, this Dragon was updated to a lighter, safer version of a dragon, made of cloth. The decades following, new versions were created, including one made out of paper-mâché by a group of creative and enterprising fraternity brothers for a special event in 1992.

By the late 90s, the Drexel Dragon mascot became animated — a tradition that continues to this day, with Drexel students stepping into Mario’s claws. The Dragon then wore a collegiate sweater featuring a big “Drexel” over a jumpsuit-like costume with a hard mask, but then in 1997 when the Drexel Dragon was officially named Mario, he was outfitted in the Drexel navy and gold of today. The 2008 Mario started to look more like today’s Mario — mostly navy, with car- toonish eyes, navy and gold wings that have slightly changed, a tongue that stays in his mouth and a more understated set of gold spikes on his back and tail.

Which Drexel Dragon do you remember?
One goal. That’s how excruciatingly close Drexel’s men’s ice hockey club team came to having a chance to achieve its own goal: winning a game in the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) tournament. Even though the season fell short, 2019 will go down as one of the most memorable seasons in the program’s history, reaching a 30-5-2 record that is the program’s best to date.

“This was hands-down our best year,” says Coach Kyle Zoldy ’13 (pictured at right), who’s been a club member since first lacing up his skates for Drexel in 2008. “We had a very seasoned leadership core. The coaching staff has now been around six years together. A lot of the players that we’ve recruited have been here for quite some time and understand what we expect from them in terms of effort and the Xs and Os side of things.”

Among the team’s accomplishments on the ice: winning its third-straight conference regular season title, earning the 18 seed at the ACHA postseason tournament in Dallas, and finishing the year with a national ranking of 24.

Yet perhaps the program’s most telling move forward was the establishment of a second team, which competed in the ACHA’s Division II.

“We went from having 30 hockey players on campus to having close to 60,” Zoldy says. “Now the guys on the top team understand that there’s a hungry group on the second team that are really fighting for their spots.”

Club hockey in the ACHA’s Division I is highly competitive. Although there are no scholarships, players are recruited and often transfer in from NCAA Division III programs.

“IT’s not a club where people are showing up thinking, maybe I’ll try it out,” says Lucas Fraiman ’20, a defenseman and the club’s president. “People are in contact with the coaches, they’re known beforehand and they’ve been playing the sport for years.”

In fact, the last two programs to join the NCAA’s Division I — Penn State and Arizona State — previously competed in the ACHA.

Club hockey players must commit much of their time to the sport. Practices are on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 6 a.m. and Thursdays at 9 p.m. Weekends usually mean two, or sometimes three, games. Road trips can mean long bus rides.

“Hockey is a sport that we’ve all played since a very young age,” Fraiman says. “It’s what we all love to do. In some ways you can’t imagine life without being a part of it.”

Drexel’s club, which has been around since the late 1970s, has never advanced out of the ACHA tournament’s first round. But it’s qualified for the competition three years in a row, and this season, its 5-4 loss to Oklahoma was its best showing. After falling behind 4-0, Drexel clawed its way back into the game before falling just short.

Next year will tell whether the team achieves its objective, but after coming so close this time, the goal seems nearer than ever.
SQUASH

FROM THE DAC

The bookends of the Drexel women’s squash team’s season tell you all you need to know about the direction of the program.

On Nov. 11, the Dragons lost a close 5-4 decision to archrival Penn in the second match of the year. More than three months later, Drexel ended its best season ever by defeating the Quakers in the Howe Cup College Association National Championship consolation match to finish No. 7 in the nation, the highest ranking in program history.

“It all came down to their determination and self-belief,” says Coach John White. “They started to get the wins toward the end of the season and started to believe in themselves a little more and realized that they’re a team that the top players don’t want to play.”

Fiona Power, a senior from Ireland, won her match and played a key role in Drexel’s success all season. Despite that initial loss to Penn, she and her teammates came away from the experience hopeful and optimistic, not down.

“We knew with our new team we could finally break that top eight and start competing with the top teams,” she says. “After that game we saw our potential and set a higher bar for ourselves.”

Following the Penn setback, Drexel defeated ranked opponents Virginia and Dartmouth in two of its next three matches. In January, the team notched its first-ever win over Cornell, an Ivy League power ranked No. 12 in the country at the time. The season also included victories over Top 25 foes Williams and Colby.

White has tried to instill a culture of success since he became the program’s first coach when it was established eight years ago. After several long and trying years in which he had to educate potential student-athletes about the mere existence of Drexel’s program, he finally sees signs that the team is ready to become elite.

Now, instead of scouring the internet for players, he travels to tournaments overseas in search of top recruits. Rather than trying to convince players to come to Drexel, many contact him to inquire about being recruited.

“We knew with our new team we could finally break that top eight and start competing with the top teams.”

— Fiona Power ’19

White says he never got a chance to pitch Drexel to recruits, so he simply offered a chance to come to Drexel after playing overseas. Now, players come to him.

“The top eight was our goal this year and we got that,” he says. “The next level is to stay there. We’re all looking at the same recruits. We’re all trying to get them to visit and seal the deal. It’s just a matter of presenting Drexel Athletics and Drexel University to the prospective student-athletes and their parents and get them involved in the program.”

Players like Hannah Blatt have helped propel Drexel to its lofty heights. The sophomore from Canada followed up a 17-4 season, when she played primarily in the No. 4 spot, by reaching No. 1 on the team.

White praises her for her determination and competitiveness, characteristics she sees in her coach as well.

“A Nice Get

From early setbacks to ultimate success, the squash team that didn’t even exist eight years ago just finished its best season ever.

By Mike Unger
Eamon Gallagher ’13 leans into a conversation about HeavyWater’s latest plans with its chief financial officer David Luk and takes a swig from a Tröegs Scratch 342, a lager from a Central Pennsylvania brewery that markets to those with a spirit of adventure and curiosity. Fitting.

Those traits, after all, are hallmarks of successful entrepreneurs — and this unique incubator and accelerator for early-stage startups is all about that. But on this last Thursday of the month, the 36-year-old program director wants to encourage another quality, one arguably harder to come by among determined, heads-down techies but central to ic@3401’s successes.

“It fosters community,” Gallagher, tall and lean, with a mop of light brown hair, says, talking a New York minute (though he hails from Maine). “We’ve made it a space where entrepreneurs can come and support each other.”

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“A lot of credit goes to its unconventional model and its status as the linchpin of Drexel’s ambition to increase the number of University-affiliated inventions that make it to market. Unlike the typical university incubator, ic@3401 co-mingles academic tenants and classrooms with entrepreneurs from the public. That means members come not only from Drexel and its wealth of commercialization and translational research programs (think seed-funder Drexel Ventures, degree-granting Charles D. Close School of Entrepreneurship, health care solutions-focused Coulter Translational Research Partnership Program, etc.) but from other academic institutions, local industry and members of the city’s startup community.
As Gallagher and Luk catch up, a steady flow of men and women unplug from laptops. They wear a path from the expanse of tables and swivel chairs that serve as shared offices to the snug kitchen cum break room on the second floor of 3401 Market St. There, food (Mediterranean from Mama’s Vegetarian this day), beer and most important chatter all abound. A couple of employees from Drexel’s transdisciplinary research ExCITe Center on the first floor wander up and ic@3401 alums such as Luk add to the mix.

It was at a similar happy hour that Gallagher played the matchmaker between Luk, then a principal at local venture firm Safeguard Scientifics, and HeavyWater’s founder and CEO Soofi Safavi, who was looking to expand. The two men hit it off so well, Luk got the job of CFO and chief revenue officer and his venture capital connections started HeavyWater on its path to the big time.

“It would have never happened if I was not at 3401,” Luk, who held office hours here, says of serendipity’s role in the successful pairing. HeavyWater’s legal team had emailed an ask a while back, he continues, but he ignored it at the time. “It didn’t seem like a fit. … I think Eamon did a better job of explaining why we needed to chat.”

Says Safavi: “Eamon grasps at even the most complex level the mission of the company, and on its behalf articulates it and attracts other individuals.”

ic@3401 helped in other ways, too. When HeavyWater needed private office space to meet Black Knight’s security regulations, the large, third-floor game room was repurposed. When HeavyWater needed new hires, a “help wanted” sign on its door landed a graduate student from the College of Computing & Informatics next door. The company also partnered with Drexel’s Xiaohua Tony Hu, an information science professor. Hu happens to be a founding co-director of the National Science Foundation Center for Visual & Decision Informatics, a program HeavyWater used to further develop its technology.

“It is a little like adding oxygen to a fire,” Hu says of the incubator’s role in advancing the company. “They’re not doing the research itself, but they are doing a lot of supportive activities that are really helping the company advance.”

“We’ve made it a space where entrepreneurs can come and support each other,” says Gallagher. “The incubator is like the nucleus, the core. The rest is the ecosystem of organizations who are in the community doing good work.”

Christopher Wink is CEO and publisher of a network of news sites called Technical.ly that follow local tech startup scenes. “Any city of any size in the world is talking about the tech renaissance,” he says. “We know that innovation happens at the intersection of different communities. Universities are blessed with their own set of internal communities, students, professors, alumni. But critically, universities want opportunity for outside entities to be on campus, bump into each other.”

ic@3401 is that type of ecosystem, according to Wink. “We need spaces like this,” he says, “to make sure Philadelphia is not a laggard but a leader.”
SHINTARO KAIDO
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF VENTURE COMMERCIALIZATION DREXEL VENTURES
"WE'RE VERY KEEN TO MAKE SURE STARTUPS ARE SYNERGYSTIC TO THE COMMUNITY"

as managing director of venture commercialization at Drexel Ventures, "and asked, 'Have you met with any of our startups?' The answer across all five was 'No.'

"So, it's like, what in the heck are you doing here?' he says. "At one point, the number of service providers exceeded people involved in startups."

Law firms were sent packing. Startups capturing capital were invited to join, enticed by an attractive location near 30th Street Station, the campuses of Drexel, University of Pennsylvania and University of the Sciences, and below-market rents. At the same time, professors with sound concepts that had spunout potential were channeled to the incubator.

Since 2014, the number of companies based at ic@3401 has doubled. Admission is competitive, including a phone-screen and in-person interview that might involve a mixer "just to see how they interact," Gallagher says. He looks for an entity of one or two founders who want to solve a problem, and know what product will accomplish it.

In addition, Drexel academics with a marketable idea get automatic admission — but only after Kaido signs off. He also puts the project through Drexel Ventures' Proof-of-Concept Academy, an accelerator program for high-growth startup teams that Kaido runs. Likewise, startups that go through the Science Center's Digital Health Accelerator, which helps companies grow in the U.S. health care market and increase revenue through sales, get a greenlight.

If Gallagher is the matchmaker, then Kaido is the visionary. "That curation we talk about is very intentional," Kaido says, giving off a Silicon Valley vibe with his cropped black hair and 3D-printed glasses, with his shorts and Phillies jersey over a tee. "We're very keen to make sure the startups are synergistic to the community." He says some successful early stages have been turned away because their ideas and products — in terms of technologies — were nothing new.

Keith A. Orris, senior vice president for corporate relations and economic development at Drexel and senior manager of Drexel Ventures, represents the University on the board of the Science Center, a long-time local hub for technology innovation. He brokered the deal with the center to share resources for a single incubator in lieu of two competing entities.

ic@3401, Orris says, fits perfectly into Drexel's DNA of translational research. "In order to have a successful commercialization program today," he says, "we not only want to license our technologies to existing companies, we also want to license them to startup companies around the principle investigator who invented it and support those academic innovators in starting up a company themselves. That takes services, mentoring and education. And that takes capital."

And, he adds, that takes ic@3401. He calls it a dynamic ecosystem "of like-minded thinkers and doers.... We expect you to fail fast or grow consistently, graduate and go to the next level of space."

In other words, sink or swim.

To its credit, more of the startups swim. In 2017, out of its current 48 members, seven companies exited and three failed, Gallagher says. On average, companies graduate in 19 months, often with a team of eight to 12 "with legs firmly under them," he says.

One reason newbies stay above water is that ic@3401 comes with built-in coaches in not only Gallagher and his connections, but other startup founders, some of whom have sold previous companies.

"This space has so many entrepreneurs," says computer scientist Zikria Syed MS '89, who is CEO of his third startup, PatientWing. The online system to facilitate patient enrollment in clinical trials has called ic@3401 home since its inception three years ago. "It's a great space to mingle and learn and share stories and experiences."

PatientWing scales, it has partnered with a Science Center startup working on novel cancer treatments. So far, it has raised almost $1 million in funds. A decade ago, when Syed was launching his other company, "incubators were really not there," he says. "We were much more isolated from other businesses." ic@3401 — and Gallagher in particular — make connections to the larger business world happen, says Priya Bhutani, founder and CEO of REGDesk, a machine-learning platform that helps medical device companies navigate the regulatory process. "Tamu goes out of his way to establish opportunities, which is what is needed in this space," she says. Quorum, a nearby Science Center event and networking space, put REGDesk in front of medical device and pharmaceutical leaders. "These types of introductions are a direct help to us."

Also, a Slack channel offers a platform for members to ask real-time questions and share industry news. Recently, a post about employee health/benefits plans for B2B customers got three swift responses. And Gallagher created a Takeout Kit, a vetted list of startup providers such as accountants, attorneys, software shops "and on and on."

There is more to ic@3401 than meets the eye. The 7,425-square-foot space hosts 58 desks, private phone booths, eight individual offices, conference rooms, a kitchen and a game room turned office. But its top assets are an unusual mix of tenants, drawn from both the public and the academic sector, and the business support it gets from Drexel.

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Then there is the building itself. It houses mysti-
Franklin Technology Partners. Because ic@3401 has proven a fruitful pipeline for the investor, it maintains an office onsite, with staff managers rotating through twice a week. “When you cut to the chase, everybody needs money. They also need guidance, market strategies. Some are very early stage. They don’t even know what company they are.”

DreamIt Ventures is another funding source that has shifted from supporting back-of-envelope ideas to scaling companies. Based up the street at 30th and Market streets, the Science Center has additional commercialization programs and spaces to connect, including Quorum that’s free and open to the public and Venture Café Philadelphia, a weekly gathering of entrepreneurs, creatives and those with an interest in out-of-the-box thinking.

“ic@3401,” says Science Center president and CEO Steve Zarrilli, “leverages and builds on the success of both institutions’ legacy of supporting back-of-envelope ideas to scaling companies. Based up the street at 3401 Market, the Science Center has additional supporting back-of-envelope ideas to scaling companies. Based up the street at 34th and Market streets, the Science Center has additional startups and convening communities around innovation and entrepreneurship.

Even after companies graduate, the relationship continues. “We caught up recently,” says ROAR for Good’s co-founder and CEO Yasmine Montana, who sought Gallagher’s counsel on fundraising platforms for the company’s new product. He always “lessens … the degrees of separation from someone you want to meet. He’s really amazing.” For the matchmaking, it was just another day at ic@3401.

When Kaido was hired in late 2014, one of his early goals was to build a supportive, on-campus community of entrepreneurs to help Drexel innovators with their entrepreneurial endeavors. To the serial entrepreneur who launched and directed a nationally recognized accelerator program in the Midwest, that meant exposing Drexel academic innovators to an ecosystem that not only offered access to seed money and support but also to an entrepreneurial community filled with successful entrepreneurs.

“For ACE, which has launched pilots at Philadelphia-area schools, it’s all about networks. ‘It’s a space where you can bounce ideas off one another,’ says Lori Severino, an assistant professor of special education and principal investigator on the I-Corps grant. ‘We wouldn’t have gone anywhere without Drexel Ventures and ic@3401. We would have had this great idea, and it would have just sat there.’

After 10 months, the company graduated to NextFab in Philadelphia and is now, he says, speaking from experience. “Tomorrow is almost too late.”

Consider Sage Smart Garden, a University of Delaware spinout developing a smart irrigation system for landscapers and home gardeners. The startup joined the incubator last summer after going through the NSF I-Corps Team program. Almost right away — thanks to an encounter at one of Gallagher’s happy hours — Sage Smart Garden connected with fellow tenants GrowFlux. The two Drexel alumni use a horticultural lighting and sensing platform using similar technology.

“We were able to significantly cut down our product-development time,” says Sage Smart chief technical officer Trevor Stephens. After only a few months, the company graduated to NextFab in South Philadelphia to focus on hardware development and manufacturing.

Meanwhile, GrowFlux moved from a small office on the second floor to HeavyWater’s old digs. The ping-pong table now serves as work table, where tinkering and testing of the agtech lights marketed to growers of cannabis and agriculture takes place.

Before its May move to ic@3401, GrowFlux kept offices at various co-working spots. None proved an ideal fit, says CEO Eric Eisele ’09 and Chief Technology Officer Alexander Roscoe ’13.

“That’s because none catered specifically to start-ups,” Eisele says. “I think,” he says, “seeing other people at the same stage as us boosts our energy.”

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In many ways, Gallagher’s background has proven perfect for matchmaking.

“Many from Drexel are new to entrepreneurialism,” Kaido says. “So ic@3401 was built so that there’s a value proposition” of nurturing first-timers with urgency.

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In 2016, Gallagher was hired to manage ic@3401 and carry out Kaido’s vision of a beacon for local entrepreneurs and investors. The incubator “really builds on all of those relationships and experiences dating all the way back to tech recruiting,” he says.

ACE BEGAN AS A RESEARCH PROJECT AT DREXEL’S EDUCATION SCHOOL BUT EVOLVED INTO AN I-CORPS TEAM Thanks to DREXEL VENTURES’ PROGRAMS AND A $100,000 GRANT TO DEVELOP A READING COMPREHENSION ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR ADOLESCENTS. THE EDTECH COMPANY ALSO WON A PRESTIGIOUS, $50,000 NSF I-CORPS TEAM GRANT TO DO CUSTOMER DISCOVERY. ONE REASON: ACE GAINED AN EDGE THROUGH NETWORKING WITH IC@3401 MEMBERS WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE NSF PROGRAM FOR ACADEMIC INNOVATORS.

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There’s something about the spirit of the times. Maybe it’s the return of a tech boom, the pressure of the gig economy, the excitement of rapid social change…whatever it is, entrepreneurship is definitely trending. In the era of Kickstarter and YouTube stardom and 3D printing, it seems everyone has a lead on some seed funding and a Big Idea. So what exactly sets an entrepreneur apart from a small business owner or a side hustle?

Can it be learned, or is it innate? Do you have what it takes?

Entrepreneurship isn’t about having “CEO” on your calling card, say our experts. It’s a state of mind.
HOW DO YOU TEACH ENTREPRENEURIALISM?

“Rather than teach about entrepreneurship, my approach emphasizes teaching for entrepreneurship. Through experiential learning, I try to expose students to the real world of the entrepreneur. Some assignments include having students work closely with customers to gain instant feedback on their perceived opportunity. I also use case studies that allow students to put themselves in the place of entrepreneurs in both successful and unsuccessful ventures so students can appreciate the challenges that are faced by early-stage companies. Simulations allow students to experience failure. Where possible students are encouraged to engage in consultancy projects with entrepreneurs and ‘placements’ in entrepreneurial businesses. Students must be provided with opportunities to put into practice concepts taught in the classroom.”

HOW DO YOU SPOT AN ENTREPRENEUR?

“I spot entrepreneurs everywhere. All of us have the ability to be entrepreneurial — to think and act innovatively, to bounce back from failure, to take initiative in the face of risk. We engage in what I call ‘small acts of entrepreneurship’ throughout our lives: when we take a chance on a new job, relationship, location, or bounce back from a challenge. At the Charles D. Close School of Entrepreneurship, we engage students in experiential courses and programs to develop their entrepreneurial skills and character. Our program gives them the life skills of an entrepreneur — because entrepreneurship education empowers everyone.”

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A GOOD STARTUP TO INVEST IN?

“Being an entrepreneur, I look more at the person, rather than the idea. Someone who has had a failed startup or a successful exit is typically a candidate for investment because the second try shows grit, tenacity and the ability to pivot. Technically, we are looking for an entrepreneur who is solving a problem in enterprise. We like to invest in early-stage companies with some traction from Series A to an A Round. A driven entrepreneur with a customer-validated idea can be a home run.”

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU’RE HIRING AN INNOVATIVE THINKER?

“Through my experience, when I hire an entrepreneur, I’m hiring a self-starter. That’s one of the key differentiators between entrepreneurship students and other students. Entrepreneurship students are not waiting for direction, you give them a mission and they go and accomplish it. It’s the self-starters who are unique and most consistent. Entrepreneurship comes down to a sense of empowerment, the feeling of ‘there’s nothing that I can’t do.’ This sense of empowerment permeates everything and all the work that they do.”

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU’RE READY TO START A VENTURE?

“I think you know you’re ready to start something when your passion will no longer allow you to sit dormant. Rarely is there a perfect time to do something; the cards are almost never aligned fully in your favor. I think passion is the only factor that can carry entrepreneurs beyond those obstacles and imperfections in the plan. Starting something without true passion is like driving a car without tires to handle bumps in the road ahead.”

Zahed Subhan

Subhan has over 30 years experience in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries including managerial roles in large multinationals, and he has raised more than $30 million from venture firms to fund biotech enterprises. Presently, he serves as CEO of Eppin Pharma Inc. and CEO of AestasRx Inc, both emerging biopharmaceutical companies.

Mike Kurzeja

Senior Manager, CSUS

EEXelon Corporation

Kurzeja hires Drexel students at Exelon and is an adjunct professor in the Close School.

Evan Ehlers

CEO

SHARING EXCESS

In his third year of college, Close School student Ehlers formed a socially charitable startup that allows students to donate unused meal ‘swipes’ on their student cafeteria meal plans to community members in need.

Donna De Carolis

Dean

Close School of Entrepreneurship

Drexel University

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Doc Parghi

Partner

SRI Capital

Parghi is an early-stage venture capitalist and board member of Ben Franklin Technology Partners, a Philadelphia-based startup firm. SRI Capital of Philadelphia operates a $100 million fund for investments in enterprise tech startups.
In 1996, 18-year-old Mihir Shah left Mumbai to study at Drexel. He spoke little English and had barely used a computer, but he wanted to study computer engineering and he wanted to make an impact. Over the years, using technology invented at Drexel, he built a breast cancer detection device that is already saving lives in the developing world, signed a prestigious distribution deal with a global corporation, and became fêted in his home country. This is the story of how he got from there to here.

BY ADAM STONE

WHEN SHAH RUKH KHAN walked onto the stage of a new primetime show in January 2018, the audience was primed for action: The film actor and producer known as the King of Bollywood is the most famous celebrity in India. All eyes were on him as he stood on the vividly lit set of “Ted Talks India Nayi Soch,” a TED Talk series produced in Mumbai for India’s largest TV network.

On that night, though, Khan wasn’t the star. He was there to present Mihir Shah, 40, a youthful-looking, unassuming guy in round glasses. Shah is the Indian-born, Drexel-educated CEO of Philadelphia-based UE LifeSciences, a company that recently debuted a breast cancer detection device unlike anything else on the market.

“Cancer is not a death sentence,” Shah began, speaking in rapid Hindi. As cameras panned across the faces of women in the audience, Shah explained that their chances of surviving breast cancer is roughly half that of women living in the United States or Europe, where early detection is more routine. Traditional mammograms are high-tech machines that depend on trained radiologists, he explained, but India has 10 times fewer radiologists than the United States, and they serve four times as many people.

Then Shah showed the audience a 2-inch-square wafer that he promised will even their odds of survival. The wafer is a unique sensor invented by professors at Drexel, commercialized through the University’s venture infrastructure by Shah when he was a young graduate of Drexel’s computer engineering program, and developed into a one-of-a-kind, life-saving medical device by Shah’s company. It’s
called the iBreastExam, and it is the developing world’s most promising tool for affordable, radiation-free, portable breast cancer screening. When Shah displayed the device, he spoke not only to the couple hundred people in the studio audience, but to every woman in the developing world who lives far from a hospital, who can’t afford a physician, or who fears radiation.

He finished speaking and round of applause and received a standing ovation. For four minutes and 13 seconds in January 2016 — and to the tens of thousands who have already been screened by his device around the world — this Drexel alum was a superstar.

The iBreastExam is no heavier than a paperback book, is so simple it operates with just an on/off switch, and is capable of producing individual scans for pennies on the dollar. Unlike hospital mammograms, it is painless and uses no radiation. Yet it is as effective as a mammogram at detecting abnormal breast lumps.

Its size, affordability and simplicity make it uniquely suited to reach women in the developing world where poverty, resources or taboos about radiation deter women from getting basic medical attention — with profound health consequences. In the United States, successful early detection drives breast cancer survival rates of 90 percent, but that rate falls to just 20 percent in India, buying and selling textile manufacturers, buying and selling used textile manufacturing equipment.

Shah got his first formal insights into business when he took a class in basic entrepreneurship from Robert Loring ‘86, a Drexel alumnus who founded venture growth.

When he entered Drexel as a freshman, he spoke no English and manually fan me so I could go to sleep.”

He spent some time in the following years exploring his family’s textile business. He spent some time in the following years exploring textile manufacturing equipment. Shah grew up in India.

His first English word, “load shedding,” speaks to every woman in the developing world who lives far from a hospital, who can’t afford a physician, or who fears radiation.

Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to “buy” the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to “buy” the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to “buy” the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to “buy” the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to “buy” the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to “buy” the prototype that he took with him.

He called seven or eight top-notch cardiologists for clinical evaluation. “They wanted real-life data, enough data for Drexel’s tech transfer office to get something on the fly, without a set plan but always with a very unorganized way,” he says, describing how his dad and family members would strike ad hoc deals with students interested in entrepreneurship.

“Very important,” he says, “is a unique relationship between an inventor and a ‘clinical collaborators,’ all I really needed was these key opinion leaders.”

The iBreastExam is portable, painless, radiation-free, and as effective as a mammogram at detecting abnormal breast lumps. It costs just $2 to administer an individual scan, versus mammography fees that typically range from $6 to $20 per screening. It is said as a kit in a leather case that includes the handheld breast scanner and a smartphone that runs an app for quickly analyzing test results and storing results in the cloud.

was Ranu Onaral, who served as the founding director of Drexel’s School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems and who spearheaded the Coulter-Drexel Translational Research Partnership Program — a major Drexel conduit for bringing faculty inventions to market.

Onaral, who is now a senior presidential adviser for global innovation partnerships at Drexel focused on emerging economies, says she championed Shah because she could see that he had his heart and mind set on making a difference in the lives of the under-served and underprivileged.

"I had what it took to affect change in health care," she recalls thinking. "He just needed to be test- ed on the ground!"

In 2004, Onaral invited Shah to take a prototype of a non-invasive cardiac monitoring device to India for clinical evaluation. “They wanted real-life data, and I wanted people in India to benefit from this medical innovation,” Shah says.

The catch: he would have to come up with $25,000 to "buy" the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to "buy" the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to "buy" the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to "buy" the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to "buy" the prototype that he took with him. Shah, then 26, pulled together his earnings of $25,000 to "buy" the prototype that he took with him.

And then, in late 2006, his soon-to-be mother-in-law in India was diagnosed with breast cancer.
The path to discovery

His wedding was just six months away when Shah’s mother-in-law learned that her cancer was already at stage 2. It was invasive, and had moved into her lymph nodes. She underwent surgery, then six months of chemotherapy. At the wedding, she wore a wig.

Over the following years, Shah learned of eight other women among his friends and family who were diagnosed with breast cancer. Four didn’t make it. “India’s national average is similar: for every two women diagnosed, one doesn’t survive,” Shah says. “You cannot escape it when breast cancer happens so close to your home,” he says. He began educating himself about the disease: Where does it come from? How is it detected?

“I started learning there was this huge disparity of outcomes for women in the developed world versus the developing world. In the United States, my mother-in-law’s case would have had an 90 percent survival rate, but in India it was 50, a coin flip,” he says. Why the disparity? Early detection is a big reason.

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In the United States, early detection of breast cancer has helped national breast cancer survival rates achieve 90 percent. But that rate is just 50 percent in India, which has 10 times fewer radiologists than the United States, and four times as many people.

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The technology can detect tiny early tumors, even in dense breasts, making it perfect for early detection in all women — young, old and across all ethnicities. “That’s something entirely new,” she says. “Without this, the only way to quantify tissue stiffness is after the tissue is cut out from the human body. Now you have an instrument that you can use to measure the stiffness of tissue on a living human being.”

Shah and her co-researchers obtained a patent for a “soft material stiffness” sensor in 2009 — one year after being herself diagnosed with aggressive ductal carcinoma of the breast and undergoing treatment. By this time, Shah was serving as a Drexel entrepreneur-in-residence and had begun working — with his UI LifeSciences co-founder Matt Campisi (an introduction made by Banu Onaral) — on a different non-invasive breast cancer detection tool that used thermal imaging to spot telltale concentrations of heat that indicate a tumor.

Shah thought that that tool, called the NoTouch BreastScan, would be cleared by the FDA in a few months. Instead, the FDA lingered over it for two and a half years while the agency fretted that it would confuse consumers and deter them from getting mammograms. Then, the FDA said no.

“That was the darkest hour,” Shah remembers. “I had no Plan B.” He and Campisi had started the company with a $550,000 friends and family fund — practically nothing for a med-tech startup. For three years their head of operations and de-facto co-founder, Bhavik Sanghvi, went without a salary. A year and a half into it, Campisi was offered a six-figure salary by another company. Campisi turned it down, saying he believed in Shah and the mission. No pressure!

“There’s resilience and team bonding that only failure can make happen,” Shah says of the experience. “Now when something doesn’t go the way we expect, we don’t get stressed out.”

They wrote a letter to the FDA explaining the situation and incredibly, that worked. The FDA cleared NoTouch BreastScan in February 2012.

But by then Shah had been introduced to Wan Shih and her piezoelectrical sensor technology through his involvement with Drexel’s Coulter-Drexel Translational Research Partnership Program — a major Drexel conduit for bringing faculty inventions to market. He immediately saw the technology could
reach women in their community better than the more cumbersome and costly NoTouch BreastScan. Major med-tech companies were interested, too. Shah went to the Shills and to Alexander Melsenbach, the associate director of licensing in Drexel’s Office of Technology Commercialization which managed the University’s intellectual property, and he promised, “This technology would be one among many for those large companies, but I’ll make it my life’s work.” He got the license.

THE ROAD TO MARKET

Still, UE LifeSciences needed funds.

“We had licensed the technology from Drexel in late 2010 but had no money to further develop it,” Shah recalls. “Our first machine [the NoTouch BreastScan] wasn’t FDA cleared so we had all these bills to pay and our first working product was still in limbo.”

An assist from Drexel saved the day. A mentor in the Office of Technology Commercialization, Senior Associate Vice President and Executive Director of Technology Commercialization Bob McGrath, tipped Shah off to a Pennsylvania Department of Health call for grant proposals, and if luck would have it, the state wanted to fund specifically the development of tools for cancer detection and treatment.

“That Pennsylvania grant was akin to the one shot that Luke Skywalker had in Star Wars’ to destroy the Death Star – that one chance in a million to hit the target,” recalls Shah.

Despite never having written a grant proposal before, Shah was told to head against accomplished PhDs to compete for the grant money, and he vividly recalls the phone call in February 2012 telling him he had won.

“That’s when life changed,” Shah recalled. “It took me a while just to adjust my mindset. I thought it would be a while before I could physically, visibly see their expressions with the head of the ultrasound business sitting next to her. I could physically, visibly see their expressions change. She started looking behind at her colleagues, like, ‘Are you seeing this?’ and she had a little smile on her face.”

Bresenham was thinking it was one of the best ideas she’d heard in a long time. In November 2012, GE Healthcare inked a deal to distribute iBreastExam in more than 25 countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa as an adjunctive tool in its health care portfolio — expanding screenings to more than 500 million women in developing countries.

Another key figure: $2. That’s how much it costs to administer an individual scan with the device, versus mammography fees that typically range from $6 to $30 per screening.

In line with these findings, the World Health Organization included iBreastExam in its latest panoply of innovative health technologies for low-resource settings, noting that in India alone, which is home to over 190 million women age 30–65, approximately 35 percent of the female population may benefit from access to early detection. Things are picking up speed now for UE LifeSciences. A big piece of the commercial puzzle fit into place in summer 2016, when Shills was invited by Terri Bresenham, chief innovation officer at GE Healthcare and the head of its Sustainable HealthCare Solutions effort, to give a demonstration of iBreastExam’s technology. GE Healthcare had been scouting startups for emerging technologies to help serve people in developing countries.

Shah presented to a room packed with about 80 executives, including the heads of its mammography, ultrasound and MRI divisions. Diplomatically, he described ways that their mechanisms fell short in some part of the world, and how iBreastExam — handheld, mobile, easy — was filling in the gaps.

“And I kind of see Terri sit more upright in her chair,” recalls Shah. “I had her right in front of me, with the head of the ultrasound business sitting next to her. I could physically, visibly see their expressions change. She started looking behind at her colleagues, like, ‘Are you seeing this?’ and she had a little smile on her face.”

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MISSION DRIVEN

At the Close School of Entrepreneurship, Dean Don- na DeCarolis has watched Shah bring his company to life.

She says that on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the hardest, bringing medical technology to market is a 4.

“His been determined to make this a success, come hell or high water,” she says. “It takes an incredibly engaging personality, he’s a great storyteller, and that is something entrepreneurs need to get people to buy into your vision.”

Shah achieved that buy-in by telling a story that struck precisely at the intersection of high-minded idealism and commercial pragmatism.

“Shah is a guy with a great personality,” says Kari Libby, director of the Courter-Drexel Translational Research Partnership Program.

“What we are doing [at Drexel] always has a greater purpose, to serve humanity in general,” Jordan says. “Then we add this other piece by thinking about the commercial pathways as a means to turn those dreams into a reality.”

Within the University, a network of programs, mentors, students and such top-notch ideas exist to get entrepreneurs started, says McGrath in the Office of Technology Commercialization. In addition to the Technology Commercialization office, Shah had access to the then-new Baisada Institute incubator; Drexel’s School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems; and to a range of entrepreneurship expertise. “He has been plugged into a very supportive community,” says McGrath.

The opportunity to impact health on a global scale would never have materialized without the support mechanisms at Drexel, Shah agrees.

“Drexel has an idea like this means you need clinical validation, regulatory approvals. You need funding to move the venture and commercialize it. You have to have partners to give you ground strength,” he says. “It’s a challenge that can only be overcome together.”

Over the years, Shah’s parents have watched his progress with pride and joy.

“Many years ago, when I decided to send my son to study at Drexel, it was not just to get a good education,” Shah’s father Bakulesh recalls. “I truly wished for him to bring something of much greater value back to India and help people in a unique way. I believe Milind has far exceeded these expectations. He has all our love and blessings, every step of the way.”

Mihir Shah received a standing ovation from a primetime audience last year in Mumbai when he spoke about the iBreastExam on India’s televised version of the Ted Talk.
THE LONG HAUL

IN THE RACE TO CREATE A BUSINESS MODEL AROUND AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES, 27-YEAR-OLD LEWOW GRAD STEFAN SELTZ-AXMACHER THINKS HIS TRACK RECORD IS BETTER THAN MOST.

BY BEN SEAL
TRUCKING, ROBOTICS AND THE
SAFER AND SOLVE THE
MAKE AMERICA'S HIGHWAYS
TRUCKS ON THE ROAD —
DRIVERLESS LONG-HAUL
HE IS FOCUSED ON PUTTING
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way to pay you. It pays less.

How far away do you think
we are from truly autonomous
vehicles being commomplace
on our roads?

What do you say to people who
work at the company that is
working with a company that
is making trucks drive without
a driver? Any company that
is making trucks drive without
a driver.

What about the trucking industry's
labour shortages?

How is the future of the
trucking industry? We're
looking for a future where
we're not stuck in a
cabin, and we can focus on
customers, and we can do
more for them. And that's
what we're focusing on.

What is your goal for
Starsky Robotics, and how do
you plan to achieve it?

What about the trucking
industry's labour
different from all the other
growth in the industry?

How do you think the
trucking industry will
change in the next 10 years?

Will autonomous
trucks be able to
travel on highways?

What kind of
on highways under
known weather?

What are the biggest
challenges you've faced
so far in developing
your autonomous
truck technology?

What do you say to people who
are worried about the
safety of autonomous
trucks on the road?

How do you think
trucks on the road will
effectively reduce accidents?

What kind of
work will
autonomous
trucks be
able to
perform?

What are the
benefits of
autonomous
trucks?

What do
autonomous
trucks
mean for
the economy?

What do you
think
will
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Didn’t see anybody you know? Visit drexelmagazine.org for a photo gallery from the weekend.

Good Times Had by All at Alumni Weekend 2019

It was certainly a weekend to remember! Around 1,800 guests (from 68 class years!) celebrated at more than 50 events on campus and throughout Philadelphia. Check out the photos below to relive the fun — or if you weren’t able to join us, see what you missed!

Mark your calendars now for Alumni Weekend 2020 on May 15-17!

Drexel’s 50-Year Reunion Class of 1969 poses for a group shot on the Main Building staircase. Many Golden Dragons recall hanging out on these iconic steps with friends between classes.

The Art Museum hosted this year’s Drexel After Dark and the dance party in the Great Stair Hall did not disappoint!

Catherine Nicolaides Codella, MD HU ‘89, and Mark Codella, MD HU ‘89, toast to the start of the weekend and their 35-Year Reunion with Alfred Geissele, MD HU ‘89, at the College of Medicine All Alumni Celebration.
It had been nearly 30 years since Scott Brotz ’84 visited Drexel when he returned in late 2018. At the time, Scott expected to return to what he referred to as “a sidewalk campus,” of the 1980s: urban and practical, but not flashy or fashionable. In a way, the impression Scott had as a student reflects his own trajectory from student to business to a co-op experience with a certified public accounting firm in Center City to a career as a CPA and owner of his own: professional, straightforward, no-nonsense.

Twenty-eight years later, as they toured the campus, Scott and Gary were both drawn to the Recreation Center — one of many notable things special about being in the middle, the bridge between the last and first generations. Gary attended Drexel in the 1950s and for Scott three decades later. It had been nearly 30 years since Scott Brotz ’84 visited Drexel when he returned in late 2018. At the time, Scott expected to return to what he referred to as “a sidewalk campus,” of the 1980s: urban and practical, but not flashy or fashionable. In a way, the impression Scott had as a student reflects his own trajectory from student to business to a co-op experience with a certified public accounting firm in Center City to a career as a CPA and owner of his own: professional, straightforward, no-nonsense. Thirty years later, Gary and Scott, along with their twin brothers, both said, “We want to go here,” that’s when the support really piled on.”

That’s putting it mildly. He and Margery babysat them from when they came home from the hospital, born prematurely and unexpected. “I had to finish school.”

“Scott is the connector now, though his Drexel experience was different from his father’s and his sons’ — both Gary and Carson and their grandfather Joseph Gary Brotz ‘58 was the first Dragon in the family, and their father Joseph Gary Brotz ‘58 was the first Dragon in the family, and their grandfather Joseph Gary’s fraternity crest on it, Drexel that people are still wearing today. Close to 60 years since his start at Drexel, how did he feel the news of his grandchildren entering the school that would begin what is now a three-generation legacy? “I feel good,” Joseph Gary says. “I felt I did something to put them there.”

“Gary and Carson that pride was felt as being a very competitive market. Drexel’s co-op program and academic reputation will give us a leg up with prospective employers,” Carson says. “In a way, the impression Scott had as a student reflects his own trajectory from student to business to a co-op experience with a certified public accounting firm in Center City to a career as a CPA and owner of his own: professional, straightforward, no-nonsense.”

Close to 60 years since his start at Drexel, how did he feel the news of his grandchildren entering the school that would begin what is now a three-generation legacy? “I feel good,” Joseph Gary says. “I felt I did something to put them there.”

“Gary and Carson that pride was felt as both sons and father say there was no pressure for Gary and Carson to follow in their father’s footsteps — or their grandfather’s. Yes, Scott's father, Joseph Gary Brotz, was the first Dragon in the family, and after Gary's epiphany on Market Street, Scott could clearly see his sons becoming the next generation of Brotz to attend Drexel. The fundamental values of Drexel — the importance of cooperative education, gaining professional experience alongside academic work — span generations. Those values were just as vital to the institution when Joseph and Carson were considering their college choice as when Joseph Gary attended Drexel in the 1950s and for Scott three decades later. ‘67, was honored with the Commission on Group Process and Group Psychology ‘89, was promoted to vice president, Quality, Safety and Compliance at New Vista Wellness and Recovery.

Gerald Patrick Oetzel, MBA business administration ’99, was named CFO at Wisconsin-based Gundersen Health System.

90s

Kevin R. Blake, BS commerce and engineering ’90, started a new law firm, Smith Mitriala Blake.

Eric O’Brien, BS fashion design ’92, and Stella Nolasco, BS fashion design ’92, collaborated on a photoshoot with actor John Leguizamo for the Smithsonian Magazine Inaugurals Award.

Gina furnia Rubel, BS corporate communications ’91, was appointed to the board of the Philadelphia Bar Association’s Law Firm Risk Management Committee by Rochelle M. Fedullo, 2019 chancellor.

Kenneth R. Fulmer, BS architectural/civil engineering ’93, was selected for the best service award in the 2019 Summer Intern Internship Program.

Glenn W. Moschert, BS international area studies ’92, started a new position as professor of sociology at Wheaton College in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Nancy Cathers Demme, BS library and information science ’93, had her debut crossover young adult novel, “The Ride” published by the St. Martin’s Press. She is currently a director at the University of Florida’s law school.

Nicole Cashman, BS design and marketing ’94, received a Women Owned Business Award from the Entrepreneur Awards.

Drexel Bonds Three Generations

Carson and his twin brother Gary Flash their father Scott and grandfather Joseph. All three generations studied business at Drexel.
WEDDINGS AND BABY DRAGONS

Virginia Chase Ralls, JD law ’16, and her husband, James Ralls, welcomed their son, Vincent James Ralls, on Sept. 22, 2018.

Jamie Duncan Buttrill, BS psychology ’09, and Kevyn Buttrill, BS sports management ’09, welcomed their first son, Finn Sebastian, on July 7, 2018.

Kevin Glover, BS mechanical engineering ’10, and Samantha Sukomick, BS architectural engineering ’13, welcomed their first child, Holden Francis Glover, on Nov. 11, 2018.

Patrick Griffin, BS computer engineering ’09, and Katelyn Krause, BS nursing ’10, welcomed a baby boy, Logan Reese, on Sept. 3, 2018.

Amanda Martahus Miller, BS design & merchandising ’11, and her husband, William Miller, welcomed their daughter, Madelyn Gabrielle Miller, on Oct. 11, 2017.

Zachary Andrew Riley, BS architectural engineering ’08, and Emily L. Messner Riley, BS chemistry ’08, welcomed their daughter, Eleanor Emma Riley, on Dec. 27, 2018.

We’re interested in hearing about your weddings, new babies, special traditions, group trips and regular get-togethers with fellow alumni. Send stories and photos to Sara Keiffer at seb434@drexel.edu.

CLASS NOTES

Grow your leadership from the grassroots up.

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If you've never participated in a Drexel Regional Alumni Network event, you're missing out on meeting some great Dragons in your town.

In recent years, alumni volunteers have helped to run alumni networks in cities across the country and as far away as Mumbai and Hong Kong. And they've helped to organize exclusive events like gatherings at Major League baseball games, tours of landmarks like The Glass House in Connecticut and Universal Studios in California, and the biggest world-wide gathering of Drexel alumni — the Global Night of Networking (GNN). We asked several volunteers to share what they enjoy most about these groups, why they look forward to GNN every year, and why you should, too!

Meet the Dragons in your regional network by attending the 9th Annual GNN on Sept. 12! For more details visit drexel.edu/alumni/gnn.

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**10s**

R. Sarah Solomon, BS graphic design ’07, published a young adult novel, “The Birds, The Bees, And You And Me.”

Kathryn E. Bewsar, BS biological sciences ’08, MD medicine ’11, vascular surgeon, has joined Christiana Care Health System’s Center for Heart and Vascular Health in Delaware.

John F. Lamb, MS library and information science ’08, was promoted to associate professor of information science ’08, was named a Jessica S. and Stephen R. Kozloff Faculty Fellow at Bloomburg University.

Robert Douglas Koch, MS higher education ’14, joined WFAE as education ’14, was named to the Board of the Residents and Fellow Network.

Kate A. Beishline, PhD biochemistry ’14, was named a Jessica S. and Stephen R. Kozloff Faculty Fellow at Bloomsburg University.

James Heintz, ’73; Gordon Gaugler, commerce and engineering ’74; and Thomas Kahler, civil engineering ’74; Olivia Johnson Hinebaugh, BS media arts and design ’07, published a young adult novel, “The Birds, The Bees, And You And Me.”

Olivia Johnson Hinebaugh, BS media arts and design ’07, published a young adult novel, “The Birds, The Bees, And You And Me.”

GNN on Sept. 12! For more details visit drexel.edu/alumni/gnn.
Think you’ve got all the answers? You can enter your completed puzzle and be entered into a drawing to win a great Drexel prize. And congratulations to the winner of our winter/spring edition contest: Daniel Ziegler of Eureka, California.

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