

# What Is the Value of a Rochester Education?

*The University begins a project to analyze its ‘value proposition.’*

By Scott Hauser

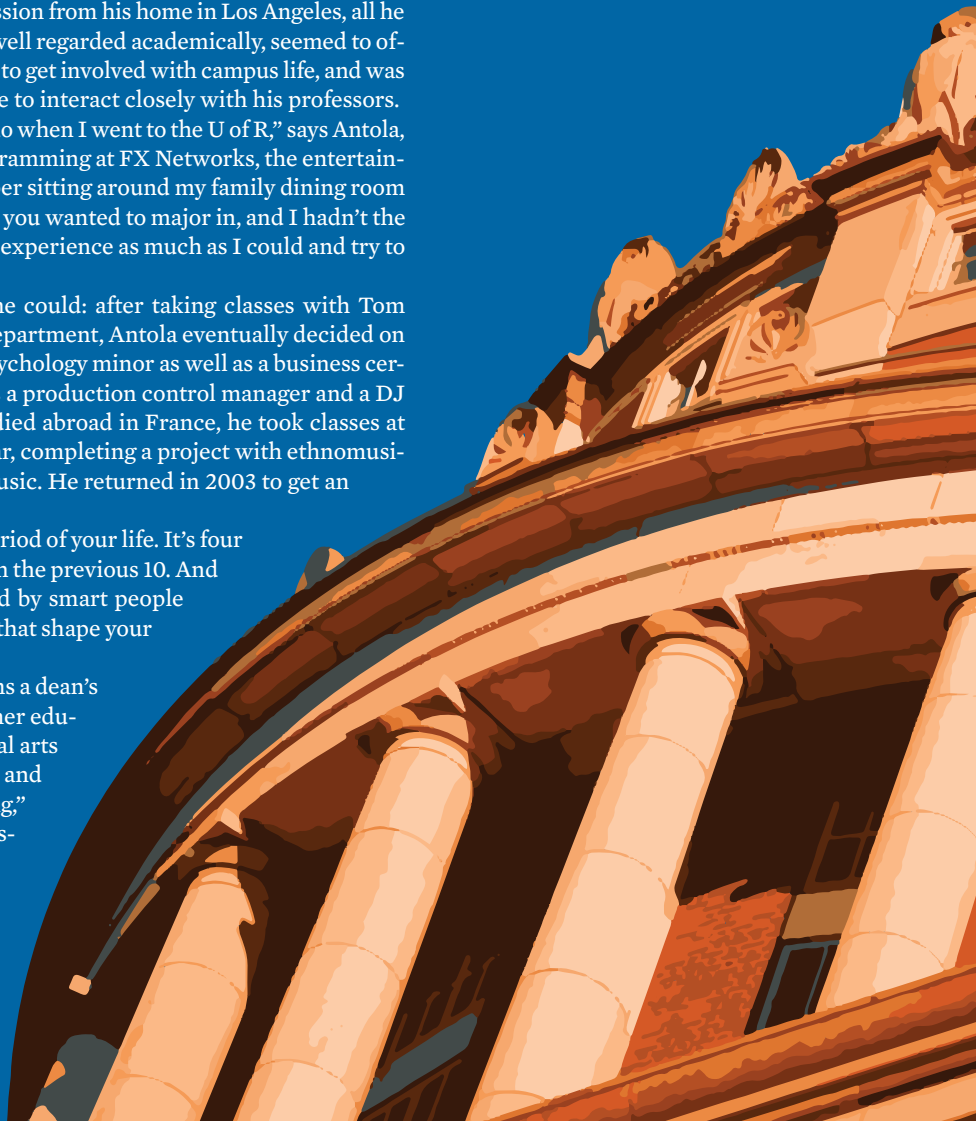
**C**hris Antola '98, '05S (MBA) would be the first to admit that he didn't really know what he was going to get from spending four years at Rochester. When he sent off the paperwork for admission from his home in Los Angeles, all he knew was that the University was well regarded academically, seemed to offer a lot of opportunity for students to get involved with campus life, and was small enough that he would be able to interact closely with his professors.

"I had no idea what I wanted to do when I went to the U of R," says Antola, who today is senior vice president of strategic programming at FX Networks, the entertainment cable TV networks owned by Fox. "I remember sitting around my family dining room here in LA, and on the application they asked what you wanted to major in, and I hadn't the faintest clue. I figured I would go to Rochester and experience as much as I could and try to hone in on what I wanted to do with my life."

Once on campus, he crammed in as much as he could: after taking classes with Tom DiPiero, then the chair of the modern languages department, Antola eventually decided on a French major and completed a journalism and psychology minor as well as a business certificate. Equally important for him, though, he was a production control manager and a DJ at WRUR, he wrote for the *Campus Times*, he studied abroad in France, he took classes at Eastman and Simon, and he was a Take Five scholar, completing a project with ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff at the Eastman School of Music. He returned in 2003 to get an MBA from the Simon Business School.

"When you're an undergrad, that's really a key period of your life. It's four years when you grow probably more than you did in the previous 10. And being in an environment where you're surrounded by smart people and given access to opportunities and experiences that shape your life—it's hard to argue against the value of that."

Antola's experience is the kind of story that warms a dean's heart. It's almost axiomatic among academics, higher education administrators, and many graduates of liberal arts programs that such an investment of time, effort, and money is well "worth it," "invaluable," "life-changing," enriching the career opportunities and the life satisfaction of individual students.





Steeped in the traditional ethos of the liberal arts, Rochester's curriculum and programs are designed to offer students a broad-based academic grounding in critical reasoning, problem analysis, and the ability to communicate effectively, coupled with the personal and social skills that are sharpened from engaging intellectually and socially with a talented group of peers.

But the value of spending four years studying at a liberal arts-oriented institution has come under increasing scrutiny in the post-Great Recession era of the 21st century. In political circles, President Barack Obama has launched an effort to develop a federal system to rank the nation's higher education programs while the governors of North Carolina, Louisiana, Wisconsin, and other states have publicly questioned whether taxpayers should support higher education programs that can't demonstrate they result in jobs for graduates.

Elsewhere, there's been a steady rise in calls from technology-enthusiasts that higher education is ripe for "disruption," giving the impression that MOOCs (massive open online courses) and other online "delivery systems," for-profit institutions, and a narrow focus on credentialing represent the future of higher education.

Given all that, it's easy to feel as if a liberal education is under siege.

That's not entirely mistaken, says Debra Humphreys of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, a national consortium, which includes Rochester and that dedicates itself to "the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education."

**"When you're an undergrad, that's really a key period of your life. It's four years when you grow probably more than you did in the previous 10. And being in an environment where you're surrounded by smart people and given access to opportunities and experiences that shape your life—it's hard to argue against the value of that."**

**—CHRIS ANTOLA '98, '05S (MBA)**

"Since the economic downturn and since the contraction of available public monies to invest in public education—as states have faced serious budget shortfalls, higher education is an area where people have narrowed their vision and talked about [education] in terms only of workforce development," she says. "I think that trend is dangerous—both for our democracy and frankly for the very economic vitality that we need to bring the tax revenues back up again.

"What we've seen consistently in our own research and in the broader economic research is that we actually don't need narrow training. We need more liberally educated graduates with higher and higher levels of capacity. This society and this economy are demanding that. Misguided policy pronouncements about the need for training and a pulling back from a long-standing tradition of providing

## College Graduates, Watch Your Email

A University project to survey alumni who hold undergraduate degrees from Arts, Sciences & Engineering is scheduled to begin in March.

A randomly selected sample of graduates will receive the survey by email, with directions to an online instrument, where recipients will be asked to answer several questions about their Rochester experience.

The survey will include prompts for traditional quantitative and demographic information as well as questions intended to elicit qualitative information about professional and career achievements, personal fulfillment, social engagement, and other topics.

A report based on the results is expected to be completed later this spring.

and expanding the opportunities for more and more students to get a broad liberal education—I think that that's very short-sighted."

So how can universities like Rochester articulate their "value proposition," as the entrepreneurs would say? Is a liberal education a financial investment that "pays off" over time? Is it worth going into debt for? Is it a time to discover intellectual passions regardless of a particular job goal? Is it a proving ground for developing the personal and social skills required in a diverse democratic society? All of the above? More of one than another?

**W**hile such questions play out on a national level, Provost Peter Lennie says understanding how Rochester has influenced—and continues to influence—the lives of its students, their families, and the social fabric of the country is increasingly important. A robust understanding of that influence can help faculty, students, alumni, and parents understand how Rochester graduates not only advance professionally but also how their interaction with Rochester has enriched their lives in other important ways. The information also could help academic leaders enhance the University's programs, strengthen admissions, advising, and career initiatives, and feed back into the College's co-curricular opportunities.

"These are extremely important issues as we look toward the future of the University," Lennie says. "Having a more robust sense of

what our alumni value about their experience here, how we helped shape their lives, how they think we can do better, and how we can draw on their life experience will help us better demonstrate the value of a Rochester education."

Beginning this spring, Lennie is leading a project to survey alumni who earned undergraduate degrees from Arts, Sciences & Engineering about their experience at Rochester. Hoping to capture both quantitative and qualitative information, the goal is to build a more complete picture than earlier surveys have provided of Rochester, its alumni, and their lives after graduation. As the undergraduate effort is fine-tuned, the survey will be rolled out to other units of the University.

Since the University's founding, a hallmark of Rochester's educational experience has been a grounding in a broad spectrum of disciplines in the arts and sciences. In his 1854 inaugural address, the University's first president, Martin Brewer Anderson, spoke on the theme of "The Ends and Means of Liberal Education."

Writing in the early 1960s, historian Arthur May noted that while much of Anderson's address was couched in the temper of his times, his comments "reflected the wisdom of the ages in the sphere of education and enshrined plain horse-sense, which is stable-mindedness. He developed at some length a doctrine later known as 'Holism,' that is, the training of youths for rounded careers during a half century or so of mature life, as distinguished from narrowly confined vocationalism, or 'the mercantile point of view,' in Anderson's phrase. Decrying the prevalent American materialism, he pleaded, 'Let us shape our educational system to make men.'"

More than 160 years later, Anderson would be surprised to learn

how the Rochester student body has changed. About evenly divided between men and women, undergraduates represent every state in the country. About 12 percent are under-represented minorities, and about 20 percent come from nearly 100 countries outside the United States.

But the idea of giving students a broadly conceived liberal education remains very much intact. Under the Rochester Curriculum, introduced in the early 1990s, areas of study are divided into three major categories—natural sciences (including mathematics and engineering), social sciences, and the humanities. Students choose a discipline to major in, based on their primary academic interest, and choose two sets of three related courses—known as clusters—in each of the other two areas.

Combine the curriculum with a strong residential focus—nearly all students live on campus for at least two years and many live in University housing for all of their four years at Rochester—and Rochester becomes a “life-changing” experience for students, says Richard Feldman, dean of the College and a professor of philosophy.

“What was true and remains true is this: if you assemble 5,000 or so bright, inquisitive undergraduates and get them into a community and get them to interact with one another, what they will learn from one another, what they will cause one another to learn, what they will inspire in others is a terrific experience. And it would be missed if we didn’t have a residential college and if we didn’t have the sense of community that we have. That’s a great strength.

“When you add to it the diversity of the College, the range of interests, the backgrounds of the student body, and you think about the world that students will be graduating into—that’s something special that we’re able to provide. That makes it, for me, vital that we do everything that we can to promote those valuable interactions among students.”

**F**eldman says he’s confident that most alumni would say that they have been successful over the long arc of their lives, but he’s particularly curious about those who have graduated over the past 10 to 25 years. He and other College leaders know that student interests (and those of their parents) have shifted in recent years, leaning toward science and engineering and away from the humanities, but he says having an up-to-date picture will guide strategic decisions about how to improve both academic and nonacademic programs.

“I’m not looking to discourage students from choosing a major in any particular discipline,” Feldman says. “I’m looking to arm our departments with information about what students who study in their fields can do after graduation.”

Knowing more about how the career paths of alumni—whether they pursued other educational opportunities to achieve their goals, for example—could be helpful in enhancing majors and in helping guide current students to develop a combination of interests, skills, and abilities that will serve them better, Feldman says.

Al Robinson ’04 can vouch for that kind of combination. Now an investment manager for a private insurance company in London, Robinson was a double major in religion and computer science.

While he says that having a computer science degree is “sort of a lifelong ticket to a job,” his major in religion was the “life-changing” experience for him.

One of his first classes as a freshman was Emil Homerin’s course, History of Islam. “This was before 9/11,” he says. “I knew nothing about Islam, and I thought, I’m in college now and this is exactly what you’re supposed to be doing: learning about stuff that you would never in a million years hear about in high school.”

The course—not to mention Homerin and his colleagues in the Department of Religion and Classics—was so compelling that he took several other classes in the department and declared a major.

As a religion major, he was introduced to a like-minded corps of

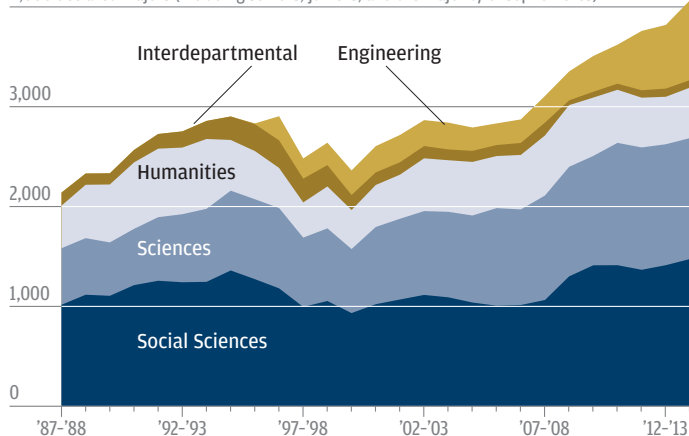
## Course of College

“A liberal education is a tradition that changes over time,” says Debra Humphreys of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, but one that retains the idea of grounding students in a broad spectrum of academic, personal, and social endeavor. As students—and their families—map out their goals for college, their plans and expectations have shifted as well, according to national and institutional data.

### MAJOR TRENDS

Over the past three decades, the most popular majors at Rochester have been in the social sciences, closely followed by the natural sciences, according to data from the College Center for Advising Services. In 1994, the former College of Engineering became part of Arts, Sciences & Engineering and has grown quickly in popularity.

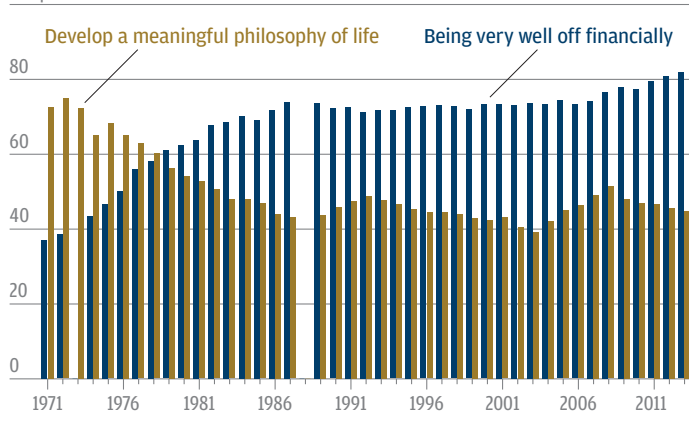
4,000 declared majors (including seniors, juniors, and the majority of sophomores)



### NATIONAL PICTURE

The percentage of American college freshmen who say that higher education will help them meet their financial aspirations has surpassed those who say that college will help them “develop a meaningful philosophy of life” for more than three decades, according to annual survey results from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.

100 percent



SOURCES: College Center for Academic Advising (top); Higher Education Research Institute (bottom)

fellow student scholars, almost all of whom had a second major in another field, and all of whom were excited about intellectual discovery.

“For me, that became a core part of my experience at the University—getting that much social exposure to people who were doing all sorts of different things but who were also very interested in a common topic,” Robinson says. “That was really cool. It’s just such an unexpected thing. The problem is that I can see that it’s not something you can easily market to people.”

Sara Nainzadeh ’99, a portfolio manager for a New York City

investment firm, says it would be a shame if current and future generations of students shied away from a liberal arts education because they were concerned about the marketability of their degrees.

An English major at Rochester who did a Take Five project combining economics, finance, biology, and English courses, she says students have little sense for the wide range of opportunities that will be available to them after graduation. Having a rigorous liberal arts background provides not only perspective and analytical skills but also enhances the ability to adapt and be flexible, depending on their professional and personal circumstances, she says.

“Most of the English classes I took had nothing to do with making money, which may be ironic,” Nainzadeh says. “But they helped me develop my own perspective on what I was doing in life. And that’s what differentiates you in the market. You have to be able to dive into something and do a deep investigation and be able to appreciate it from different points of view. If you can find perspectives that are different from those of others, you can be one step ahead.”

**K**enneth Gross, the Alan F. Hilfiker Distinguished Professor in English, says such stories can be gratifying for faculty in the humanities. Faculty hope that students discover that their intellectual interests will prepare them for satisfying lives and careers, but they often have little more than anecdotal evidence to support it.

That’s why in 2012, he asked about 2,000 graduates to reflect on how their work as English majors stayed with them in later life. Gross, who was then director of undergraduate studies for the English department, is careful to point out that his project was not intended to collect statistical data. He wanted information and details but also, as a literature professor would, he wanted to hear the stories of the department’s graduates. About 200 graduates have responded so far, representing a wide range of occupations. They included alumni in fields connected to literature, such as teachers, professors, writers, editors, and others in media, as well as those in finance, medicine, engineering, law, public policy and service, business, manufacturing, and other areas.

None of them answered the survey strictly in terms of financial success. Instead, Gross says, they spoke with energy of how their study of literature increased their powers to think and speak, to write fluently, and to imagine in ways that enhanced their lives and careers.

**“For me, that became a core part of my experience at the University—getting that much social exposure to people who were doing all sorts of different things but who were also very interested in a common topic. That was really cool. It’s just such an unexpected thing.” —AL ROBINSON ’04**

They credited their studies with helping them analyze people’s words and arguments, but also to sympathize, and to help them understand better the difficult issues faced by employers, colleagues, and families.

“It was moving to read,” Gross says. “No matter what they did after graduating, they saw in their lives, in their relationships, in their career choices, a connection to their work as English majors. They were very alive to what their time at Rochester did for them.”

Jonathan Burdick, dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, says prospective students and their parents continue to value a residential college experience.

The curriculum, in particular, has enormous appeal among incoming students because, in many ways, current undergraduates approach college much as graduate students did 25 years ago.

“They have a pretty good idea of what they want to study, they know where they want to go with their education, and they’re happy if we

stay out of the way,” Burdick says. And most, he says, expect that they will need further education—whether formally in graduate school or in other venues—to achieve their goals over the course of their lives.

That requires thinking of education with a broad perspective, Burdick says, and while institutions like Rochester need to be nimble and open to new ideas, the core appeal of the best institutions remains intact. “Students want to be with their peers and be in a learning community,” says Burdick.

Having that small, connected community was important to Nainzadeh. “People [at Rochester] really do care about you,” she says. “It’s big enough where you can meet a lot of different people and still have the sense that there is a lot of opportunity for you to take advantage of. At the same time, it’s small enough where you can stand out. You can pursue almost any avenue that you want to. It’s all at your fingertips.”

Providing that community is expensive, a point not lost on those who have higher education in their political and policy crosshairs. At Rochester the average undergraduate tuition bill was \$46,150 for 2014–15, a sticker price that for many students is offset by financial aid and assistance from Rochester’s endowment, donor-supported scholarship programs, and other funding sources.

But, counter advocates for liberal education, the cost is worth the investment on behalf of students and their families, as well state and federal programs. As Humphreys of the Association of American Colleges and Universities notes, many colleges provide students a quality liberal education at lower tuition costs than Rochester, but it’s incumbent on each institution to make clear how students come out ahead in the long run.


“All the economic data suggest that individually if you get a college degree, it pays off dramatically,” she says. “Even if you borrow some money to do it. In the sheer dollars-and-cents analysis, there’s no question that it’s a good investment of individual time and money. A place like Rochester can certainly point to its graduates’ success and say not only is it valuable to get an undergraduate degree in general, but also getting a degree from a place like Rochester is going to set yourself up even more dramatically for success in a knowledge economy.”

Antola is willing to attest to that.

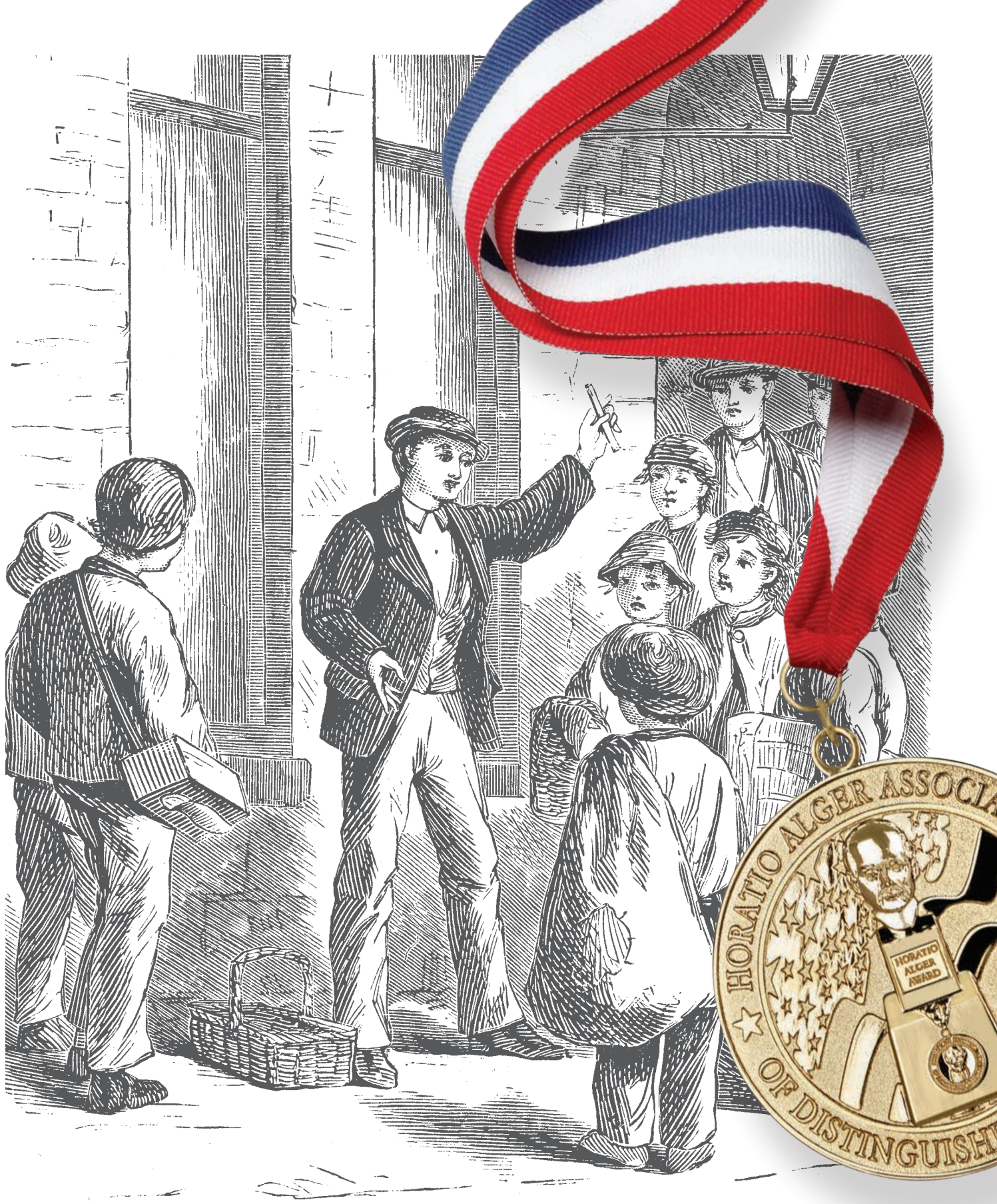
“I look back and I feel a little guilty that I didn’t apply at the UC schools that would have cost my parents a lot less, but I think you get

a lot more out of a Rochester education than you would elsewhere,” he says. “When I was applying to business schools, which was on my own dime, I chose Rochester again for the exact same reason. I knew the place. I knew the players. I knew the ease of access to everything that you want to do. It’s relevant to real-world learning processes—to figure out what you want to do as much as what you don’t want to do. And how, through those experiences, to tailor your education to achieve the goals that you set for yourself.”

Those goals and those interests change over time, he says. But the value of a Rochester experience has not.

“I look back on my experiences there—and the farther I get away from my graduation in 1998—the more I look back, the more I realize that it was a great experience, and the resources that I had access to were amazing. To me, the true value of a Rochester education is above and beyond what you do in the classroom.” 





**RAGS TO RICHES:** The heroes of Horatio Alger's popular 19th-century novels overcame humble origins to achieve success, often with the help of generous benefactors. **Overset:** The medallion awarded to inductees of the Horatio Alger Association.

# WORKING CLASS Heroes

What's a uniquely American model for success?

To work hard, rise, and give back.

Bob Goergen '60 and Ed Hajim '58

receive national honors for doing just that.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

Bob Goergen '60 and Ed Hajim '58 were just boys when an obscure school counselor named Kenneth Beebe decided young people needed more encouragement to grasp at the American dream. It was just after World War II, and Beebe, an admirer of the works of Horatio Alger, decided as an incentive to young Americans to present awards to two young men whom he believed embodied the rags-to-riches success stories that the 19th-century children's writer had celebrated in his popular novels.

Beebe's program grew, and each year since 1947, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans inducts a select few business and civic leaders. All come from humble circumstances, and all are eager to reward hard work and character in those who begin their lives with few other advantages.

In the past two years, Goergen and Hajim—both University trustees (past and current chair of the board, respectively) and among the most generous supporters of the University since George Eastman and Joe Wilson '31—have been winners of the Horatio Alger Award.

The award isn't merely a medal to hang on a wall and be admired. It comes with a duty. Though the heroes of Alger's books are often recalled as scrappy and self-reliant individualists, in fact, the original Horatio Alger success stories required another kind of hero: the educated gentleman of means, who saw virtues in the young boy and decided to assist him on a path to the middle class.

Goergen and Hajim are modern exemplars of both heroes in this social contract. And their induction comes with the obligation to continue to offer financial support for young Americans vying for a higher education against great odds.

For Hajim, this makes his induction especially poignant. "My emphasis over the last 25 or 30 years has been scholarships. And the main thrust of Horatio Alger is taking people with austerity in their background and giving them scholarships," he says. "This changed my life, and in many respects, our interests are totally aligned."

When Hajim was three, his parents divorced. His father took custody of him, and his mother disappeared from his life. But his father was in the Merchant Marine, away at sea except for short intervals at home. Hajim spent most of his childhood in foster homes and orphanages. "I was a one-man team," he says.

Goergen was born in Buffalo to a young mother. The two were abandoned by Goergen's father. His mother remarried, but the relationship was not a stable one. For a time, Goergen and his younger half-brother lived in foster care, and then with an aunt in Virginia. They returned to the Buffalo area, after which Goergen's mother divorced and remarried again. Despite her difficulties, Goergen's mother was a stalwart source of emotional support for her sons and had high aspirations for them. "She always had in her mind that I would go to college," says Goergen.

In business, Goergen has shown an aptitude for knowing how to create conditions in which employees can thrive. "I feel that most people don't start out as superstars," he once told *Wharton Magazine*. "So if you can channel them with a strategy and help them focus on certain goals, the chances of their becoming a superstar are much higher."

With the public sector shrinking, and the reliance on philanthropy growing, the social compact Alger mythologized remains relevant. Both men are routinely asked to share their stories, and how their ability to overcome obstacles shapes their approach to their professional and personal lives today. 🍎



**UPWARD BOUND:** As college students, Goergen (top) and Hajim were recognized campus leaders. In business, both would continue to distinguish themselves through leadership.



# Bob Goergen '60

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, BLYTH INC.

**> It's good to work for an organization, but even better to create one.**

Many young college graduates seek careers with big companies, thinking that size and stability go hand-in-hand—and not minding the prestige of a well-recognized organization, either.

Goergen believes these assumptions are often misguided.

“Large corporations don’t create jobs,” he says. “Large corporations eliminate jobs.”

Early in his career, Goergen left the consulting firm McKinsey & Company. It was a prestigious firm to work for, and its clients were major corporations. But he preferred small companies, and preferably ones in which he could hold a financial stake. He took a job with a venture capital firm Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette instead, and found his calling in identifying promising, but poorly run, small enterprises, which he could reorganize and build.

Goergen was among the first people to suggest that academic institutions could play a strategic role in fostering business creation. In 1997, he went to his graduate alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, and offered to endow a program in entrepreneurialism. For a school renowned for training generations of Fortune 500 leadership, the proposal was an unusual one. But Goergen’s offer was accepted, and since then, the Goergen Entrepreneurial Management Program has grown to offer more than 20 courses to about 2,000 students at any given time.

At Rochester, Goergen’s desire to foster business creation inspired him to contribute a lead gift for the creation of the Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics. The building was designed as shared space for the Department of Biomedical Engineering and the Institute for Optics to foster collaborations. It significantly increased available lab space and added demonstration rooms as well as a Center for Institute Ventures that puts faculty in contact with sources of venture capital.

**> The STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and math—are essential for the country’s success. But these careers aren’t for everybody, and that’s OK.**

Goergen studied physics at Rochester, graduating with honors. And to this day, he credits his study of physics with giving him “skills and discipline” that he’s applied to his business career.

Yet he acknowledges that STEM isn’t for everybody, and his investment decisions demonstrate that there are plenty of opportunities for individuals outside those fields.

For example, his greatest business success is not in any high-tech enterprise, but in one of the oldest and lowest-tech industries around: candles. In the late 1970s, Goergen put \$25,000 into a small, regional candle manufacturer based in Brooklyn. It was what’s called a “hobby investment”—one he pursued on his own, because it was too small to interest his private equity group. Through acquisitions and the development of new products, such as fragrance candles and an array of home décor products, he built the company, which he renamed Blyth Inc., into an international firm that surpassed \$1 billion in annual sales in 2000. It took innovation, to be sure, but innovation in management and organization more than in science and technology. And because Blyth’s products are distributed through direct sales, it’s given thousands of individuals a chance to earn extra cash and test their mettle running their own small enterprises.

**> Live by the words *meliora*, *kaizen*, and *omphaloskepsis*.**

Goergen says he has encountered three words—one in Latin, another in Japanese, and a third in Greek—that sum up his approach to work and life.

Goergen and those closest to him say he can’t sit still. So it’s not surprising that the University’s motto *Meliora*—the Latin word that translates as “ever better”—would resonate with him. As much a concept as a word, it implies resistance to self-satisfaction. “*Meliora* means never being satisfied,” he says. “Whatever you’re doing, there’s always an opportunity to improve.”

Many entrepreneurs have big plans, but some can stumble when it comes to carrying them out. Entrepreneurs see themselves as bold, but caution is part of the mix as well. That’s where *kaizen* comes in. A concept Goergen encountered when he was reading about Japanese approaches to management, it means thoughtful, gradual change—or, says Goergen, when it comes to expansion, “Do it in steps you can manage. Don’t jump so far that you have to fall back.”

And there’s a time for reevaluation, too. *Omphaloskepsis*, Goergen says, “basically means, looking inward, seeing where your navel is taking you. And saying, is my navel taking me in the direction I want to go, or do I have to do something to improve my position in life?”

**CALCULATED RISK-TAKER:** As an investor, Goergen has excelled by identifying the diamonds in the rough passed up by firms looking for greater polish.

**BOB GOERGEN '60  
HORATIO ALGER CLASS  
OF 2014**

*BS, physics, cum laude  
MBA, finance, University of  
Pennsylvania’s Wharton School  
of Business*

**University of Rochester  
trustee, 1982-present; chair,  
1991-2003**

**Current Job:** Founder and executive chairman, Blyth Inc. Past: principal partner, McKinsey & Company; managing general partner, Sprout Group (venture capital division) at Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette; senior account executive, McCann-Erickson.

**Philanthropic Highlights:** University support totaling more than \$30 million for undergraduate programs, the Institute for Data Science, the Goergen Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, renovation of the renamed Robert B. Goergen Athletic Center, and the creation of the Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics. Goergen also endowed the Goergen Entrepreneurial Management Program at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business and is a donor to numerous organizations that support educational opportunities for underprivileged young people.





# Ed Hajim '58

PRESIDENT, DIKER MANAGEMENT LLC

## > Disadvantages can become advantages.

Looking back at his own life, Hajim likes to cite Malcolm Gladwell's book *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*. In it, Gladwell demonstrates the ways in which disadvantages can become advantages.

"If you have nobody, what do you develop? Self-reliance," says Hajim. "If you have no means, you try to get means. All of a sudden these disadvantages as a child become advantages."

Hajim says, candidly, that he's really not sure how he overcame his circumstances. Part of it, he insists, was luck. "I look back at the places where I could have fallen off the cliff and never gotten back. Little things just turned in the right direction." A big part of it was work and determination. "I was very driven," he says, describing his work ethic when he was a youth. When Hajim reached high school, he was lucky to be part of a community that allowed him to see greater possibilities ahead. At Roosevelt High School in Yonkers, New York, he recalls girlfriends and friends on the basketball court who were college bound. And the director of the orphanage he called home at the time was also a source of encouragement. "He had the mentality that everybody should go to college," Hajim recalls.

By the time Hajim got to Rochester on a Naval ROTC scholarship, he had, by many measures "made it." But being at a private college was a strange and unfamiliar experience for him, as it can be for many students from poor and working class backgrounds today.

"My first year was a very difficult social adjustment," he says. "I was excited about what I was doing. But it was very hard because I was very different from everybody else." But he'd developed a special skill from all the instability in his youth. He was used to figuring out how to adjust to new environments. "I had survived so much," he says. "I wasn't going to fail in this next adventure."

## > The best way to build an organization is to help people exceed their own goals.

Although he never lost his love for science and engineering, Hajim says that at Rochester, and later in the Navy, he found a new passion having to do more with people. "I found that I became fascinated with how to make organizations work, and how to assist people to accomplish more than they believed they could," he says. He enrolled in Harvard Business School, where he had the chance to study organizations in a formal way. The goals of people who work in investment management are often

assumed to be purely financial. But for Hajim, the fun is in the process—in creating the conditions to reach those goals. It's an attitude he believes contributed significantly to his early success in investment management and later, to his ability to create winning teams at both E. F. Hutton and Lehman Brothers.

"After getting my dream job as the chairman and CEO of a small investment bank, I really got a chance to put my strategy to work," he says. "Over 14 years, I helped the firm to grow 10-fold in people and more in revenues and profits, at the same time that the industry lost half of the companies of similar size."

Hajim used a similar approach in the nonprofit sector. He became chair of the board of trustees at a local day school and president of the Harvard Business School alumni association. In the latter position, Hajim helped found the "Entrepreneurs Tool Kit," which was used to develop several new initiatives for alumni. "My job as the chairman of the Board of Trustees at our University has been so rewarding," he says, "since *Meliora*, 'ever better,' is what I've always believed in."

## > Define your "Four P's"—passions, principles, partners, and plans.

When Hajim meets with his scholarship students, he says, "I give them a methodology that I hope will help them better plan their lives." He calls it "the Four P's." "I tell them, 'Find your passion(s), find your principles, find your partners, and finally, find your plans and your dreams.'"

"The University gives them a chance to test their passions and principles, and to understand how they will evolve. I push them to seek what really excites them, what makes them leap out of bed in the morning." He believes in the saying, "If you love your work, you will never work." He wants them to have as many experiences as they can, so they can test all or as many of the Four P's as possible.

"It takes time and plenty of trials and errors to find your calling and to find out who you really are," he says. Hajim encourages his scholarship students to change their majors if their interests are taking them in another direction. "I continue to use the Four P's myself, and my involvement at the University has fulfilled one of my major plans, which was to find a way to give underprivileged students the same chance that I was given," he says. He adds that one of his own principles is gratitude. "I feel I owe a great deal to so many people. I've long ceased to be a 'one-man team.'"

**TEAM LEADER:** Hajim, who began life as a "one-man team," discovered his interest in working with people while a student at Rochester. He has led Rochester's Board of Trustees since 2008.

### ED HAJIM '58 HORATIO ALGER CLASS OF 2015

BS, chemical engineering  
MBA, Harvard Business School

**University of Rochester trustee, 1988-present; chair, 2008-present**

**Current Job:** President, Diker Management LLC. Past: chairman and CEO, MLH Capital; chairman and CEO, ING Aeltus Group and ING Furman Selz Asset Management; cochairman for the Americas, ING Barings; senior manager at Lehman Brothers and E. F. Hutton.

### Philanthropic Highlights:

More than \$30 million in University support for scholarships and the endowment of the Edmund A. Hajim School of Engineering & Applied Sciences. Hajim has also granted scholarships to students at Harvard Business School, the University of Vermont, the University of Denver, Westchester Community College, the Brunswick School, and Middlesex School; and supported health services, arts, culture, conservation, preservation, and recreation on Nantucket Island.

# Bringing University History to Life

*A new online history project gives voice to Rochester's past.*

*By Kathleen McGarvey*

**H**ave you ever wanted to peek behind the scenes of University history? Hear the voices of one-time leaders and alumni who experienced a very different Rochester?

The River Campus Libraries, collaborating with the other campuses, have launched a new project designed to let you do just that. The Living History Project was formally established in 2013, at the suggestion of President Joel Seligman. It's an effort to make existing oral histories, recorded beginning in the 1960s, easily accessible and to add to them with new interviews.

The site complements the new book about University history, *Our Work Is But Begun: A History of the University of Rochester, 1850–2005*, by Janice Bullard Pieterse (University of Rochester Press, 2014). While the book offers a formal account of the institution, the living history project “adds a diverse mix of people who can flesh out the history of the University,” says Mary Ann Mavrinac, vice provost and the Andrew H. and Janet Dayton Neilly Dean of River Campus Libraries.

“It’s very individual, very personal,” says Melissa Mead, the John M. and Barbara Keil University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian. “A University is made up of its people—and oftentimes it’s how we best respond to our history.”

Paul Burgett ’68E, ’76E (PhD)—vice president, senior advisor to the president, and University dean—has conducted several of the recent interviews. “I believe it is important to our understanding of the history to include the spoken words of those who have had the lived experience at the University, including faculty, alums, friends, trustees,” he says. “Each has his or her

own unique story, which taken in aggregate, with the stories of others, provides an exciting and informed human quilt about the University of Rochester.”


The effort “will go on and on and on as there are more people who will share their experiences as staff, faculty, and alumni,” Mavrinac says. “We’re talking not solely to the luminaries, but to everyone—a long-standing staff member, or someone who came here as a student after World War II. It adds such a rich tapestry to the history of the University, which is typically more formal.”

Inclusiveness is critical, says Burgett, a member of the project’s advisory board.

“It’s important that our subject pool be representative of the great diversity in the University, so knowing the experiences of women, of people of color, of the young, of the old, of the disabled, of the international population.

... The challenge, of course, is in there being time and resources enough to do all of these things, because those who are involved have so much on their plates. If we had an army of 20 interviewers, that would be great. But we don’t. So we do as much as we can.”

An anonymous donor has given funds to provide for hiring a researcher and the cost of travel, of transferring recordings to digital formats, and of creating transcripts.

Former University archivist Nancy Ehrich Martin ’65, ’94 (MA) has worked both as an interviewer and an annotator of interviews. “There is a huge amount of closeness to the history of the University that you can’t get any other way. You have the person’s voice and their personality—it’s a prism through which you see the University at that time. The people interviewed in the ’70s were sometimes remembering things in the 1910s, the 1920s—and it truly was a different world.” 

## Hear the Voices

The recordings from which these excerpts were drawn can be heard by visiting the Living History Project at <http://livinghistory.lib.rochester.edu>.

## 'As My First Insurrection . . .'

*Eleanor Garbutt Gilbert (1898–1984) was a member of the Class of 1919. She was interviewed in 1978 by Helen Ancona Bergeson '38. When she entered the University in 1915, she says, the students came from a radius of 20 miles and “we were most provincial and conservative. And Miss Munro, our dean”—Annette Munro, dean of women from 1910 to 1930—“attempted to keep us that way.”*

**W**e had fine professors. Except for the few who didn't accept the fact that young women were allowed at the University of Rochester. I remember how we loved Dr. Gale even if we weren't so fond of his subject, Math I. Dr. Kirk was inspiring in economics and sociology. Oh yes, I have a personal story about that subject. Miss Munro checked our schedules individually. She crossed out my sociology. Too sophisticated for me, I guess. And wrote “Spanish I” instead. As my first insurrection, I crossed out her “Spanish I” and again wrote in “Sociology,” which went undetected.

Psychology and education courses were rather deadly but they were required for school teaching and we had to have them. Oh, this time was of great excitement for two young teachers who were coming here from Harvard. Professor Perkins and Packard were excellent teachers and much beloved.

Well, since there was a war on, 1918, the surgical dressing room, Red Cross knitting on Alexander Street, the Home Nursing Course at Genesee Hospital all had much more meaning for us than did Latin and math.

We did have lots of fun. Dancing at noon to the jazz band made up of four of our classmates. There was a good theater at the Lyceum—a Shakespearean comedy came from New York for four days every year. And we would stand in the long gallery line. One afternoon, we spent the afternoon and evening there with our sandwich bags.



# A Hospital: 'A Complex Social Institution'

*John Romano (1908–1994) founded the Department of Psychiatry, where he held the title of Distinguished Professor and was chair for 25 years. Romano, together with Rochester colleague George Engel, developed the biopsychosocial model of medicine, which places health and health care in biological, psychological, and social contexts. He was interviewed by Jack End '40E around 1971.*

I've once defined the teaching hospital as one of the consciences of the medical profession. Wherever you have a set in which the questions which are asked must be answered, you have the equivalent of a conscience. And this is the sum and substance of a teaching hospital: that whatever is done, there is a special kind of accountability. One must be

accountable. One must be accountable not only to the patient, but also to the student. That if a measure is undertaken or not undertaken, there must be explicit reasons as stated for that action or inaction.

So a teaching hospital, different from any other hospital, is a hospital where certain standards are kept high in terms of the need to explain, to justify the conduct which has been taken.

Now a teaching hospital is always a more complex institution. A hospital in itself—any kind of a hospital—is a very complex social institution. And at times it seems to be almost a Tower of Babel, because of the many different kinds of persons, particularly today when there are increasing numbers of persons per patient, for example, involved in patient care.

Studies have been undertaken indicating how long a chart was and how many people saw a patient, let's say a middle-aged woman with heart disease, some 40 or 50 years ago as compared to today. Today, many, many more people see that same type of patient, many more notes are written, and there are many more paraprofessional persons involved.

So today, the hospital is an extremely complex social institution with many persons of very different backgrounds, at times appeared—they appear dissonant to each other, and it requires a degree of courage and tolerance and fortitude to help people understand something of the ventures they have in common in patient care and in teaching the young and in pursuing new knowledge.





## 'Just Go to It'

*William Warfield (1920–2002) was a member of the Eastman School of Music’s Class of 1942, and returned in 1947 for graduate work. He became a world-renowned concert baritone. In 1992, he was interviewed by Ruth Watanabe ’52E (PhD), the longtime librarian of the Sibley Music Library, and John Braund ’53, ’61W (Mas) of alumni relations. Here he tells of his dilemma—and of his conversation with school director Howard Hanson—over going to New York City to audition for a role in the musical Call Me Mister while working on his master’s degree.*

I went down and auditioned for it, and they offered me right then a tour of the road company, which meant that I would have to leave school and couldn’t finish the master’s degree. So, I came back and I had a talk with Dr. Hanson about it, he said, “Bill, why don’t you do this . . . go on it, you can always come back and finish your master’s degree but this might be your entree into the career, and just go on and do that and see how that all works, and if you then find you want to come back and finish the master’s degree, you can, and if things start working out for you, well, you won’t need a master’s degree to perform anyhow, so just go to it.”

Well, it just so happens that he predicted that. By the time I came out that year later, I decided to stay in New York and just see where this was all going to take me. That’s when I got with the American Theater Wing and started grooming for my debut. I did a few night club stints, I was at cocktail lounges where I sat and played and sang for myself. As a matter of fact, it was at a night club stint that I met the gentleman who actually sponsored my Town Hall debut in 1950.



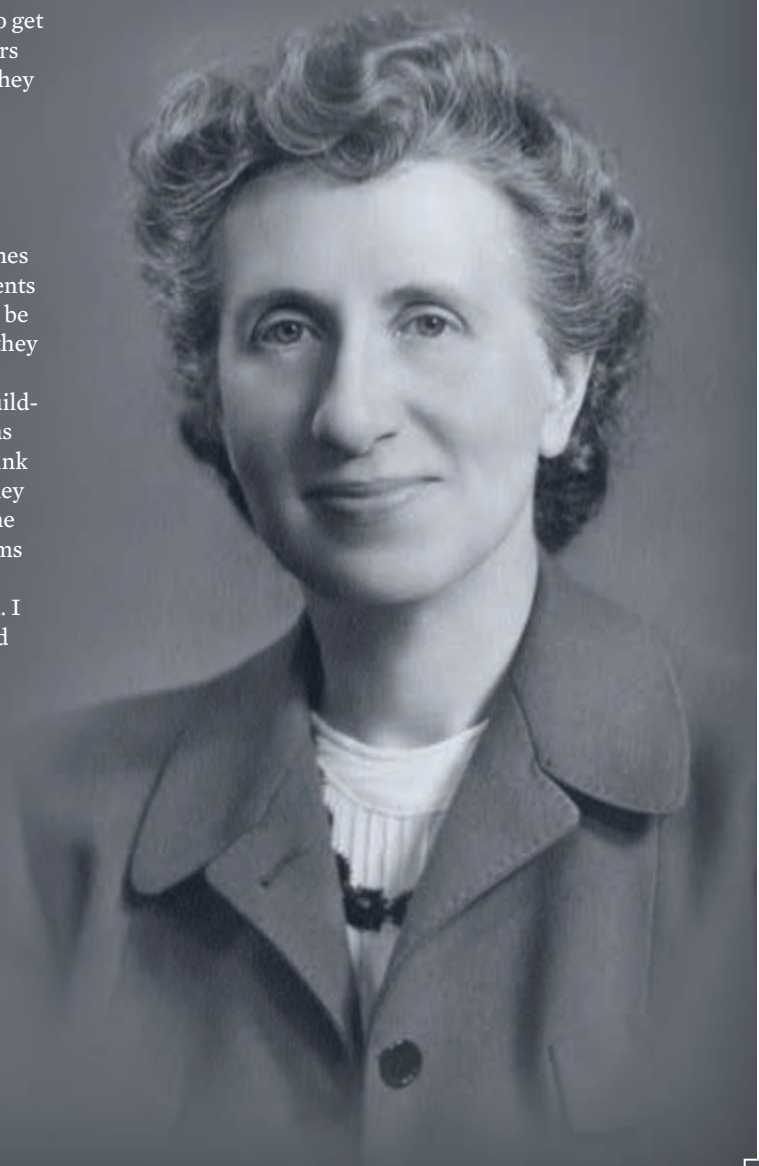
## 'The Girls Felt That Building Belonged to Them'

*Ruth Merrill (1894–1980) directed the Prince Street Campus's Cutler Union from 1933 until 1954. That year, she was named dean of women when the men's and women's campuses merged. She spoke with Jack End '40E around 1971. Here she reminisces about when the men who weren't involved in the naval program came to the women's campus during World War II.*

I have never seen such unhappy young men as when they first arrived. And I've never seen happier ones before they left. They were most helpful and I think they thoroughly enjoyed being on the campus. They took part in student government, they took part in religious activities, they took part in most everything; they were extremely helpful young men and it was possible to set aside a room for their own use so they felt they had some privacy and had a chance to get well acquainted with one another, and as those years developed I enjoyed them thoroughly and I think they enjoyed the campus.

I think that was an outstanding period which could've been an extremely difficult period on the campus. I think that when a dormitory came into Cutler Union, that was a change, that we all had to make some adjustments. I remember that many times when the girls were looking over the balcony at events that were going on in the first floor and they had to be shooed back to their dormitory. But on the whole, they were very considerate and helpful.

I think the pride that the women took in their building I'm not certain has ever been developed as far as buildings are concerned on the River Campus. I think the girls felt that building belonged to them, and they wanted to take care of it and they wanted it to be the very best building possible. I never had any problems with what nowadays we call vandalism. During Freshman Week I always talked with the freshmen. I always took them on a tour around the building and I pointed out the little interesting things. I pointed out how the dandelion had been used in the light fixtures, how it had been used in the andirons, how it had been used in many and surprising places around the building. And many the time have I heard a girl showing a stranger around the building and pointing out all these little special things.



## A 'Close Personal Connection'

*Dexter Perkins (1889–1984) came to the University as an assistant professor of history in 1914. He became chair of the department and was an expert on the Monroe Doctrine. He was interviewed by Jack End '40E in 1971, and here conjectures about the future of the University—after first demurring that a historian “always tells you about it after it’s happened.”*

I should think it would be bright. I think there are problems ahead for all the universities, of course, as a matter of fact . . . but it seems to me that we have been moving along sound lines and that the reputation of the University has been growing. I see no reason to be otherwise than optimistic except as the whole story of education is going to be complex as time goes on. The difficulties that exist in American education today come from the enormous volume of students and faculty. And this is not a criticism of any individual institution but what [there] is likely to be less of, what I think of sentimentally, is the close personal connection between the student and teacher that was possible when I came to Rochester. This again is a question of the situation, and not a comment on personalities.



# In Our Midst

Meredith Dank '99 has uncovered some surprising truths about the illegal sex trade—and policymakers are starting to take note.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

**F**or two years, from 2010 and 2012, Meredith Dank '99 traversed the United States, visiting police departments, prisons, and social service agencies. She met with pimps, sex workers, local law enforcement officers, and federal investigators.

She was on a quest to shed light on one of the most shrouded areas of modern American life. Just how much money is generated by the illegal sex economy in the United States? What are its business practices? And to what extent does it overlap with the most coercive forms of commercial sex known as sex trafficking or sex slavery?

A senior researcher at the Urban Institute, Dank was working on her biggest project yet at the Washington, D.C., think tank. She arrived at the institute in 2009, fresh out of the doctoral program in criminology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Since then, Dank, an expert on labor as well as sex trafficking, had been part of multiple studies on these subjects, as well as on juvenile justice reform and teen dating violence.

This time, however, she was in the lead. She'd won a grant from the National Institute of Justice, a division within the Justice Department, to estimate the size of the unlawful commercial sex economy in the United States. The institute had heard over and over again

from law enforcement and policymakers about the need to know just how large a beast they confronted. Whether the need was for financial information or numbers of participants, the call for research proposals didn't say. "It was a very vague solicitation," Dank recalls. "We overdelivered."

In a final report released in March 2014, Dank and her team, including an economist, a mathematician, and multiple researchers at the Urban Institute, produced estimates of the profits generated by all forms of illegal commercial sex activities in seven cities across the

United States. Critics were disappointed that Dank hadn't produced a national estimate. Others praised the study for its methodology and declared its estimates the most reliable yet. Predictably, a media flurry ensued, egged on by the Urban Institute's own release, "The Hustle," a summary of the report, illustrated with a chart of glaring red bubbles showing dollar totals. Nearly \$40 million in Denver.

Nearly \$300 million in Atlanta. And five more cities generating profits somewhere in between.

On the evening the report was released, Dank appeared on the PBS *NewsHour* to discuss what else the report had revealed. Not satisfied simply to deliver figures, Dank had delved into the practices of the industry. She portrayed a sophisticated economy built on well-established norms in the areas of marketing and recruitment, online

**IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS:** Dank stands on a pier jutting out from Hudson River Park in Manhattan. Dank has conducted extensive field work around the pier, which is known as a site where sex trafficking and other aspects of the illegal commercial sex economy of New York City thrive.



## BY THE NUMBERS

# A City-by-City Comparison

Dank and her team chose eight cities as sites for their research based on a variety of factors. One of those factors was the availability of data on the illegal drug and weapons trade.

The data were important pieces in a complex system that Dank, working with Bilal Khan, professor of mathematics and computer science at John Jay College, used to derive estimates of profits from the illegal commercial sex trade. The data also had the advantage, of course, of helping reveal how profits in the sex trade have compared to profits made in the drug and weapons trade, for seven of the eight cities included in the study.

As it turned out, Kansas City, Missouri, supplied plentiful data on the drug and weapons trade, but was missing other data on which Khan and Dank needed to rely. It remained a source of qualitative data, however.

—Karen McCally '02 (PhD)



SEX	\$290 million
DRUGS	\$117
GUNS	\$146



\$235
\$96
\$106



\$112
\$87
\$60

and in-person communications, employee policies and incentives, price structures, and special deals with legal businesses such as hotels, rental car services, and cell phone companies.

“There have been some other studies of the underground commercial sex economy in the past,” says John Picarelli, a program manager and specialist on organized crime, trafficking, and terrorism at the National Institute of Justice. “But this is one of the more advanced and detailed ones to arise in recent years.”

The media frenzy quickly dissipated. But the implications of the study will play out over the course of years, say other researchers studying the sex trade and sex trafficking.

“We’ve had a lot of studies that have looked at a city, or that have looked at commercial sex work from the perspective of individuals who are prostituted,” says Amy Farrell, associate professor of criminology and criminal justice at Northeastern University. “This is really one of the first studies that comprehensively examined the commercial sex economy from a variety of different angles at once.”

One might assume that the business known as the world’s oldest profession would operate in similar fashion, regardless of the locality. But Dank revealed some significant variations that could prove helpful to law enforcement as they work toward greater collaboration across regions and nationally. For example, she found significant overlap between sex and drug traffickers in some cities, but not others; variations in the ethnic make-up and countries of origin of

facilitators and sex workers in “niche market” brothels and massage parlors depending on the city.

She was able to sketch out some well-worn sex trafficking circuits; reveal details of how money exchanges hands; show how online social networks bleed easily into recruitment, taking prostitution beyond urban enclaves and into the suburbs.

Bill Woolf, a 30-year veteran detective with the Fairfax County, Virginia, Police Department, joined with Dank in calling the study “a blueprint that can help inform strategic resource allocations, intervention, and prevention efforts.”

**D**ank grew up in northern New Jersey, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. Like many teenagers, she was drawn to crime dramas. Among her favorites was the television series *Twin Peaks* and the blockbuster thriller *Silence of the Lambs*, both cultural milestones of the early 1990s.

She harbored no dreams in her adolescence of a career either investigating or reporting on crime. In school, her main interest was languages. “I’d studied both Spanish and French,” she says. “Picking up languages was something I did really well.” When she got to Rochester, she decided to study Japanese.

“Japan was pretty much at the height of the economic bubble at that point. I thought Japanese would be a really good language to learn.” She spent a year studying abroad in Japan, and when she



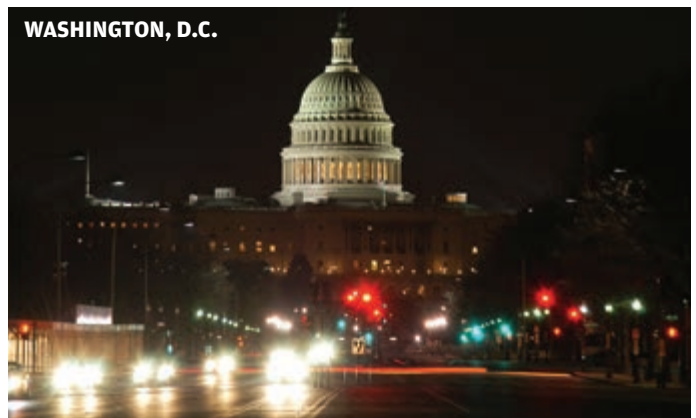
\$99
\$191
\$171



\$40
\$64
\$47



\$97
\$96
\$48



\$103
\$103
\$160

returned, wrote a senior honors thesis on bullying in Japan, an early instance of what she calls her lifelong interest in victimization.

When she graduated, she found a job tracking steel purchases for a Tokyo-based commodities trading firm. “It was so boring,” she told *Bloomberg Businessweek*, “I can’t even really remember what I did.”

After a brief stint working for a record label, she decided to apply to the doctoral program in criminology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which she passed daily on her route to work. Recalling her affinity for crime drama, she describes the move as “a gut reaction.”

“It wasn’t something I really researched. I knew I wanted to stay in New York. It was a CUNY school, and I knew I wouldn’t go into too much debt.”

She was accepted, and entered the program in the fall of 2003. It was just a few years after passage of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, a landmark law that acknowledged the existence of modern forms of slavery, within the United States, and classified trafficking as a federal crime. The problem of trafficking had been receiving more media attention, and in January 2004, the *New York Times Magazine* published a cover story by Peter Landesman called “The Girls Next Door.” Dank remembers the article as a turning point.

It told a harrowing tale of sexual slavery, in which four teenage girls, all immigrants, lived in bondage, serving clients back-to-back, taking breaks only for an occasional trip to the corner store. What shocked many readers, including Dank, was how brazenly

transparent the operation seemed. And yet, run out of a nondescript house on an unremarkable street in the bedroom community of Plainfield, New Jersey, the business had carried on while almost no one had thought that anything was amiss. “I guess I grew up somewhat sheltered,” she says. “Just the fact that this was going on here in the United States, in particular. It just kind of sparked something in me.”

For a young doctoral student like Dank, trying to pinpoint a focus for her future research, the timing of the article couldn’t have been more opportune. “In reality, little has been done to document sex trafficking in this country,” wrote Landesman.

In the weeks and months after the publication of Landesman’s article, criticisms arose. Despite having called attention to the lack of information on sex trafficking in the United States, Landesman proceeded to publish numbers that critics called unreliable. One *Boston Globe* reporter wondered if the entire piece had been “exaggerated.” The critics only underscored the problem Landesman had already identified: no one knew much of anything about sex trafficking in the United States.

As the controversy played out, Dank began working with the chairman of John Jay’s anthropology department, Ric Curtis, on a study of commercial sexual exploitation of children in New York City. Curtis had just won a grant from the National Institute of Justice and Dank became the project’s manager. She’d found her dissertation topic—and her calling.



The months ahead would be wrenching—“emotionally, mentally, physically,” she says, recalling the project. The aim was to determine just how many children and adolescents were trading sex in New York City. Working with social service agencies, Dank and Curtis tapped into the network of youths trading sex by offering coupons, redeemable for cash, in return for anonymously participating in the project. “I spent a year-and-a-half interviewing young people in New York City about their experiences in engaging in the commercial sex trade,” Dank says. “What they go through just to survive really opened my eyes up, and I knew that this was something that I wanted to continue to focus on.”

It would be her first foray into the kind of controversy she says she’s continued to encounter. When she and Curtis had completed the study and published their conclusions, law enforcement officers as well as victims advocates were shocked, and not altogether pleased, according to a lengthy article about the research that appeared in the *Village Voice* newspaper in 2011. From their sample of 200 youth sex workers, they extrapolated an estimate of 4,000 children and adolescents trading sex citywide. They found that about 45 percent of the population were boys; that 90 percent worked independently, without the involvement of a pimp; that 90 percent were also native-born American citizens; and that 95 percent said they sold sex as a way to support themselves.

“The typical narrative was that there are these little girls who are being lured into this by traffickers and pimps,” Dank says. “We came out and said, ‘Listen, a lot of the young people who are engaging in this are doing it for survival. There isn’t necessarily this third party exploiter who’s forcing or coercing them into doing this. Many of them are doing it because they’ve been kicked out of their homes, they’ve run away, they’re being abused. Or even if they’re with their

families, their families can’t afford to put food on the table,’” Dank says. Poverty, the study showed, was the problem. “I can’t tell you how many times kids have said that they literally have nothing to eat.”

Law enforcement and advocacy groups alike “had built all of this support around one narrative,” she says. The *Village Voice* reported that Dank’s and Curtis’s study had failed to make much traction outside the Justice Department—and charged that advocacy groups were invested in a narrative that had proven potent in attracting media attention and funding.

The narrative certainly is potent. It has united lawmakers who can agree on virtually nothing else. And Dank, too, knows its power. It’s what drew her into a career dedicated to researching trafficking.

“We know what to do when someone’s doing bad. We can find them, we can arrest them, we can prosecute them, and put them in prison,” she says. But when kids sell their bodies to survive, policy-makers have had fewer clear responses.

**D**ank’s March 2014 study went well beyond the scope of trafficking. Formally titled “Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major U.S. Cities,” the report considered all forms of prostitution as well as child pornography. Child pornography was taken out of the commercial equation, however, when Dank discovered that images appeared to be overwhelmingly traded for free.

According to Farrell, some of the most illuminating aspects of the study concerned structure rather than size. “Some of the most valuable work out of that study is the qualitative work,” she says. “The hundreds of hours that Meredith spent, along with her junior colleagues, interviewing—particularly individuals who are facilitators of commercial sex—from that we learned a lot about those networks.”

**THE STROLL: While much sex work is now facilitated online, Danks says meet-ups still occur in plain sight, on streets like this one, in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.**

Farrell says Dank has a gift for getting people to talk about difficult subjects. “She has no pomp about her,” says Farrell, who’s conducted interviews with Dank in the past.

“I think it helps a little bit that I look a lot younger than I am,” says Dank. She’s been mistaken for a student—“even though I say right off the bat that I’m not,” she says. “I actually heard a couple of people say they were helping a student with her paper for class.”

It’s also the case that most pimps who are tied up in the criminal justice system, and most sex workers, aren’t used to being asked about their lives in the neutral way that Dank, as a social scientist, does. Or to being approached as human beings to whom you’d extend the usual courtesies. “We made sure, when they walked into the room, to smile,” Dank says. “What I heard particularly from people I interviewed in prison is that they hadn’t seen somebody smile at them in a really long time.”

Drawing on interviews that lasted as long as 90 minutes each, Dank produced a 300-plus-page social science study with some unusually rich and nuanced portraits of the people involved in the sex trade. And as in her 2008 study of New York City’s child sex workers, she found her subjects didn’t necessarily conform to prevailing stereotypes.

Among the most surprising and controversial findings was that few pimps seemed to use physical force against their employees. One might assume many of those pimps were simply lying, were they not so detailed and forthcoming in their descriptions of the various forms of psychological manipulation they relied on to recruit, maintain, and get the most they could out of their employees. The lengthy chapter in which Dank detailed these techniques muddied the waters for advocates of sex workers who tend toward two poles: those who view all sex workers as victims of exploitation and those who see all adult sex workers as active agents.

Can a sex worker be called a victim if she doesn’t see herself as such? Who determines what counts as indoctrination? Is psychological manipulation a form of coercion?

None of these questions has a simple answer. “We found a lot of gray areas,” Dank says.

Dank acknowledges that she’s been “hit from both sides.”

“It’s a very difficult line she’s trying to walk,” says Farrell.

To the extent there’s been discontent with Dank’s study, it’s mostly been centered among the advocates of sex workers, who argued that she hadn’t interviewed enough sex workers and that the pimps she interviewed were all either facing charges or incarcerated. *The Washington Post*, for example, included a blog post from Maggie McNeill, a self-described retired call girl, who urged readers to imagine “a report on restaurants which treated the opinions of failed hot dog stand operators as the basis for broad statements about every kind of food business, from convenience stores to food trucks to McDonald’s to five-star restaurants.”

Dank argues that critics such as McNeill have misinterpreted her study. “We were very clear that this was not a prevalence study,” Dank says. In other words, the study did not attempt to draw statistical conclusions about the prevalence of any one aspect of the sex economy. Rather, the qualitative information presented in the report served the function of showing noteworthy trends, distinguishing among the sex economies of various cities, and highlighting exactly where the gaps in knowledge are. Dank notes that she chose sex workers who had worked in more than one city and who had been in the industry for long enough to yield important information about how the industry has changed, and continues to change, over time.

Dank acknowledges that for both ethical and practical reasons, she was not able to include pimps who had eluded law enforcement. She says it’s a genuine limitation. But, she adds, “in empirical research, limitations do not imply bias.”

Few social scientists purport to offer the final word. Often, the most successful studies are those that clarify further lines of questioning.

Dank says there’s a lot left to learn. “When looking across [underground commercial sex economy] venues,” she wrote in her final report, “it appears the cases least likely to be investigated may also be those that are more organized, generate more money, are more likely to be run by foreign national groups, and have client bases that are the most closed ethnically or socioeconomically. . . . Findings from offender interviews suggest that the UCSE extends far beyond the cases investigated and prosecuted by law enforcement.”

But her study did attract immediate attention from lawmakers. In the months following its release, she appeared on Capitol Hill to be part of a panel discussion sponsored by the Senate Caucus to End Human Trafficking. She was invited to brief the Values Action Team, a group of senators with an interest in international human rights inspired by their Christian faith.

She also appeared at the Justice Department to present her findings to representatives from agencies including the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Council, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department.

Many of the policy recommendations she offered in the report are priorities that nonprofits and law enforcement groups have previously advocated, or in some cases, had already begun to implement. Chief among those are campaigns to educate the public in how to identify potential trafficking victims; programs to educate kids on

**“The typical narrative was that there are these little girls who are being lured into this by traffickers and pimps. We came out and said, ‘Listen, a lot of the young people who are engaging in this are doing it for survival.’ . . . I can’t tell you how many times kids have said that they literally have nothing to eat.”**

healthy relationships and how to avoid falling prey to some of the sophisticated recruitment tactics of pimps; and improved training for law enforcement officers who investigate and question people who are potentially involved in the sex trade. Dank’s study buttresses the case for those kinds of initiatives.

But in gauging the size and scale of the illegal sex economy, Dank has also shown, beyond reasonable doubt, that profits from the trade exceed those made in the illegal drug and weapons trades in many cities. As a result, she makes a solid case that law enforcement will need more resources to identify and prosecute sex traffickers, and more guidance from lawmakers about where the line is to be drawn between voluntary and coerced participation in the sex trade.

In the end, there may be only one major aspect of the illegal sex trade she leaves untouched. She’s often asked about buyers.

“There’s a whole movement to end demand. And I’ll be honest. I don’t really touch the demand issue,” she says. After a pause, she explains why. “When you ask [sex workers] what they need to get out, they don’t say, ‘Well, let’s arrest the people who are giving me money.’ It’s ‘How are you going to help me get housing? How are you going to help me get livable wage employment?’” The sex trade, she says, “has to do with so many failures with the structures of the communities and of society. And if we don’t address that, then we’re never going to properly address this issue.” 