



REVEREND BLESSED UNAMI SIKHOSANA

## A MODEL CITIZEN'S JOURNEY

THE REVEREND BLESSED UNAMI Sikhosana '11, G'12 was just 11 years old when she had to walk alone from her home in the Mzilikazi African Township to the city to buy medicine for her ailing grandmother, who was raising her and five younger siblings. It was during the days of strict apartheid in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)—a time when black people were not permitted to ride on buses or own cars. It was a challenging journey for the young black girl—but one that would change her life.

The pharmacist's wife took one look at Sikhosana and was so impressed by her beauty that she wondered if her daughter, who owned a modeling school, would be interested in the young girl as a fashion model. "I had no idea what she was talking about," says Sikhosana, who earned a master's degree in international relations and conflict resolution from the Maxwell School. "The next time I came to buy medicine her daughter was there, took pictures of me, and wrote down my address." Sikhosana soon forgot the encounter, for her beloved grandmother died shortly afterward, leaving her to raise her brothers and sister alone.

Nearly five years passed before the woman invited Sikhosana to attend her modeling school. "It was not an easy place for me and I was very sad," she says. "It was difficult for the white girls to accept a black girl coming into their school. They didn't want to share makeup and clothes with me or go into the sauna or the pool if I went in. Apartheid was at its peak at that time, and they resented me." Despite the obstacles, Sikhosana excelled, becoming the nation's first black fashion model and winning numerous titles, including Miss Rhodesia 1978. Her success led her to open her own modeling school in 1990, the first black woman in the country to do so. She closed the school in 1998, when she came to the United States

to live with an aunt in Syracuse and further her education.

After earning an associate's degree in information technology and programming at Bryant and Stratton College, Sikhosana attended University College, earning a bachelor's degree in legal studies, supporting herself by working for a local attorney. Inspired by her "prayer warrior" grandmother, whose home was a refuge for people from all over Africa seeking spiritual and physical healing, Sikhosana took theology classes from an international bible seminary and was ordained a pastor in 2004.

Along with her ministerial duties and Maxwell studies, she is the founder and driving force of the Blessed Sikhosana Foundation, which funds sustainable developments, such as sponsoring and educating village girls, as well as clean water and medical projects in rural areas of Zimbabwe. A dedicated advocate for African refugees in Central New York, she assists them with housing, employment, and educational issues. "We have received 20 donated computers and are looking for space on Syracuse's North Side to establish a computer center," she says. "Our refugee children are having difficulties passing their Regents examinations, and we hope a computer center will help, especially for those who are having trouble with English."

Although still dedicated to addressing problems in Africa, and planning to use her education to improve the lives of people there, Sikhosana became an American citizen in 2006. She is immensely proud of her adopted country. "America is so blessed and people here take it all for granted—the clean water, the abundant food, health care, education," she says. "Americans don't realize that their country is the best. I consider myself privileged to be an American citizen." —Paula Meseroll



## STEPHEN KUUSISTO

# ENLIVENING LANGUAGE

FOR POET STEPHEN KUUSISTO, LANGUAGE IS DELICIOUS AND powerful and survival. He knows from bittersweet experience. "I often tell the story of being a blind kid on the playground in 1960 and convincing a bully not to beat me up by just simply dazzling him with invention," says Kuusisto, University Professor and director of the Renée Crown University Honors Program. "My grandmother used to laugh that the kids in the neighborhood followed me around because I was a very imaginative, funny kid." It was inevitable that he would put his words to form. "The jokester in me likes to say, 'Being blind, I was never any good at baseball. Poetry was a better career,'" says Kuusisto, who is accompanied around campus by his guide dog, Nira.

Born with a condition in which his retinas were underdeveloped, Kuusisto sees shapes and colors only as a blurry, distorted panorama. Memory and his other senses compensate to help him tell stories in verse. His poems reveal texture and imagery that are vivid and observant as in "Summer at North Farm" (*Only Bread, Only Light*, Copper Canyon Press, 2000): "Fires, always fires after midnight, / the sun depending in the purple birches / and gleaming like a copper kettle."

A graduate of the acclaimed University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, Kuusisto traveled to Scandinavia to translate contemporary Finnish poetry as a Fulbright Scholar. He ventured into nonfiction writing around the time of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. "I realized then that essentially I had spent my entire life without civil rights," Kuusisto says. Although he attended public schools, Kuusisto was educated at a time when there were no laws in place to assist those with special needs. His first-grade teacher worked with him to help him read as he pressed his face into the pages of reading primers.

Kuusisto's memoir, *Planet of the Blind* (The Dial Press, 1998), a *New York Times'* "Notable Book of the Year," details his life growing up but

also, in a sense, it tells the story of many other individuals who are blind. "I needed to write an autobiographical account because I was part of a historic movement of that first wave of people with disabilities entering the public square," he says. His other works include more than 100 essays, articles, and poems, which have appeared in national publications, and the forthcoming *Letters to Borges* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013).

In 2011, his commitment to disability rights brought him to SU, where he recognizes the work being done in disability studies at the School of Education, among other programs. "The idea that Syracuse embraces scholarship that is tied to community engagement and the well-being of people, many of whom have been marginalized historically, was really powerful for me," says Kuusisto, who along with his wife, Connie, founded a consulting business that assists companies on the best practices in serving customers with disabilities.

After he began as director, the honors program helped launch the Center for Fellowship and Scholarship Advising, a campus-wide initiative to help students find opportunities for post-graduate fellowships and scholarships. Kuusisto is also working with administrators to relocate the honors program from Bowne Hall to a larger space to better accommodate the program's 900 students.

Kuusisto, who was an English professor at the University of Iowa, also engages with students through his honors seminars on poetry and creative non-fiction. His most important lesson: read a lot of good writing—such as Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. "A lot of good writing is romantic and strange and not at all simple journalism," he says. "You want students reading the wonderfully improbable and beautiful writing of real artists, so they can understand great storytelling has to be memorable—and break new ground."

—Kathleen Haley

# TARGETING TOXICITY

BROOKS GUMP HAD EVERY INTENTION of following his father into the medical profession, but as a philosophy major at Swarthmore College, he was more interested in the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and physiology. So when it came time to apply to medical school, things didn't quite work out as planned. "During my medical school admissions interview, I talked about Freud the whole time," says Gump, a professor in the Department of Public Health, Food Studies, and Nutrition at the David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics. "It was suggested that maybe medical school wasn't the right place for me."

In due time, Gump found his rightful place in the field of epidemiology—the cornerstone of public health—which studies the causes of disease in human populations, how it spreads, and on developing and testing ways to prevent and control it. An expert in cardiovascular behavioral medicine, he conducts research on how children with low levels of such toxicants as perfluorochemicals (PFCs), lead, and mercury in their blood may be at risk for cardiovascular disease. "Early on, there was no one in my field doing research on how toxicants might alter cardiovascular and endocrine reactions to psychological stress," says Gump, who holds advanced degrees in general psychology, experimental psychology, and epidemiology in public health.

While studying for his doctoral degree at the University of California, San Diego, Gump worked in an area called health psychology, assessing how a patient's hospital roommate can affect the outcome of bypass surgery. Later, as a psychology professor at SUNY Oswego, he began to investigate how children's cardiovascular systems react differently to psychological stress as a function of very low-level lead exposure. His research over the past 10 years contributed to the recent reduction of what are considered acceptable lead levels in children, which were lowered from 10 micrograms per deciliter to five.

Since joining Falk's public health faculty in 2010, Gump has continued to focus his research on how toxicants in food and the environment affect children. His latest project, funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, will compare lead levels in white and African American children as a predictor of heart disease and IQ deficits. "We know many African American children have higher levels of lead in their blood than white children," he says. "Preliminary data suggest their hearts are already showing signs of change because the



**BROOKS GUMP**

lead is causing vascular constriction, which triggers a rise in blood pressure. We also hope to link the well-known detrimental effects of lead on IQ to this vascular constriction because reduced blood flow may be having a negative impact on brain function."

Going forward, Gump will examine how children react to low-level mercury exposure—which typically occurs because of fish consumption—and assess the relationship between metal toxicants and autism. And because the level of lead in our bodies is now 600 times greater than it was in pre-industrial times, he will explore chelation therapy as a way to detoxify metal agents by converting them to a chemically inert form that can be excreted from the body. Gump has also received National Science Foundation funding to train undergraduates who are military veterans to conduct research with other veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. "Most of my research is not boundary specific in terms of a particular field," he says.

Gump says one thing he likes most about being on the faculty of Falk's public health program—one of the few undergraduate programs of its kind in the nation—is that his research initiatives receive much needed support from the college. "Funding for my research in the toxicant field is a challenge because most funders are not clear about why my research matters," he says. "The college's research center helps me write grants and administer budgets, so I can concentrate on my teaching and scholarly activities. Having that support has been terrific—I feel much appreciated for what I do."

—Christine Yackel

# HEART AND DEDICATION

ZOE GUZMAN '13 CREDITS HER MOTHER FOR ENCOURAGING her to play on the SU volleyball team and pursue her dream of being a medical doctor. It was her mom, after all, who told her nothing can hold her back but herself. "My mom is a well-educated woman, and her commitment to health definitely transfers to me," says Guzman, a double major in anthropology and forensic science in the College of Arts and Sciences who grew up in San Juan, Puerto Rico. "It affects me in a good way and lets me pursue my career as a doctor."

As a defensive specialist, Guzman racked up 273 digs in her Orange volleyball career. But the success didn't come easy. Not recruited for the team, she practiced faithfully and went through an extended try-out period in her first year, dedicating herself to training and improving her skills. The perseverance paid off. As a sophomore, she was awarded an athletic scholarship and made her debut on the court, becoming one of only a couple Hispanic players in the team's history. Throughout the year, Guzman regularly got up at 5:45 a.m., began to work out at 6:15 a.m., and went to class at 9 a.m. The intense training and extensive schoolwork made her a strong, well-organized, independent young woman. "I have my schedule laid out," says Guzman, a two-time Puerto Rico High School Athletic Association All-Star selection. "You either organize yourself, or you can't achieve anything."

Guzman also made the adjustment to working with two different head coaches and their assistants, believing it helped her develop into a versatile player and acquire lifelong skills. "I can work under pressure and think critically in a stressful situation," she says. "I don't think it is what everyone can do. Life never always goes as what we planned." Guzman enjoyed the team's international diversity as well, saying it helped her improve her communication skills and learn how to overcome the language barriers. "We have girls from all over the world, Russia, China... whose first language is not English," she says. "My first language is not English. It is hard to communicate, but we have to learn."

Even though she received an offer from a professional volleyball team back in Puerto Rico, Guzman plans to focus on her passion for medicine and gain additional clinical and research experience in a post-baccalaureate program. She initially became interested in medicine through a biological anthropology class she took with Professor Shannon Novak. A knee injury five years ago also

inspired her to do medical research on her own. "I was fascinated with how the doctors fixed my knee and how safe they made me feel throughout the whole process," Guzman says. "I was given the opportunity to get back on the court. I want to do the same for athletes and other people as well. I want to tell them, 'Don't worry. I will help you out.' I really love the feeling."

The successful pre-med student improved her understanding of medicine through her forensic science courses, and says the classes kept her motivated to pursue a medical career. This semester, she did an independent research project on religious objection to autopsies and its effect on death investigations. The research complemented her work as an intern at the Onondaga County Medical Examiner's Office—an experience that allowed her to observe autopsies, improve her understanding of human anatomy and pathology, and assist a forensic pathologist. "It was one of the most fulfilling medical experiences I have ever had," she says. "Everyday I learned a lot, and this made me happy and helped me get a taste of what I will be dealing with in medical school."

—Jingnan Li





## RYAN WILLIAMS

# A HELPING HAND

RYAN WILLIAMS GREW UP IN NEW CASTLE, INDIANA—A small town outside of Indianapolis whose only claim to fame is that it has the largest high school basketball gymnasium in the world. He played basketball at New Castle Fieldhouse until his junior year when he realized his true athletic talent was in playing football and running track. During his high school years, Williams considered several career possibilities. “At one point I wanted to be an architect because I liked drawing floor plans, but then I decided I wanted to be an archaeologist so I could travel the world and discover ancient civilizations,” says Williams, associate vice president for enrollment management in the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship Programs. “And like many other students from low-income families, I thought my ticket to a better life was to become a doctor.”

It was very important to Williams’s mother that he go to college because he would be the first member of their family to earn a degree. He attended Earlham College, a small Quaker liberal arts college located in Richmond, Indiana, not far from home. “Looking back, it was clearly a good decision for me to remain close to my family and have a support system while I was in college,” he says. “My advisors and professors also watched out for me on a day-to-day basis, making sure I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. If it hadn’t been for them, I don’t think I would have made it.”

At Earlham, Williams continued to search for his true calling. He knew he wanted to have a career in a helping profession, but with a major in experimental psychology, he wasn’t sure what direction to take until just before graduation when his advisor asked if he would be interested in working at the school. “It just so happened there was an admissions counselor’s job open at Earlham College, and I was encouraged to apply,” he says. “It was an easy job for me because I loved my undergraduate

experience at Earlham, and I really enjoyed traveling around the country talking with parents and students about my alma mater.”

Williams was confronted time and again with the one question he didn’t know how to answer: “How do I afford college?” Realizing he needed to learn more about financial aid, he left Earlham after one year to become a financial aid counselor at the University of Rochester. By the time he left a decade later, he had become the director of financial aid and earned a master’s degree in education administration. “Having the educational credentials in combination with my practical experience gave me career options down the line,” says Williams, who went on to financial aid positions at Boston University and Harvard, and served as vice president of enrollment management at the College Board in Washington, D.C., before moving to Syracuse with his family last spring.

When Williams interviewed for his position at SU, he was impressed with the University’s vision of Scholarship in Action and how that translates into student and community engagement. “Everyone I spoke with echoed the same vision,” he says. “I found it significant that Scholarship in Action has permeated the entire campus.” He was also impressed with SU’s commitment to diversity by increasing access to academically qualified first-generation students, students of color, and students from low-income families, as well as reaching beyond the Northeast to recruit students from several targeted geographic areas around the country. And after several years away from university life, Williams is happy to be back on a college campus because he loves working directly with parents and students. “At Syracuse I feel needed and fulfilled,” he says. “I can be engaged and involved and help make a difference—even if it is one student at a time. That’s what makes me excited and feel good about what I do.”

—Christine Yackel

# EDUCATING GLOBAL CITIZENS

WHEN MARGARET HIMLEY WAS AN UNDERGRADUATE at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she created her own study abroad program by enrolling in the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. By the end of the semester, she had been bitten by the travel bug and stayed on to explore France, Spain, and Germany before returning home to finish college. "I remember vividly sitting in Edinburgh's St. Giles Cathedral every Sunday and feeling a minuscule part of history in a way that was completely liberating," says Himley, associate provost for international education and engagement. "I discovered the world is much bigger than me and that I could touch history across time."

Himley began her career as a professor of writing and rhetoric in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1983 after completing a master's degree in English at her undergraduate alma mater and a doctoral degree in composition and rhetoric at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A Midwesterner by birth and upbringing, she was attracted to the high energy of the East Coast and has made Syracuse her home for the past 30 years. Although Himley continues to be a member of the writing faculty as a Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence, she took on a new challenge in 2011 when she assumed the helm of SU Abroad, which was moved from Enrollment Management to Academic Affairs to reflect the broadening scope of international education at SU. "I was charged with addressing the challenges all higher educational institutions face, which is how to prepare people to live in an increasingly transnational world," Himley says. "Study abroad is central to that, but we also need a strategic plan for how to produce globally prepared students who know about the world, who care about it, and who engage with others to address urgent issues that cross borders."

For example, Himley is working with SU faculty to develop a reconciliation program based in Wroclaw, a Polish city (formerly Breslau, Germany) with a complex and contentious past. Students would be provided with coursework and action research opportunities to explore the history, struggles, conflicts, and practices of peace and healing enacted in this region. "The kind of learning students need is what I call 'metonymic,' which means that you go deep to learn a great deal about a place, go deep into another place, and then figure out how the two are alike—and not alike—each other by connecting the dots," Himley says. "This global analytic learning is not only about developing knowledge of the world. It is about learning how to learn about the world—a transnational spirit of inquiry and action."

One thing Himley likes most about her new job is visiting SU's eight study abroad centers around the world. Back home, she enjoys learning about the faculty's scholarly interests and their commitment to international study and research. She also is working with colleagues to determine which pedagogical assumptions need to be reimaged—

assumptions about knowledge itself, what is being taught, and what constitutes a globally prepared person. "We're having an exciting conversation, and we will have an opportunity to do that all over campus," she says. "There are probably some common features to being globally prepared that we need to highlight in all disciplines."

A typical day for Himley starts by checking and responding to e-mails at about 4:30 a.m. because someone on



**MARGARET HIMLEY**

her staff is always awake somewhere around the globe. Now, thanks to a new videoconferencing system, she can meet with all of the study abroad center directors at the same time. "I feel that 'face-to-face' interaction with the directors is important, even if for some it is in the middle of the night and they are in their pajamas," Himley says. "Educating global citizens for the world, in the world, is a huge collective undertaking, but well worth the effort—especially when wonderful, hardworking, and caring people are completely focused on students."

—Christine Yackel



RYAN NASSIB

## RECORD GAINS

FOR RYAN NASSIB '12, THE NUMBERS KEEP ADDING UP TO forward progress. And whether he's on the football field or in the classroom, the numbers reveal the rewards of hard work, determination, and a fierce competitiveness that drove him to the top of the charts, athletically and academically, during his five years at SU. Now poised to embark on an NFL career, the Orange quarterback leaves the Hill with bachelor's degrees in accounting and finance (*cum laude*), a master's degree in accounting under way, national accolades as a scholar-athlete, and a handful of SU football records. "Ever since I was a kid, my parents instilled in me that if you're going to do something, you should do it to the best of your ability," Nassib says. "I wasn't the most gifted kid, but I put in the work to get to where I wanted to be. That wasn't

new to me coming to college—I've been doing that my whole life."

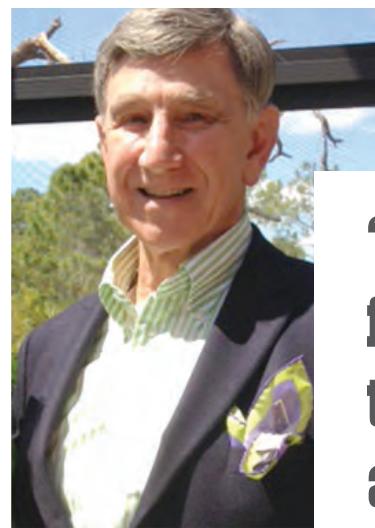
The West Chester, Pennsylvania, native is one of five children in an athletic family. A Philadelphia Eagles fan since childhood, he loved watching Orange great Donovan McNabb '98 during his time there. "I didn't even know he went to Syracuse until I looked into coming here," Nassib says. "I thought that was a great sign."

It was. In 2010, as a redshirt sophomore, Nassib moved into the starting signal-caller role in former head coach Doug Marrone's pro-style offense. He endured his share of ups and downs, but persevered and kept building on his game. In 2012, his final season, Nassib guided the Orange to an 8-5 record, which included a share of the Big East title and a New Era Pinstripe Bowl victory (Nassib's second). The co-captain threw for SU single-season records for passing yards (3,749), completions (294), touchdowns passes (26), and total offense (3,891 yards), led the Big East in passing yards per game and total offense, and ranked 12th in the nation in passing yards. And if that wasn't enough, the tough-minded, hard-throwing quarterback became Syracuse's all-time leading passer, connecting for 9,190 yards on 791 completions (also a record). He was named a 2012 *Pro Football Weekly* All-American and earned a trip to the Senior Bowl. Did he envision a record-setting career at SU? "Never in my life," he says. "I had some great coaching, a little luck, and some great players around me, so I was able to leave my name in the record books, which is nice on a personal level."

As Nassib advanced his play on the gridiron, he tackled such topics as cost analysis, auditing, and investments at the Whitman School of Management, and interned for three summers at Leigh Baldwin & Co., an investment brokerage firm in nearby Cazenovia. Hitting the books hard also brought him honors as the Big East Football Scholar-Athlete of the Year and as a National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete. "It was extremely difficult to succeed in the classroom as well as perform at a very high level against top competition," he says, "so being acknowledged for that was great."

When Nassib reflects on his time at Syracuse, he's deeply appreciative of the guidance and support he received from his coaches and Whitman School professors and staff. Most of all, he says, he'll remember his teammates and all the experiences they shared together. Since season's end, he's devoted himself to training and preparing for the 2013 NFL Draft in late April. "Ever since I came to college, one of my goals was to put myself in the best position I can to play at the next level," he says. "Anytime you strap on a helmet, it's enjoyable work."

—Jay Cox



**"We want our passion  
for Syracuse University  
to be seen and felt long  
after we're gone."**



Throughout her career in public education, **PATRICIA MAUTINO '64, G'66** witnessed raw, young talent and identified personally with students who needed financial aid to help them pursue their educational goals. Her husband, **LOUIS MAUTINO '61, G'62**, attended SU on an athletic scholarship and went on to be a business owner in the building industry. Together, they are committed to helping young people prepare for successful lives and feel privileged to share their "Forever Orange" spirit with future generations.

As an active member of the Syracuse University Alumni Association and the iSchool Board of Visitors, and a longtime supporter of SU Athletics, "Pat" Mautino already has a strong presence on campus. And with the four scholarships the Mautinos have endowed through their bequest, their love for SU will become an everlasting legacy.

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