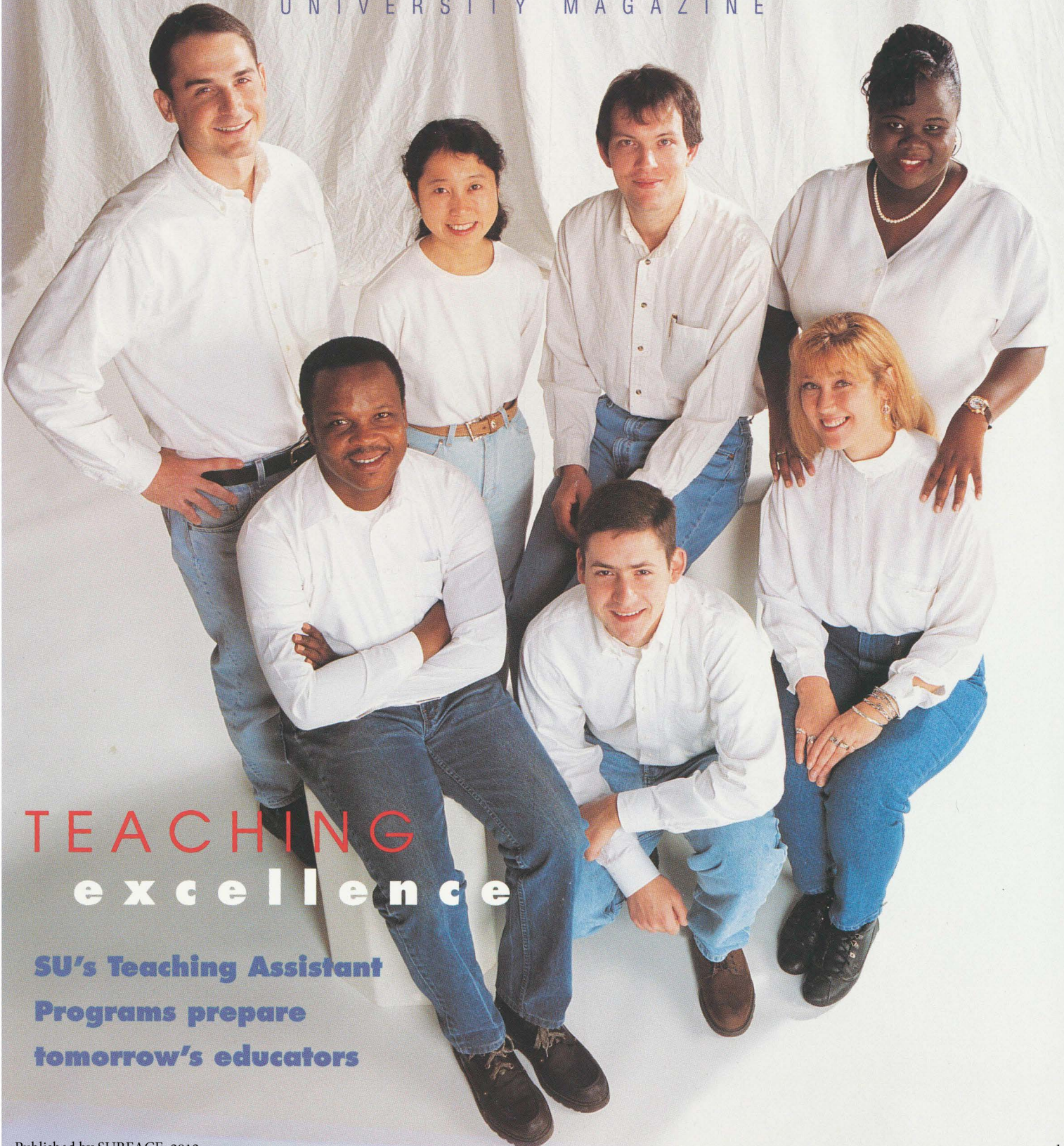


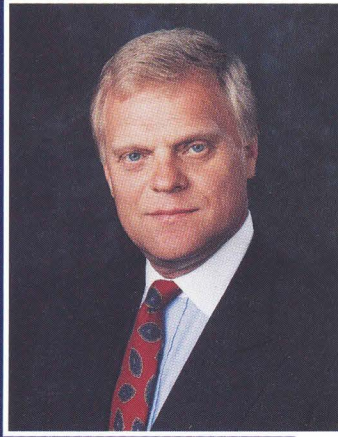
SYRACUSE

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



TEACHING
excellence

**SU's Teaching Assistant
Programs prepare
tomorrow's educators**



A

Message

From the

Chancellor



Happy New Year.

I look forward to 1998 as another year of positive changes for the University. Each year in this decade has seen significant improvements at SU in the quality of each new class of students, in the faculty's ongoing commitment to teaching and scholarship, in the numbers of alumni whose successes add luster to our national reputation, and, most important, in our progress toward becoming the leading student-centered research university.

Syracuse University Magazine will be changing to better reflect the growth of the institution. A thorough study conducted this past year by a major public relations consulting firm, Ruder•Finn, revealed a great deal of important information. Two items are particularly meaningful here: Syracuse University alumni have strong, positive feelings about their alma mater. But because the growth of the University has outstripped our capacity to communicate effectively, this most important public is less informed than we would like.

Accordingly, in the months to come you will see more stories in these pages about your University in the nineties and beyond. You'll become better acquainted with the knowledge being created here, with the faculty and students, with the initiatives we have designed to ensure SU's future, with your fellow alumni whose careers and commitments make us all very proud, and with the generosity that gives us every reason to hope that the decades to come will see a stronger and more vital Syracuse University.

Our communications will be organized around three key messages. Syracuse University is a dynamic institution: There is forward motion toward achieving our vision on the part of all who care about this institution and its place among the finest in the nation. Syracuse University has a clear vision: We are focused on achieving our goal as the leading student-centered research university. We are doing so by integrating our commitment to students and learning with a continuing pursuit of new knowledge and creative accomplishment. Syracuse University will experience success: We will build on a strong tradition and rely on the best people to make our vision real.

Woven throughout these pages and in all our communications will be the University's core values of quality, caring, diversity, innovation, and service.

We look forward to your comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth A. Shaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kenneth A. Shaw
Chancellor and President

SYRACU



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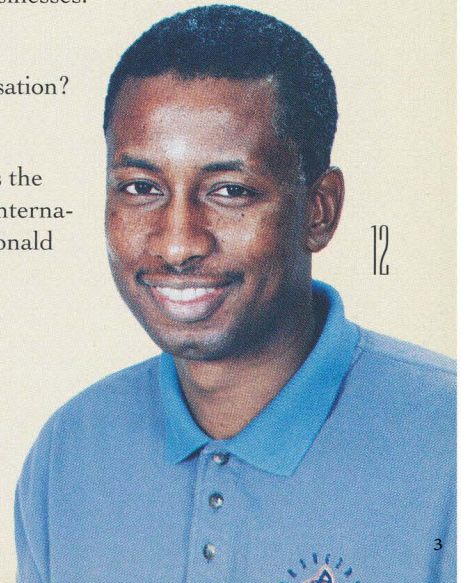
Alumni weigh in with advice for today's students.

Cover photo by Susan Kahn.



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Total Education

There are many levels to the SU learning experience

As editor of *Syracuse University Magazine*, it became clear to me soon after accepting this job that if I planned to do it well, it was important to experience SU's educational process firsthand. After all, what better way is there to get a feel for this educational institution and its students, faculty, and alumni than by plunking down in one of those squeaky plastic deskchairs and letting a few professors have at me?

Enthusiastic as I was about the experience, I did not approach my first course without a footnote of concern. I still recalled far too well my undergrad years when, frankly, I was not that great a student. Would I be any better today? All those canvassed insisted I'd do just fine, bringing to the classroom not just my dusty book-smarts, but a brain-file filled to overflowing with the life skills I've acquired over time. And they were right: To my great relief I found that I enjoy studying, prefer to complete assignments early, and experience little reluctance in stepping up to the scholastic plate to take a swing at the hypothesis of the day. But I still *hate* tests.

Equally gratifying was the discovery that my fellow classmates, most half my age, are remarkably on the ball—testament to the fact that SU continues to attract the best and brightest. So gifted are these students that many have risen to the level of teaching assistants (TAs), earning their degrees with a full load of courses and the additional responsibility of serving as student advisors, instructors, and research aides.

There was no such creature as a TA during my undergraduate days, when professors and students were often left on their own to decipher who needed what and how best to get it. SU's TA program, which I've since learned is among the best in the country (see "Teaching Excellence," page 26), bridges that gap, team-

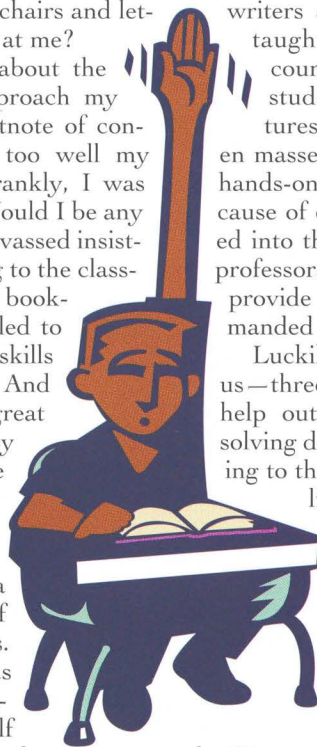
ing talented graduate students with professors in need of their assistance, while providing the TAs with a little pocket money and the rare opportunity to explore scholarship from the other side of the podium.

My first experience with the TA program occurred last summer, after I registered for a computer graphics class for writers and editors. Two professors taught this newly introduced course, which drew more than 40 students. Following group lectures, my classmates and I moved en masse to computer clusters for the hands-on portion of the course. Because of our numbers, we were divided into three labs, forcing the harried professors to sprint between rooms to provide the individual attention demanded by the graphically impaired.

Luckily for the winded pros—and us—three TAs had been assigned to help out, offering computer advice, solving design problems, and responding to the endless avalanche of niddly little questions that would have driven the professors to early retirement had they been on their own. All in all it was a great system; virtually everyone in the class left with positive feelings about the course—in large part, I'm sure, because the TAs were there to lend a hand.

I think one of my fellow classmates, a working mother of two, put it best when, on the last day of class, she planted herself at the classroom door and stated firmly: "I'm not leaving unless I get to take a TA home with me!"

If I were her, I would have held out for two.



JEFFREY CHARBONEAU
EDITOR