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## QUEST Honors Program

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390H Instructor

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190H Instructor

Jessica Roffe
Assistant Director

Rachel DiDonna
Program Coordinator

Russell Ottalini
Graduate Assistant

David Ashley
490H Co-instructor

Dr. Christina Elson
490H Co-instructor

Dr. Jim Purtilo
Affiliated Faculty
WHAT IS QUEST?

The Quality Enhancement Systems and Teams (QUEST) Honors Program is a challenging, hands-on program for University of Maryland undergraduates from three participating schools. Students complete five courses over three years and work on team-based, experiential learning projects in each course. Students who complete the program gain skills in teamwork, process improvement, systems thinking, product design and development, data analysis, and oral and written communication in addition to a network of passionate and motivated peers, alumni, faculty, and administrators.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

QUEST students are from the Robert H. Smith School of Business, the A. James Clark School of Engineering, and the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences. In a highly competitive process, 90 new “QUESTees” are admitted each spring as freshmen.

COLLABORATION & TEAMWORK

QUEST students work in multidisciplinary teams on projects and are fully comfortable navigating team dynamics, working with individuals with diverse skill sets and talents, and inspiring an environment for collaborating on ideas and tactical strategies.

COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

QUEST is a dynamic community of learning where students, faculty and staff, alumni, professional partners, and University colleagues contribute to and benefit from the interactions and lessons learned.

HANDS-ON

QUEST projects focus on real-time innovations and challenges facing organizations and society today. Students apply total quality tools, design and systems thinking principles and engage in customer-driven initiatives. Project outcomes develop real and immediately applicable innovations that improve processes, drive productivity, and reduce costs for clients.

What do students gain as a direct result of QUEST?*

- **97%** can communicate ideas more effectively in oral presentations
- **87%** can network and communicate more effectively in diverse professional settings
- **97%** feel more prepared to work on diverse teams
- **87%** are more confident in their ability to get a job
- **92%** say they have a better story to tell recruiters
- **82%** feel more prepared to solve complex problems
- **87%** report an improved experience at UMD

*Based on 2019 graduation survey data*
A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I’m pleased to share with you the 2019 QUEST Annual Report. I think you will find that QUEST continues to live up to its mission of providing a defining learning experience for our students across the disciplines of business, engineering, and science at the University of Maryland.

I’m particularly thankful to all of the members of our vibrant community who help make this program a success. From my colleagues at the University of Maryland to QUEST’s corporate partners to alumni to parents, we are a better program because each and every person helps improve the program.

In the pages that follow, you will see that our students deserve much of the credit for QUEST’s success over the past year and the 27 years from the program’s founding. We are very fortunate that some of the very best students in Clark, CMNS, and Smith want to join our community. We are even more fortunate that once these students do join our community, they become incredible stewards of our mission. From the experiential learning that results in real value for our partners to the student leadership and service that helps make our program run, I can’t thank the students enough for what they do. I’m confident that I speak for all of us when I say the students really make this program a success, and we are fortunate to participate in their three-year QUEST journey.

There are many strategic initiatives that we’ve implemented over the past year that are described in this report. I am so thankful to my colleagues for listening to our students and always striving to be innovative in how we live up to our mission to give QUEST students a defining learning experience.

We look forward to keeping you engaged in our QUEST community and welcome new and innovative ways for you to be even more engaged with us going forward.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joe Bailey
A NOTE FROM THE DEANS

QUEST continues to bring together some of the best and brightest University of Maryland undergraduates in engineering, business, and the sciences. Through challenging students to solve ambiguous real-world problems on multidisciplinary teams, QUEST produces some of the most career-ready students on campus.

As deans of the three colleges whose students participate in QUEST, we are constantly impressed with the accomplishments of QUEST students. This year alone, QUEST students made an impact on startups in Africa, multinational Fortune 500 companies, alumni-founded startups, and on-campus departments. These partnerships not only provide an excellent learning opportunity for students, but also allow the stakeholders to walk away with actionable results.

QUEST’s commitment to continuous improvement is unparalleled, and the curriculum is constantly changing to keep up with the world around us. These changes will produce students who are even more prepared to work across disciplines in teams solving complex problems. We look forward to all of the exciting accomplishments to come from QUEST students in 2020!

Darryll J. Pines  
Dean, A. James Clark School of Engineering

Alexander Triantis  
Dean, Robert H. Smith School of Business

Amitabh Varshney  
Dean, College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences
2018-2019 QUEST STUDENTS

249 STUDENTS

33% A. JAMES CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

39% ROBERT. H SMITH SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

33% COLLEGE OF COMPUTER, MATHEMATICAL, AND NATURAL SCIENCES

3% OTHER

*Percentages total over 100% because some students are pursuing majors in multiple colleges
NEWMELY ADMITTED STUDENTS

This year, QUEST received 280 applications for its incoming cohorts. With the help of QUEST alumni and current students, we reviewed each application, conducted 150 interviews, and admitted 90 new students in March! We are very excited to welcome Cohorts 33 and 34 into the QUEST community!

280 APPLICATIONS
150 INTERVIEWS
90 NEW STUDENTS

STUDENT MAJORS*

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<th>Major</th>
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<td>Supply Chain Management</td>
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*Numbers total to more than 249 because some students are pursuing multiple majors
**190H: INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN AND QUALITY**

Problem solving and teamwork are at the center of this first QUEST course. Students work on multidisciplinary teams to design solutions for three design challenges by applying methods from design thinking, new product development, project management, quality management and process improvement. These projects include designing physical and digital products as well as analyzing and improving processes.

A recent addition to the class is the focus on circular design, where students must ensure that their solutions are environmentally-friendly. This constraint requires students to carefully research and select their materials and sourcing as well as plan for end-of-lifecycle disposal. Students push themselves to tackle major problems, which have included clean drinking water for disaster areas, fire safety, and dental hygiene in developing countries. Teams have also designed digital solutions for helping loved ones with depression, educating children in conflict zones, and finding sustainably-sourced clothing.

For the final project, teams work with an on-campus client to improve or design a business process. Recent clients include the Administrative Modernization Program, the Division of IT, and the Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship. Students enjoy having this opportunity to help a client and make a difference at the university.

“190H taught me how to incorporate various methods and tools into creating and improving the quality of products and systems. I was also able to meet and learn from a variety of creative and talented students from all different backgrounds.”

Sam Pearlstein  
Computer Science ’21  
Cohort 31

“190H not only instilled in me the importance of teamwork in a multidisciplinary environment but also introduced me to the application of design thinking and a quality-focused perspective to develop solutions to real world problems.”

Pranav Kuruba  
Finance and Information Systems ’21  
Cohort 32
390H: DESIGNING INNOVATIVE SYSTEMS

Disruptive technologies may only realize their potential if the systems within which they live are properly designed. The movement of capital, material, people, and information can be engines for growth and improvement, or they may be forces that oppose each other and only reinforce the status quo.

In this class, students learn how to embrace complexity and the perspective of the academic disciplines represented in QUEST to understand systems. Teams of students are faced with two different challenges.

The first challenge is to examine how new disruptive technologies – such as blockchain and autonomous vehicles – are affecting our transportation system. Students create quantitative system dynamic models that describe how systems evolve over time. Through this analysis, students better understand the role of assumptions and uncertainty to examine how systems may evolve and how decision makers that affect system design may be able to help accelerate or slow down the effects of disruptive technologies.

The second challenge is to examine early stage systems in the context of different African markets. Through QUEST’s strategic collaboration with the United States African Development Foundation (USADF), which started in fall 2018, QUEST teams are paired with entrepreneurs in Africa. With this collaboration, students better understand systems design in an international and developing economy context.

“This class allowed me to apply the design tools we’ve learned thus far in QUEST to a real-world situation and gave me a new perspective on problem solving. Consulting for ShiShi International, a medical technology startup in Uganda, was my favorite experience thus far in QUEST!”

Alex Bergman
Operations Management and Business Analytics ’20
Cohort 30

“This 390H has taught me to work in multidisciplinary teams with a systems design mindset and has been invaluable in teaching me how to apply different concepts to complex real world systems.”

Kartik Krishnan
Computer Science ’21
Cohort 31
THIS YEAR’S INNOVATIVE SYSTEMS PROJECTS

The U.S. African Development Foundation’s (USADF) mission is to support organizations to create and sustain jobs, improve income levels, and achieve greater food security in Africa. An important initiative is the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) which helps entrepreneurs in Africa with their startups. Many of these entrepreneurs have already experienced some market success but challenges still remain. That is where QUEST comes in.

Over the past year, QUEST students in Cohorts 30 and 31 helped the YALI entrepreneurs identify and remove system bottlenecks for long-term growth. The variety of projects was both an exciting challenge and an incredible learning opportunity for our students. From clothing manufacturing in Ghana to solar energy generation in South Africa, students had to understand where these businesses were experiencing challenges and find creative ways to address them. In doing so, students learned how to analyze complex systems in a context unfamiliar to them and develop good client relationships across geographic and cultural boundaries.

One of the key features of the USADF-QUEST collaboration was the ability for two different student teams to engage with the entrepreneurs. In fall 2018, students in Cohort 30 helped lay a foundation for future success and initial recommendations for improvement. In spring 2019, students in Cohort 31 were able to pick up where the previous teams left off. These students not only got up to speed more quickly, but they learned about the outcomes from the recommendations made by the previous team and adjusted accordingly. This is one of the key principles of system design: creating feedback loops for learning and continuous improvement.

At the conclusion of the spring 2019 semester, the entrepreneurs traveled to the University of Maryland, and students in both Cohort 30 and 31 were able to sit down with them in person. It was an excellent opportunity for the students to share their recommendations and learn more about their ability to affect systemic and global change from a classroom in College Park.
490H: QUEST CAPSTONE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICUM

In the QUEST Capstone Professional Practicum, 490H, students work together on multidisciplinary teams to help clients address real-world organizational challenges by utilizing concepts and techniques of process improvement, system design, quality management, and product innovation. Each project is sponsored by a corporate partner, and each team works directly with that client to understand the opportunity, research the industry and relevant technologies, develop and evaluate possible solutions, and make final recommendations. This experiential learning project is a highlight of the QUEST program.

“490H taught me the value in creativity and diversity of thought. By collaborating with students who have a similar work ethic but unique perspectives, I learned to approach problem solving in a dynamic and creative way.”

Jill Gelines
Supply Chain Management and Government and Politics '19
Cohort 28

“490H has been a transformational experience - my project pushed me to be the best teammate possible and learn skills that I never had the chance to develop. After this semester, I’ve gained a new level of confidence and knowledge that will help me add value to any future endeavor.”

Adam Sarsony
Computer Science and Operations Management & Business Analytics '20
Cohort 29

QUEST CAPSTONE PROJECTS OVER THE PAST 23 YEARS

- Consulted for 98 companies
- Completed 222 total projects
- 149 projects with companies with a major office or plant in Maryland
- 37 of those companies are Maryland-based

LARGEST NUMBER OF PROJECT SPONSORSHIPS:

- ATK/ORBITAL ATK: 17
- LOCKHEED MARTIN: 12
- LEIDOS/SAIC: 11
- GENERAL ELECTRIC/MIDDLE RIVER AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS: 11
- NORTHROP GRUMMAN: 11
THIS YEAR’S CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Over the past academic year, QUEST students completed 16 projects for 12 companies. These projects, based everywhere from Baltimore, Maryland to New York, New York to Houston, Texas, provided students with the opportunity to tackle real-world problems and provided companies with tangible benefits in the forms of manufacturing efficiency, time savings, and reduced operational costs.

Oceaneering
QUEST alumnus Jeff Gamerman, mechanical engineering ’08 (Cohort 12), a Quality Engineer at Oceaneering, reflects fondly on his days in QUEST. “Whenever I speak about my days at College Park, I inevitably bring up the QUEST program and the lasting impact it has had on my professional life. In my current position, I’ve had the opportunity to put all the quality management and process improvement knowledge and experience gained from QUEST to good use and on a daily basis so it has been with great pleasure that I’ve been able to reconnect and work with QUEST again, ten years after graduating.”

Gamerman reached out to QUEST in 2017, seeing an opportunity for students to work on a capstone project at Oceaneering. Since then, they’ve sponsored two capstone projects and are working on a third for fall 2019.

In fall 2018, QUEST Team Five Guys helped Oceaneering organize and streamline their calibration tracking system for production, test, and assembly equipment. Gamerman said, “The current system was a bit inconsistent with different projects and departments tracking differently. Our QUEST team helped to centralize and standardize the process and came up with a more user-friendly tracking system interface for employees to use.”

QUEST student Jeff Zhao, finance ’19 (Cohort 28), a member of Team Five Guys, took advantage of having a QUEST alumnus as his project champion. “When you have an alum as a project champion, you have that ally and champion who has gone through QUEST. From the beginning, our project champion Jeff made sure that our team was in a position to not only succeed but thrive. It also took some of the pressure off because we had this shared experience of QUEST. We always had a friend on the other side and someone batting for our team when it came to deliverables.”

Gamerman has seen the benefits as well. “What has been most enjoyable since reconnecting with QUEST is exposing others at Oceaneering to QUEST students, whether through 490H participation, internships, or visits for the scoping class. Everyone who has been in contact with QUEST students has been impressed with the level of professionalism and talent displayed. Our recruiters for summer internships have even asked specifically for more QUEST candidates moving forward. People are noticing.”

HelloFresh
In spring 2019, Team HelloQUEST worked with HelloFresh to redesign their event sales strategy. The team created a dashboard to generate graphs and visuals that report on previous event performance to allow the event booking team to make stronger decisions about events that will generate more sales.

Team member David Rosenstein, marketing and management ‘20 (Cohort 29), said, “The whole 490H experience was really neat. It was so cool to be handed a problem without a clear solution and then be able to tell the client that we know how to solve it. Our team built something that HelloFresh is going to use starting tomorrow, and that’s pretty surreal.”

Benjamin Rank, Director of Sales Strategy and Operations for HelloFresh US, was a first-time project champion. “Working with QUEST students proved to be invaluable. Their positive energy, endless drive, and strong passion for solving challenges was infectious among our team. The students’ unique perspectives coupled with a strong foundation of business acumen led to innovative approaches in tackling the opportunities at-hand. I was constantly amazed by how they worked as a team to overcome adversity and collaboratively deliver feasible and impactful solutions.”
In addition to the required courses, QUEST students can choose to take elective courses with topics ranging from quantitative data analysis to mentoring multidisciplinary teams to quality management in Japan. These courses complement the curriculum and allow students to meet and work on teams with students from other cohorts.

**Data Analysis**

In BMGT438A/ENES489A, students work in teams to translate raw data into useful information and come to understand the complexities of managing and drawing inferences from real data, provided by a client. This class has been piloted in different stages over the past few years and will become a required part of the curriculum beginning in spring 2020.

QUEST alumnus **Josh Kohn, computer science ’13 (Cohort 18)**, is one of the instructors for the course. He said, “It’s been a lot of fun teaching as an alum. I enjoy sharing the knowledge that I’ve gained both on campus and in the workplace and bringing that back to students to help prepare them for 490H and their greater careers. Hearing students mention that they’re using concepts learned in this course on other projects is really gratifying.”

“This course taught me a lot about data analytics and how to efficiently apply statistical tools. I now feel confident that I can use data analysis techniques to solve realistic problems outside the classroom.”

**Mentors**

In Mentors course, BMGT/ENES 397, QUEST students practice essential skills for mentoring and coaching multidisciplinary teams, including effective communications, facilitation, conflict resolution, and the ability to motivate. Mentors work with student teams in the introductory course, BMGT/ENES 190H, and in the process, they strengthen their knowledge of design and quality techniques.

“Being a mentor has given me insight on how to handle working with teams in a managerial role. From holding one on ones to handling difficult conversations, guiding younger students in a positive way has been a very rewarding experience.”

**Scoping**

In scoping class, BMGT/ENES 491, QUEST students cultivate relationships with new and current corporate partners and prepare project scopes for QUEST’s introductory and capstone courses. Students practice networking and professional etiquette skills and learn how to write and present clear and technically precise project scopes.

“Creating and pursuing projects from start to finish helped me improve my communication skills, my ability to organize and plan for meetings, and most importantly, my ability to create common ground with clients. Scoping class was also an awesome way to get to strengthen my connection with the QUEST community.”

**Web Development**

In BMGT 408C, students learn the technical and business components of building a web system. From client-server computing to databases to HTML to JavaScript, the course instructor, alumnus **Danny Laurence, computer science ’14 (Cohort 19)**, walks students through the full stack of web development to move beyond a wireframe into building a fully-functioning web system.

Laurence is in his second iteration of the course. “This year, the students focused their technology projects on the QUEST program itself, which proved to be a challenging and interesting problem space. The quality of the work that QUEST students produce continues to impress me, and as an alumnus, maintaining a connection to campus and the program has proven to be invaluable,” he said.

“WebDev with Danny was a fantastic experience - the diverse range of student abilities and talents, combined with the intimate class size, ensured that everyone had the opportunity to not only learn valuable skills, but also build upon each other’s experiences in an incredibly supportive environment.”

**Garrett Allen**

Chemical Engineering ’19  
Cohort 27

**DJ Sharma**

Computer Science ’19  
Cohort 28

**Celine Moarkech**

Data Analytics in Biotechnology ’20  
Cohort 29

**Amanda Tang**

Marketing and Information Systems ’19  
Cohort 28
QUEST TO JAPAN

In January, QUEST students visited Japan to expand their cultural understanding and explore the evolution of quality management and lean. In addition, students learned about the growing role of robots, automation, and artificial intelligence. The journey began in Tokyo, where the group toured ancient temples. The group learned about doing business in Japan at JETRO and visited two startups – Ascent Robotics and Kabuku – where they heard about how the cultural attitude towards startups is beginning to change.

A highlight for many students was the visit to the Toyota plant. Here, the group saw the Toyota production system in action, from jidoka to just-in-time inventory. It was also a treat to see the high-speed welding robots in action.

The trip continued in Kyoto, where the focus was on culture. Students experienced a traditional tea ceremony with a renowned tea master, made their own sushi, and practiced the art of ancient taiko drumming. At the Four Seasons Hotel in Kyoto, the students learned about omotenashi, or Japanese hospitality, from the general manager. The group also spent a day exploring Nara, the ancient capital of Japan.

Toward the end of the trip, the group visited ATR, where researchers study humanoids. Here, the students met and spoke with Erica, an android that understands natural language. From historic traditions to future technologies, students explored many topics on this trip.

“The QUEST to Japan trip showed me an entirely new lens, not just on emerging technological trends, but also the critical importance of cross-cultural communication in a truly global world. As a student early on in the QUEST experience, the class shaped my ideas about effective management, especially after observing the Toyota Production System in action.”

“The QUEST to Japan trip was an irreplaceable experience. There was a nice balance of time spent traveling as a class and time for individual discovery. I am now able to appreciate the differences and similarities between the American and Japanese culture.”

Kelli Webber
Computer Science ’20
Cohort 29

David Polefrone
Biochemistry and Economics ’21
Cohort 32
**QUEST TO SILICON VALLEY**

Over spring break, students in QUEST’s Design and Innovation in Silicon Valley elective (BMGT 438G/ENES 489Q) visited San Francisco and Silicon Valley to study the product and software development processes at firms in the area. Throughout the week, they visited eleven firms and networked with Bay Area QUEST and UMD alumni. After returning to College Park, the students presented to the QUEST community about the similarities and differences of the design processes at the different firms.

“It was really exciting to see how some of the most successful companies in the world focused so heavily on employee well-being, and it made me look forward to working for one someday.”

—Alec Lahr
Mechanical Engineering ‘20
Cohort 31

“QUEST to Silicon Valley helped me realize that there are so many opportunities and career paths out there that I wasn’t aware I could pursue before. It was also so eye-opening to experience vastly different company cultures and see many topics taught in QUEST put into practice in the workplace.”

—Alissa Li
Accounting ’19
Cohort 28

**FIRMS VISITED SPRING 2019**

- Autodesk
- compology
- DoorDash
- Facebook
- Ford
- Google
- Genentech
- IDEO
- Uber
- Verizon Media
- Tesla
QUEST STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

QUEST CORPORATE

The QUEST Corporate student committee plans events to connect students with corporate partners and alumni and help prepare them for opportunities in the professional world. This year, QUEST Corporate hosted its fourth annual fall networking event in the Stamp Student Union. 25 companies and 150 students attended the largest event to date. In the spring, QUEST Corporate hosted the second annual Bowling with Professionals event. QUEST Corporate co-lead Michael Vetter, accounting and finance ‘19 (Cohort 28), described the event as a “fun way to connect students with alumni in the DC area.”

QUEST CREATIVE

QUEST Creative, one of our newest student organizations, provides all students with a creative outlet. This year, the QUEST Creative student leaders organized events where students decorated canvas bags by fruit stamping, carved pumpkins, and learned the art of origami folding. Students in QUEST Creative also strive to develop their creative skills by learning and teaching computer programs like Adobe Illustrator. “I love QUEST Creative because of the opportunity to meet and spend time with people within and outside my cohort,” QUEST Creative member Brianna Ho, bioengineering ‘20 (Cohort 29), said.

QUESTPRESS

Students on the QUESTPress committee are dedicated to sharing the stories of the QUEST community. The students release a monthly newsletter to QUEST students, alumni, parents, corporate partners, university affiliates, and friends. QUESTPress co-lead Kara Eppel, accounting and information systems ‘19 (Cohort 29), originally joined QUESTPress to keep writing in her life. “In addition to my passion for writing, this club has allowed me to establish a larger network of QUEST students and alumni, many of which have become friends and mentors,” Eppel said. Read the latest edition of QUESTPress at blogs.rhsmith.umd.edu/questpress/.
### QUEST RECRUITING

QUEST Recruiting continues to serve as one of the best avenues to promote the QUEST program because of the dedication of each student ambassador. In addition to attending Maryland Day and all Admitted Student Open Houses, our QUEST recruiters hosted three in-person information sessions and one online recruiting event to promote QUEST to prospective students. These dedicated efforts resulted in the largest number of applicants in QUEST history: 280. When discussing her time with the organization, QUEST Recruiting lead Shivani Krishnamurthy, information systems and finance ’20 (Cohort 30), said, “My favorite aspect is getting the opportunity to interact with so many passionate students – it is always exciting to share my wonderful QUEST experiences with prospective students.”

### QUEST SOCIAL

QUEST Social strives to build community amongst the entire QUEST program, connecting current students and alumni alike. Last fall, QUEST Social hosted the annual Homecoming Tailgate. Ankita Sahoo, biological sciences ’20 (Cohort 30), said, “The tailgate is just one of the events hosted by QUEST Social that gives current QUEST students the opportunity to interact with QUEST alumni while enjoying great food and Maryland football.” QUEST Social also planned the End-of-Year Celebration in early May, where all students came together to celebrate our seniors as they were honored with medals and awards. This event also introduced newly admitted students to the community. Incoming student Ryan Gerbes, mechanical engineering ’22 (Cohort 33), described it as “an incredible chance to meet fellow members and a perfect opportunity for freshmen to learn what life is like in the QUEST program.”

### QUESTECH

QUESTech aims to provide opportunities for all students, regardless of major, to learn about new and innovative technology. As co-lead, Dan Selzer, computer science ’19 (Cohort 27), explained, “QUESTech aims to dispel the notion that coding and technology is only for computer science majors.” This March, QUESTech planned and hosted a 12-hour hackathon that was attended by both current students and alumni. Several alumni also presented during the hackathon about product design, UX/UI concepts, and web development.
QUEST ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT

One of the greatest strengths of the QUEST program is its vibrant alumni community. In our 27th year, we have over 1,200 alumni across the world.

QUEST alumni continue to be involved through social events, classroom visits, company engagements, and more. To learn more about how you and/or your company can get involved, contact QUEST Assistant Director Jessica Roffe at jroffe@umd.edu.
Andrew Katz

When Andrew Katz, supply chain management and marketing ’17 (Cohort 24), moved to San Francisco to work at Uber after college, he never imagined that just two years later he’d be moving to Amsterdam to launch Uber Freight in Europe. “It was less than a month from the time I was told about moving to the time I arrived in Amsterdam. While abrupt, it was incredibly exciting,” Katz said.

Katz works every day to make truck driver’s lives better. “[Truck driving] is one of the most common professions globally, and the most common in America,” he explained. “It’s a hugely important, underserved, and too often, disrespected slice of the labor force. It’s rewarding to find ways to make it just a little bit better every day.”

Before this role, Katz worked in Carrier Sales, Carrier Payments, Account Management, Customer Service, Financial Operations, and Business Process and Policy at Uber. He credits QUEST to giving him the skills to take on so many roles in such a short period of time. “QUEST was the first time I had objectives to hit without clear paths to achieving them. QUEST provided ample opportunity to solve novel problems, as well as up-leveling and optimizing existing processes.”

When Katz was a student on the 2015 QUEST to Asia trip, he met QUEST alumnus Bernard Ng, computer science ’05 (Cohort 10). At the time, Ng worked at Morgan Stanley and hosted the group for a site visit. Two years later, Katz moved to San Francisco and attended a UMD alumni event where he introduced himself to the only other Uber employee. It happened to be Ng, who had transitioned to Uber in 2016. Now colleagues, it all came full circle this March when Ng and Katz hosted the QUEST to Silicon Valley students at Uber and presented about their respective units. “In many ways, this felt like my second graduation from QUEST,” Katz joked.

So what’s next for Katz? “I intend to stay with Uber Freight and would like to continue launching new markets. Uber Rides and Eats operate in over 100 countries. I’d love to see Freight follow their lead.”
Eden Kroeger Burks

When Eden (Kroeger) Burks, management information sciences and decision science & statistic ‘97 (Cohort 3), returned to campus this fall for this first time since 1997 with her husband and kids, it wasn’t for a typical campus tour. Burks was back for her induction into the University of Maryland Athletics Hall of Fame. “Being the first volleyball player inducted into the University of Maryland Hall of Fame was unexpected and mind blowing,” she said. “In addition to that honor, the Maryland Volleyball team dedicated a locker in my honor so every #7 going forward will have my locker. It was such a surprise and thoughtful gift from the program and all the coaches.”

While a student at UMD, Burks was not only a star athlete, earning 1997 ACC Player of the Year and setting the all-time record in career assists, but also a star in the classroom, earning Academic All American - First Team and getting involved in QUEST. “I think about how lucky I was to be involved in the beginning of a great program at the University of Maryland (Cohort 3)! I take aspects of QUEST with me everywhere. UMD and QUEST, in particular, introduced me to a variety of people, dug into issues at a deeper level, and built my teamwork skills. Everything about my education and athletic experience provided a solid base to make me successful in my career and family life.”

After graduating, Burks enjoyed the consulting life for a few years. “This was perfect as it allowed me to travel and visit friends all over the U.S. while helping me decide where to settle down,” she recalled. After wavering between California and Colorado, she ultimately couldn’t resist returning to Colorado. “I worked for a few companies local to Denver before joining an Atlanta based company– InComm. I am part of the Emerging Technologies group, which focuses on developing new digital tools and services that change the way customers interact with pre-paid goods and services around the world. I love this group because we are constantly innovating. We are focused on working with big brands and retailers to drive consumer behavior.”

Looking back, she has fond memories of her times on campus. “You’re not going to remember your exact grade, but you’re going to remember the fun times and the craziness around it,” she said. She distinctly remembers making goofy videos for QUEST presentations above everything else. “Being at Maryland and in QUEST gave me exposure to people from all walks of life. That is what made college an adventure for me.”
Sahil Rahman, operations management and supply chain management '12 (Cohort 17), is the Co-Founder and Co-CEO of RASA, a fast-casual Indian restaurant in Washington D.C. In just its first year, RASA was named Best Fast Casual and Best New Restaurant by the Washington City Paper, Top 100 Cheap Eats by Washingtonian, and Rahman and his co-founder, Rahul Vinod, were named Eater Young Guns, which Rahman describes as “the Forbes 30 Under 30, for food.”

But if you ask Rahman, it’s not the awards that matter. “As much as I love the media recognition, I’m more grateful for the really high return rates of our guests. Being able to have guests who love it and come back and to open up their minds to new food and culture is really exciting,” he explained.

Rahman was born into the restaurant industry and has always had an itch to introduce Indian cuisine to people in a more accessible way. He even wrote a business plan for a radio contest in high school and won $500.

In college, Rahman took on several odd restaurant jobs, including a stint at Outback Steakhouse in Southeast Asia, where he learned everything from operations to cooking to bartending to creating menus. He accepted a job at Deloitte after college, but couldn’t shake his entrepreneurial mindset.

In late 2017, Rahman and Vinod opened RASA, which means “essence of” in Sanskrit and is a combination of their first names. The restaurant has received rave reviews and boasts 4.5 stars and above on Yelp and Google. Rahman and Vinod are currently fundraising for two more restaurants that they hope to open next year. “We are looking to follow in the footsteps of Cava and Sweetgreen while writing our own story at the same time,” Rahman explained.

Being a CEO is a learning process, but QUEST was great preparation, he says. “QUEST taught me to think in systems which has allowed me to be effective in understanding the root cause of problems and creating structures that allow people or teams in the business to thrive.”

When evaluating career opportunities, he encourages current students to care less about how they will look on their resume and more about where they will learn the most. “If it’s something you’re interested in, follow that passion, meet the most interesting people you can, and invest in keeping in touch.”

Food at RASA

Rahman, bottom left, with his Co-Founder and their dads

Rahman, top left, and his Co-Founder, Rahul Vinod
Linda Rassenti
Linda Rassenti, bioengineering ‘12 (Cohort 17), is a Strategy Manager in Portfolio Access and Reimbursement at Genentech in San Francisco, CA. Linda is in her second rotation of the Commercial Rotational Development Program (CRDP) after completing her first rotation in field sales as a Clinical Oncology Specialist in the Boston area.

After graduating from UMD in 2012, Rassenti joined BD (Becton Dickinson) and completed their 3-year Manufacturing Development Program, where she rotated through their Diagnostics division in Baltimore, their HQ in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, and their Biosciences division in San Jose, California. But Rassenti always had an MBA on her mind. “Being part of QUEST initially sparked my interest in business and fueled my desire to get an MBA early in my career,” she said. “QUEST opened my eyes to the world of business and the value of working cross-functionally and being able to ‘speak multiple languages.’ I loved working with non-engineers and quickly learned that a project could turn out much better and be more interesting when a group with diverse backgrounds and experiences came together.”

With this in mind, she enrolled in the MBA program at Duke, The Fuqua School of Business and focused in Health Sector Management. She graduated in 2017 and began her role at Genentech. Rassenti loves “working on difficult problems and learning about the complex, confusing world of healthcare, from payers to hospital systems to health policy, as it’s a very dynamic space and affects every one of us.” She added, “Many of my projects have important broad, strategic implications and have the potential to positively impact patients’ lives. The patient is at the center of every decision that we make, which adds a lot of value and meaning to my work.”

Rassenti recently hosted the QUEST to Silicon Valley students at Genentech where she taught them about biotech drug research and development, manufacturing, and bringing healthcare products to market. Her advice for current QUEST students? “Attend as many of the ‘extra’ QUEST events as you can (i.e. resume workshops, mock interviews, case competitions) - many of them help develop the soft skills you will use for the rest of your career and can really set you apart from others.”
Doron Tadmor, operations management & business analytics and international business ’20 (Cohort 29), is spending his summer in Tokyo, Japan as a Sustainability Consulting Intern for PwC Japan. Having already spent the previous summer in Israel, Tadmor knew he was interested in spending this summer abroad. With the guidance of QUEST Assistant Director, Jessica Roffe, he reached out and made several hundred connections on LinkedIn before finding this internship at PwC Japan. While in Tokyo, Tadmor will work to enhance the sustainable practices of international Japanese firms.

Tadmor is excited to gain sustainability consulting experience, an area he has been passionate about for several years. “I am always looking to make an impact on everything I’m involved with,” said Tadmor, and this is a great way to make a difference while spending more time abroad.

Bella Abbott, chemical engineering ’20 (Cohort 30), is returning to her home state, Illinois, this summer to be a Manufacturing Management Intern for Kraft Heinz. Abbott’s internship is project-based, meaning she will be given multiple problems throughout the summer to understand, analyze, and solve. She equates her responsibilities to the design process discussed throughout all QUEST courses and knows the skills she has developed in 190H and 390H will be critical this summer.

Abbott is excited for the opportunity to work with consumer products because she believes it will help her clarify her future goals. “It can be hard to see how to apply what I’m learning in the classroom,” Abbott said. She looks forward to experiencing the chemical engineering industry first-hand and translating all she has learned in her classes.

Quinn Wandalowski, mechanical engineering ’21 (Cohort 31), is currently a scholar within the SMART (Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation) Scholarship-for-Service Program. Through this program, a subset of the National Defense Education Program, Wandalowski is spending her summer on Edwards Air Force Base in California, working as an intern on the Weapons Integration Team.

In this role, Wandalowski will be using her mechanical engineering skills to focus on the F16 fighter jets. In addition to the direct mechanical engineering connection, she sees many parallels between this summer internship and her 390H coursework. Like in 390H, her work will require her to have a systematic perspective and focus on efficiency to improve processes at the Base.

“I am looking forward to working for the government and the opportunities that will come from this program,” Wandalowski said. She is excited to continue with this program throughout college and will work on the civilian side of the Department of Defense following graduation.

Faaiq Zarger, finance and mathematics ’21 (Cohort 32), is spending his summer as a Data Analytics Intern for the National Basketball Association (NBA), working specifically for the Washington Wizards.

As a member of the Data Analytics team, Zarger will analyze player statistics to help the team understand player potential and implement new in-game strategies. When looking for summer internships, Zarger looked for positions that would allow him to utilize his math skills, especially statistics. In addition, Zarger is interested in consulting after graduation. He believes this internship will help him become a more effective consultant by learning how to apply data in meaningful ways.

For Zarger, this internship is a way to combine his education with his passion for basketball.

“I’ve been a fan for so long. It is exciting to see how the NBA runs behind the scenes,” Zarger said. He is also looking forward to embracing the NBA culture, which he described as “innovative.”
Liz Gillum, marketing and supply chain management ’19 (Cohort 28), is joining PepsiCo North America Beverages in Columbia, MD as a Supply Chain Associate. Gillum interned with PepsiCo in Massachusetts last summer and really enjoyed the people and the company. “I’m most excited to return to PepsiCo in a new role focused on demand planning. I will be using my analytical side to forecast beverages and sales in a specific region. I will also be using my communications skills to communicate decisions to other departments. I’ll definitely be challenged in this role but also comfortable,” she said.

Gillum used examples from QUEST during her initial internship interview and bonded with one of her interviewers, QUEST alumnus Augusto Tono, supply chain and operations management ’11 (Cohort 16). She says that she molded her summer intern project as if she was doing a QUEST project by using tools like DMAIC and Lean Six Sigma. She feels confident that she can continue to use these skills in her full-time role and make an impact.

Jacob Lapidus, finance and operations management & business analytics ’19 (Cohort 27), is moving to Valencia, Spain to begin a Masters in Global Entertainment and Music Business through the Berklee School of Music. As a senior, he happened upon several masters programs abroad and immediately felt drawn to apply. “Making music part of my career has always been my long-term plan, but I’m excited to start pursuing that goal a little sooner than expected,” said Lapidus, who has been playing music for 14 years.

During his senior year, Lapidus became President of the Maryland Music Business Society, volunteered in a production lab in the School of Music, joined two jazz ensembles, and started the Smith Concert Series in Van Munching Hall. At the end of the fall semester, he received his acceptance letter to Berklee.

“I plan on concentrating in the record label practicum which guides students through the entire process of breaking a new artist from sourcing talent to licensing, publishing, production, marketing, and distribution. I hope to apply this to a career in digital rights management where I can work towards creating more sustainable artist compensation models,” he said.

Lapidus is most excited about the opportunity to live internationally long-term, travel with his cohort to music business conferences around Europe, and explore next steps in the industry.

Stephanie Baylouny, chemical and biomolecular engineering ’19 (Cohort 27), will be moving to Houston, Texas to work in ExxonMobil’s Fuels, Process and Optimization Department. Baylouny took an engineering design course last year and is excited to have a job that will allow her to put what she’s learned into practice. During her interview, she immediately connected with her interviewer who was also in Alpha Omega Epsilon International Engineering Sorority at UMD. ExxonMobil flew Baylouny out to Houston for a second round interview, and she received her offer that day. “I was not expecting that!” she said.

Within ExxonMobil, she will be optimizing plant designs and working to minimize carbon emissions. “I’ll definitely be utilizing the collaboration and creative thinking skills I’ve gained from QUEST.” Baylouny is also excited to explore a city she doesn’t know much about and meet new people in Houston.

Varun Mohan, computer science ’19 (Cohort 28), is heading to Menlo Park, California to join Robinhood as a Software Engineer. Mohan is excited to work towards making financial services more accessible and fair for everyone. He said, “I have been interested in Robinhood since meeting some representatives at an industry event in the Bay Area. I have noticed that financial services is not always the most consumer-friendly industry, and I think Robinhood is doing a lot to combat that.”

Through QUEST, Mohan has learned to be a more effective teammate and communicator, skills that he believes will ultimately contribute more to his success as a software engineer than his ability to write code. He is looking forward to collaborating at Robinhood with cohort member and 490H teammate Ishaan Parikh who is also an incoming Software Engineer.

Top Companies to Hire 2019 QUEST Graduates
- Deloitte
- Capital One
- Protiviti
- PwC
- Leidos
- Microsoft
- Northrop Grumman
- Robinhood
POST-GRADUATION PLANS

69 GRADUATING SENIORS

92% PURSUING FULL-TIME JOBS

41% ACCEPTED JOBS WITH QUEST CORPORATE PARTNERS

8% PURSUING GRADUATE STUDIES

100% WOULD “DO IT ALL AGAIN”
“QUEST ranks among one of the best decisions I have made both in college and throughout my life.”

“QUEST was the saving grace to my college career. It was the only experience through which I have zero regrets and can identify how much I’ve learned with each class, experience, and event. The people I met along the way only bolster how valuable this course was to me developing as a person.”

“Because of QUEST I have an extensive network of people, both personally and professionally that have added significant value to my time at UMD.”

“It’s the most incredible opportunity to learn in every capacity. I love that QUEST is truly an approach to problem solving and teaches students skills that are extremely adaptable in many environments.”

“QUEST has truly been one of my most valuable college experiences. In addition to making lifelong friends, I have also participated in numerous professional experiences that have helped me build my resume. QUEST has provided me with numerous life changing experiences, and I truly value being a lifelong member of the QUEST community.”

“I learned many valuable skills in QUEST that I will use throughout my career, such as how to make professional presentations, interview skills, and so much more. If I had not joined QUEST, I don’t think that I would’ve learned these skills or had these experiences in my major courses. QUEST also gave me many opportunities to learn from students in different majors and discover my career path.”
THANK YOU

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To discuss unique giving partnerships, please contact Jessica Roffe, Assistant Director of the QUEST Honors Program, at jroffe@umd.edu.
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“QUEST is a shining star within the University of Maryland curriculum to educate, train, mentor and transition talented students to strong, capable contributors for any lucky company who has the opportunity to hire a QUEST graduate.” – Kevin Schoonover, aerospace engineering ’06 (Cohort 11) and Fall 2018 QUEST 490H Project Champion

“As the parent of a QUEST student who just finished his capstone, I saw first-hand the tremendous accomplishments of the various projects. Each presentation was delivered with excellent preparation, thorough analysis, and tremendous enthusiasm. The corporate sponsors seemed so impressed and thankful for their efforts. Most memorable was seeing just how many friendships had built up between the students during their QUEST experience. QUEST is truly an amazing organization and the embodiment of UMD's mission to create Fearless Leaders.” – Roger Sturtevant, Parent of Jack Sturtevant, computer engineering ’20 (Cohort 29)

“On engineering problem sets, we developed our individual technical skills. In QUEST, we had a safe sandbox to work on life skills: communication, collaboration, servant leadership, and growth mindset. I'm grateful for the friendship, mentorship, and community that QUEST continues to give me. It is a privilege to give back and invest in the next generation of students in this program.” – Luxi Wang, electrical engineering ’12 (Cohort 17)

"I'm deeply grateful for the experiences and relationship I gained through QUEST. Giving back to the program, which gave me so much, is an easy decision." - Jacob Wilkowsky, accounting and finance ’14 (Cohort 19)