If you’re in the Hartford, Conn. area before the end of October 2016, don’t miss the opportunity to walk the grounds of the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington, Conn. to see a sculpture trail created by seven recent graduates of the Hartford Art School (HAS). Imagine walking along a trail and coming upon a large chess set floating in a pond, a giant sphere of sheep’s wool in a field, a relief sculpture of a fiberglass cow, a working clock behind a granite stone, or a statue of a borer beetle carved out of wood.

The Hill-Stead sculpture trail was made possible when HAS Inc. board member Jane Herzig and her friends Jim and Lois Coon and Neil and Judy Cowan gave the art school a $5,000 grant for a special project. Faculty members Sam Ekwurtzel and Hiro Fukawa used the grant to provide sculpture majors a rare opportunity to showcase their work publicly. The project enabled the students to enhance their portfolios and utilize the skills they had been taught on how to successfully create a public art exhibition.

Audrey Musinski ’16, a sculpture and ceramics double major, says one of her courses focused on creating multiple proposals and taught her how to identify the necessary tools, materials, and budget for an exhibition. “It was very professional and now I know what I need to do if I ever want to apply for a grant,” says Alexis, who sculpted “Theodate’s Cow” for the trail exhibition. “It was actually really helpful, as far as what could potentially happen after graduation,” she said.

Kevin Hernandez ’16, who created four “Sign Poems” along the sculpture trail, agrees. “We had to come up with a way to present our idea so that it was very clear.” Kevin says those who review proposals not only want to know details about the art piece, but also how it will benefit the museum or gallery.

“This project gave me a lot of skills I can use,” says Taylor Schaffer ’16 who will attend graduate school to pursue a degree in secondary art education. “It’s something that’s different than what other art teachers teach their students.” Taylor carved “The Wooden Emerald Ash Borer,” a beetle statue out of ash wood that sits at the entrance to one of the walking trails.

Another sculpture on display is: “Stalemate,” a 32-piece chess set that floats on a pond, by Dylan Ahern ’16.

To learn more about the sculpture trail and exhibit hours, visit hillstead.org.
One of the University’s most compelling research projects, known as “the Hartford Hand Project,” has reached an important milestone. The world’s first prosthetic hand that can be fully customized to patients’ needs has been approved for testing on patients. Currently, amputees and those born without hands have a limited selection of sizes and designs for a prosthetic hand. The groundbreaking Hartford Hand has a unique design that allows each patient to get a custom-made hand that can be adjusted as the patient grows.

“This is a need and something I could have used from the very beginning,” was the reaction of one patient when he saw the prototype. That reaction compelled five graduate students in the University’s Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) program in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions to spend many non-class hours working on the project throughout their degree program.

“This has been one of the best opportunities I have had in my life to design,” says Christopher Welch M’16, one of the students who spent two years working on the project under the guidance of Prosthetics and Orthotics Assistant Professor Michael Wininger. Christopher and colleagues Yonathan Moshayev M’16, Jake Green M’16, Amber Sayer M’16, and Stephen Sousa ’14, M’16 spent hours upon hours improving the current design to make the unique Hartford Hand a reality for patients.

“This is a good chance for students to train on cutting-edge technology,” says Wininger. “They have more training than any other students in the country, which makes them competitive for their residencies.” This has proven to be true. With the Hartford Hand project on their résumés, the five graduate students all landed promising clinic jobs before graduating in May. Even though they are moving on to new exciting opportunities, Stephen and Christopher plan to continue developing the Hartford Hand. Christopher is working at De La Torre Orthotics & Prosthetics in Pittsburgh, Pa. and Stephen started his career at Long Island Orthotics and Prosthetics in Long Island, N.Y.

While the two recent alumni will work on new prototypes, incoming graduate students will test the Hartford Hand on patients.

Five recent graduate students and their professor in the Prosthetics and Orthotics program reached the important milestone of qualifying for human tests with a first-of-its-kind prosthetic hand.

L-R: Yonathan Moshayev M’16, Jake Green M’16, Christopher Welch M’16, Amber Sayer M’16, Steve Sousa ’14, M’16, and Assistant Professor Michael Wininger.
THE SINGING GUTIERREZ TRIPLETS ARE READY FOR A NEW STAGE

Prepared with degrees in vocal performance from the University’s The Hartt School, the singing Gutierrez triplets from Chesapeake, Va. are moving on to separate pursuits of their dreams of performing and teaching music. It is the first time the brothers have lived in different locations.

Chase, Evan, and Zachary Gutierrez started singing and performing together when they were just three years old. They have recorded several CDs, performed professionally as a group called “Three,” and have been referred to as “the Jonas Brothers of classical music.”

Now, Evan will pursue a master’s degree in vocal performance at the Peabody Institute of The John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md. Chase will stay in Connecticut where he has some singing gigs lined up while preparing to apply to graduate schools. Zachary moved to Washington D.C. to work as a professional singer before applying to graduate schools.

“I feel Hartt has prepared me for all kinds of jobs,” says Zachary of his career plans. Each of the brothers has been working with a private voice teacher to develop his own sound. “Assistant Professor of Voice Robert Barefield has helped me so much in terms of opening up my voice,” says Evan. Chase also feels well-prepared for his music career, and he encourages new students to take advantage of the many opportunities The Hartt School has to offer. “The teachers really care about the students. They want you to succeed,” Chase says.

LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

GRAD DESIGNS MOBILE APP TO KEEP YOU FIT

Cindy Lau ’16 says she knows from personal experience that the key to staying on track with an exercise program is to have fun. That’s why Lau, who earned a double major in visual communication design and illustration from the University’s Hartford Art School, created a mobile game app for her senior project. It uses “virtual pets” to help track every step you take as a way to promote a healthier lifestyle.

“Originally I wanted to make a video game, but my professor suggested I create something more—something that would help people,” says Lau, who is an avid runner. That’s when she came up with an idea for SANBO, a game app that encourages individuals to incorporate physical fitness into their daily routine.

SANBO, which means slow walk or stroll in Cantonese, is suited for health enthusiasts and gamers who are not into heavy exercising. It uses a mobile device’s pedometer to track the number of steps taken and measures it against a daily goal. When goals are achieved, points are awarded to improve the health status of the app’s virtual pets, and if steps fall short, the pets are in danger of entering a “sick state” that Lau hopes will motivate the user to get moving again.

Lau is working as a junior designer at Taylor Design in Stamford, Conn., and hopes to make SANBO available for free for Android and Apple devices on the iTunes App Store.
HIRED AND WORKING BEFORE GRADUATION

Scott Roberts ’16 didn’t have to wait until graduation to become a professional news producer. After two internships at NBC Connecticut, a television station in West Hartford, Conn., his bosses were so impressed they offered him a job during his senior year. Scott wrote and produced early-morning newscasts twice a week during his final semester and started working full-time at the station after Commencement.

So what exactly does a producer do? “I arrange all of the stories, the content, the video, and every graphic that you see go up on screen,” Scott explains. “It’s an art form. You want to make sure it flows well. You want to make sure you give enough time to the weather anchor and traffic anchor and make sure everything goes smoothly.”

Scott, who majored in communication in the College of Arts and Sciences, traces his success back to his first meeting with School of Communication Professor Lynne Kelly. She encouraged him to check out STN-2, the student-run campus television station. He was an STN reporter in his freshman year, learning how to write for television and how to put together a newscast. He eventually worked his way up to general manager.

Because of his STN experience and his passion for producing, professors encouraged him to contact Kristie Borges ’93, a producer and internship supervisor at NBC Connecticut. The two alumni are now co-workers.

Throughout it all Scott also was active in student life, playing in the pep band and being a Red Cap at orientation for new students. He is very appreciative of the personal attention that was given to his personal goal and how others helped him achieve it.

“The close relationships between professors and students are really something special about the University,” says Scott. “The support and encouragement have made me a better person overall.”

FUTURE OPTOMETRIST SHEDS LIGHT ON PROPER CONTACT LENS CARE

Do you know how often a contact lens case should be replaced? Is it, a. Every month, b. Every 3 months, c. Every 6 months, or D. Every year? If you answered anything other than b. Every 3 months, you might want to take a contact lens care survey created by health science major Cassie Pastier ’16, of Oxford, Mass.

Pastier, who enters Salus University’s doctoral program in optometry this fall, says, “This survey had a major influence on me and how I plan to treat my future patients.” To demonstrate that the lack of proper contact lens care instruction can contribute to chronic eye infections and irritations, Pastier created the survey as part of her Honors Program research and education project in the University’s College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP).

With the help of Associate Professor Claudia Oakes and funding from the University’s Women’s Advancement Initiative’s Dorothy Goodwin Scholarship Program, Pastier developed the survey and a contact lens care and hygiene education program. She recruited 61 students to answer 10 survey questions, attend a brief presentation about proper contact lens care, and take a post-education session survey.

What surprised Pastier was that the pre- and post-education scores were nearly the same for both the survey’s 24 contact lens users, and 37 non-users. The contact lens users achieved a pre-education survey score of 49%, compared to the non-users’ score of 46%. Results among the contact lens users post-education increased to 88%, while the non-contact lens users’ score rose to 85%.

“You’re so overwhelmed with information when you first get contacts, you don’t always remember what you’re supposed to do,” says Pastier, who may decide to specialize in pediatric eye care. No matter what she decides, one thing is certain, her patients will know their contact lens care.
As far back as Nicole Awad ’17 can remember, she has wanted to be an archaeologist. But never in her wildest dreams did this history major from New Canaan, Conn., imagine that, as an undergraduate, she would play a part in an archaeological discovery that would make headlines around the world.

This summer, Nicole was a member of an international team—led by archaeologist Richard Freund, the University of Hartford’s Maurice Greenberg Professor of Jewish History—that discovered the location of a Holocaust escape tunnel hand-dug by 80 Jewish prisoners at the extermination pits in Paneriai, Lithuania. Called the “burning brigade,” the prisoners were forced by the Nazis to incinerate bodies to hide evidence of the destruction of Lithuanian Jews during World War II. Only 12 prisoners survived the courageous escape via the tunnel, which took place on the last night of Passover in April 1944, and 11 of the 12 lived to tell the harrowing story of digging for 76 nights using only their hands, spoons, and other crude tools.

Immediately after its announcement in June, news about the discovery spread quickly throughout the world with articles and interviews appearing in countless newspapers, television stations, and online media, including The New York Times, USA Today, The Atlantic, Yahoo, and the BBC. Nicole, Freund, others from the team, and descendants of the escapees were featured in a documentary being produced by the award-winning science series NOVA. It is scheduled to air on PBS in 2017.

Nicole was amazed to learn that people from all over the world, regardless of faith or locale, care about the discovery. “As someone who wants to become an archaeologist, it is really amazing for me to see the emotion archaeology can provide,” Nicole says. She adds that, while people still care about archaeological digs at castles from the 1500s or at ancient structures, the tunnel discovery strikes a chord with many people because it’s part of recent history.

Calling the tunnel discovery monumental, Nicole says, “You find what these people did to survive and it almost feels like—not only are you discovering a real story, but you are doing them a service. It’s hearsay when someone says, ‘there’s a tunnel there’—there’s no substance to it. But now their voices can be heard and we can provide a whole community with a story of hope and liberation from this terrible and awful thing that happened.”

This was not Nicole’s first time working on an archeological project. Throughout her years as an undergraduate, she has worked on projects from Griswold, Conn. to Rhodes, Greece, and learned cutting-edge strategies along the way. The contours and direction of the 100-foot-long escape tunnel were found at levels of 3 to 15 feet underground using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) equipment, which Nicole has operated at numerous archaeological “digs.” Originally developed for the gas and oil industry, the noninvasive technique was used in Lithuania because of its ability to identify the location of the tunnel without disturbing the resting places of some 100,000 bodies buried there.

When she came to the University of Hartford, Nicole thought she would be working on only small projects like digging in someone’s backyard for arrowheads. She credits Professor Freund with providing opportunities and invaluable experiences that will contribute to her future success. “The University of Hartford literally gave me everything,” she says. “I wouldn’t have been able to do archaeology if not for the University. The level at which the University cares about your career is astounding to me.”

Nicole is now applying to graduate school to continue her study of archaeology and finds many of the admission applications require fieldwork and real-life experiences. Looking to the future, she says her dream is to work in Egypt. “I’ve studied Egypt all my life and ever since I was 3, I wanted to be an Egyptologist. My parents said I was crazy, but here I am still trying to do it. But as long as I’m digging, I’ll be happy.”