I STAYED AT WORK FOR YOU. YOU STAY AT HOME FOR US.
COVID-19 was tossing multiple patients an hour into cardiac arrest in mid-March and April at NYU Langone Medical Center in Brooklyn, where Paul Treybich, MD ’18, was entering the home stretch of his second year of residency.

Finding himself at the epicenter of the U.S. coronavirus outbreak, Treybich was scared—and for good reason. His hospital was overwhelmed, every patient was testing positive for the virus—many critically ill—and the entire hospital had been converted to intensive care units.

Treybich likened it to a war zone. “You can’t see your coworkers anymore because their bodies are covered in hazmat suits.” Treybich was among thousands of members of Bobcat Nation who put their own fears aside and stepped up to the front lines. They didn’t sign up to risk their lives and potentially expose their family members to the virus everybody else got sick. And then he developed a fever and flu symptoms March 27 and tested positive for the virus. The worst symptoms for this virus—many critically ill—and the entire hospital had been converted to intensive care units.

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PLUNGED INTO THE PANDEMIC

Physician assistant Christina Ferneini, MHS '19, had been on the job less than three months at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan before COVID-19 exploded. She had been working in the cardiothoracic ICU, which was converted to a COVID unit in March. She said Quinnipiac prepared her well to adapt to any work situation—even one as daunting as this, with fear of the unknown adding even more anxiety.

“Our professors have been checking in with us. In the PA program, we are a close-knit group, and we all can relate to what’s going on,” she said. Although the pandemic shortened her orientation process, her fellow alumni and colleagues have been a really good support system and have made things “a little less lonely in the city.”

The hardest thing for Ferneini was watching families of both COVID and non-COVID patients cope with the restriction on visiting loved ones. Sometimes, exceptions were made if death was imminent and family members were willing to risk exposure to the virus. And then there were the reports, heard through the grapevine, of hospital employees getting exposed to the virus. And then there were the reports, heard through the grapevine, of hospital employees getting exposed to the virus. "A ventilator does not push itself into a room, we didn't sign up to be in danger, but we also didn't sign up not to help," she reflected.

Ferneini wore the same N95 mask daily until it was soiled, but never truly protected while assisting with procedures that had the potential to aerosolize the virus. Her saddest moment came when a 30-year-old cardiac patient of hers got the virus after turning a corner with heart disease. “She likely contracted it from being in the hospital. We were treating her for countless days just wearing surgical masks because she hadn’t been a COVID patient.” After this patient died, the hospital took her handprints as a remembrance for her child.

Amid the sadness, Ferneini savored the sounds of New Yorkers cheering and clapping in gratitude at 7 each night. Kuo agreed. “Hearing it gives me chills every time and provides that extra motivation I need to head back into the shift.”

BREATH OF LIFE

As New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned of a predicted ventilator shortage day after day, Americans hoped there would be enough for all who needed them ... and fervently hoped they personally would not need one.

Respiratory therapist Dianne Major-Olivant ’18 said that respiratory therapists have been more essential than ever in operating the many ventilators pressed into service during the pandemic. “A ventilator does not push itself into a room, attach itself to a patient and adjust its levels automatically,” she remarked, adding that RTs are responsible for monitoring the airways and breathing of patients and responding to emergencies when breathing is an issue. While they can intubate, that role is being performed by intensivists and practitioners students, supplying actors from its Standardized Patient and Assessment Center via Zoom for practice in taking patient histories. “These students went into rooms with smiles on their faces and without apprehension to care for the patients,” she said. “They were sensitive to the absence of family and their willingness to be present was just incredible.”

The hospital was at capacity this spring. She described the atmosphere in April as a bit surreal. “Usually the flow in the ED is tremendous, but instead of the volume we usually saw, there were fewer patients, but they were acutely ill.” Conditions demanded Conway to think more on her feet as the staff worked to stabilize patients. Intubation was the last resort. She also put much thought into the way she approached her distance learning classes, using ingenuity to provide students with the clinical experiences they would need to be prepared for work. Examples included enlisting family members to practice with stethoscopes and percussion of the chest. “And one company gave us three months of free web access to interactive learning activities like suturing and wound closing,” she said.

The Netter School of Medicine partnered with nurse practitioner students, supplying actors from its Standardized Patient and Assessment Center via Zoom for practice in taking patient histories. “These are experiences students wouldn’t have had, but telemedicine is sure to be a big part of health care delivery in the future,” she noted.

Conway takes heart in what she calls the amazing care being delivered under stressful conditions. “We never lose that caring or forget why we got into this field in the first place.”

Conway remarked that her husband, a nurse and state trooper, is driven to get out there and keep people safe whenever something happens. He told her she didn’t need to work her hospital job during the COVID crisis. “I was with my family, we were taking care of our kids, and I think about all the things I’m giving up to work. I thought, ‘This is where I am supposed to be; otherwise I’m not a nurse. Patients need me now more than ever.”
Bobcat Nation Responds During COVID-19 Pandemic*

**PPE DONATIONS TO HOSPITALS IN REGION**
- **30,000** Surgical gloves
- **1,329** Handmade cloth masks
- **480** Surgical and N95 masks
- **400** Surgical gowns
- **250** Shoe covers

**UNIVERSITY**
- **325** Donors who raised $222,036 for the Student Care Fund
- **158,629** Minutes of content consumed for virtual Admitted Student Experience
- **9,000+** Visitors to virtual Admitted Student Experience webpage
- **60,981** Zoom meetings held since March 18
- **3,071** Number of online classes taught in Spring 2020
- **250+** Virtual Quad events for our community
- **34** QU faculty and staff members wishing students well in “#BobcatStrong” video

**STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**
- **200** Children’s activity kits funded by QU, made by Irsa Awan ’21, Uswa Hanif ’21
- **206,697** Dollars raised by virtual QTHON for CT Children’s Medical Center
- **20** Shopping trips by Kaleigh Oates ’20 to help Hamden neighbors in need
- **400** Snack bags of Kennedy Kitchen gourmet popcorn delivered to staff at 4 area long-term care facilities by nursing students
- **18** Quinnipiac Legends singers in Bobcat Strong concert series
- **3,000** Pounds of frozen and refrigerated foods left behind by students donated to area food banks and pantries, and more food donated by Quinnipiac Dining
- **2,081** Views of YouTube “Imagine” video by The Legends

* As of May 31, 2020
Professors, teachers pivot to online instruction

When classes moved to online instruction this spring, law professor John Thomas played guitar and wore colorful shirts during his lectures. Just like always.

But he also reserved time to speak with students about how they were coping with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teaching the material was critical, of course. But delivering it with humanity was just as important—until Thomas couldn’t breathe.

After two weeks of coughing and feeling run down, Thomas found himself in the back of an ambulance April 27. Suddenly, he was gasping for air with a COVID-19 diagnosis waiting at Yale New Haven Hospital. After a few hours in the emergency room, Thomas was home recovering with an “industrial-strength” cough suppressant.

“When you get it yourself, it definitely makes you stop and think,” Thomas said. “It made me value everything that I do and everything that I have, including my connections with students.”

Thomas is among the countless Quinnipiac faculty members and School of Education graduates who have adapted, rallied and shined professionally during the pandemic. They thrived across digital platforms while caring for students and finding teachable, impressionable moments. Overall, 3,071 sections of Quinnipiac classes were taught online this semester, according to Joshua Berry, university registrar.

“When I went to the hospital, I thought, ‘OK, I’ll tell my students, so that’s what I did,’” Thomas said. “I got lots of lovely messages, and it made me feel like we’re all in this together.”

Just a few weeks earlier, Thomas had been awarding prizes to his most responsive students. For example, the first three students who uploaded correct responses to his civil procedure crossword puzzle won free delivery: first place scored a pizza, second place scored a dessert.

For professor Mary Meixell, who taught “Designing and Managing the Supply Chain” this spring, the pandemic was an opportunity to teach students in real-time about global supply chains and their ability—or inability—to produce and distribute goods.

Meixell is the senior associate dean and a professor of management in the School of Business with a joint appointment as a professor of industrial engineering in the School of Engineering.

“This pandemic has been a very compelling case study,” Meixell said. “Early on in the semester, we were reading in the press about how so many supply chains have their sources in China and the scale of disruption that a pandemic would cause. We also were starting to see some good supply chain practices emerging.”

For example, Meixell said, students learned that one of the basic principles of supply chain management is anticipating market changes: “One way you can do that is through inventory buildup—component materials as well as running your own production lines more heavily.”

Students vividly learned how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the supply chain in the United States and abroad. Suddenly, there was a surge in demand for N95 masks and other personal protective equipment. At the other end of the supply chain, production and distribution often slowed because of public health measures.

“It was a sizable transition for students to go from on-ground instruction to virtual instruction,” Meixell said. “There was a week or so where I sensed some disarray—maybe they were having difficulty finding a routine—but they came back and started participating again in big ways.”

Dakota Molinari ’18, MAT ’19, a third-grade teacher at St. Augustine School in Ossining, New York, said the COVID-19 pandemic gave her a chance to help students as well as colleagues.

“Fortunately, we’ve got some amazing technology now,” Crawford said. “I got two webcams going in class. I’ve got one for me and another so I can look down on my page and draw things just like I would in the classroom. I try to explain things visually. That’s important in my circuits class, for example, when you’re dealing with electronics you can’t see.”

During one class in April, Crawford played the song “Synchronicity” by The Police to open a lesson about three-phase electricity and to mark synchronous instruction. “Our norm has shifted enough as it is, so let’s try to keep things as normal as they were before,” Crawford said. “Let’s have class at the regular time. Let’s keep the same format. I’m also a big proponent of making class fun. I think that’s even more important now.”
Prepping for Fall

BY ADAM DURSO
ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID PLUNKERT
PHOTOS AUTUMN DRISCOLL

Infectious disease specialist helps QU make decisions regarding pandemic

The part Dr. David Hill plays on Quinnipiac’s COVID-19 task force can be compared in some ways to the role of Dr. Anthony Fauci, the well-known infectious disease expert serving on the White House coronavirus task force.

Hill, the director of the Institute for Global Public Health in the Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine, learned long ago to balance optimism and pragmatism with clear, accurate messaging, reminiscent of Fauci’s style. Hill has decades of frontline experience in America and Europe dealing with the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and H1N1 (swine flu).

In fact, during Hill’s residency at the University of Rochester in the late 1970s, it was Fauci who provided the template for temperament. Fauci came to Rochester to conduct grand rounds on a rare autoimmune condition. Even then, Hill said, he was impressed by Fauci’s deep knowledge, no-nonsense approach and plain-spoken style: “I thought he was just brilliant. He’s been on the cutting edge of his field for 45 years now and has published hundreds of respected articles.”

More than 40 years later, Hill, like Fauci, has been called upon to help navigate an institution through an unprecedented and ongoing public health crisis. Since February, he has been a vital member of Quinnipiac’s COVID-19 task force, a group created by President Judy Olian to guide the university’s response to the pandemic.

The task force meets daily to assess reopening scenarios and outcomes, working closely with local and state health officials. The team’s 13 members represent nearly all of the university’s major offices and functions, from public safety, facilities and student health services to marketing and communications, student affairs and information technology.

In late May, Hill said that if a fall reopening at Quinnipiac happens as planned, it will include on-campus instruction as well as classes with access for remote learning, a mixed model that accommodates all students.

Members of the QU community will be required to wear face masks as they go about their campus routines, with a variety of social distancing protocols and other modifications in place for academic buildings, residence halls, dining halls and other facilities.

“Hill noted that four measures would have to be in place before the university could reopen: all students, faculty and staff would need to do a daily check for symptoms related to COVID-19; Student Health Services would need the capacity to conduct rapid diagnostic testing; the university would need the ability to trace contacts of those who may be infected; and the university also would need to dedicate safe spaces to isolate those who are infected.

“You need to make sure that you’re testing enough to pick up a signal [of infection],” Hill said. “Some of the modeling that’s been done on a national and global basis is not based on testing everybody. It’s based on testing a representative sample and then making a prediction. I could see us doing that.”

Hill is proud of how nimble Quinnipiac has been in response to the pandemic, but there is still work to do.

“We are going to need cooperation from all members of our community,” Hill said. “In this time of pandemic, we all need to look inside and say, ‘What can I do? What do I need to do to make sure my community is safe, and I can continue to learn throughout the semester?’ We’re really going to have to take that to heart.”

The alternative, Hill said, is unacceptable.

“We can’t go back to overwhelming our health care system. That’s just not an option,” he said. “We also need to walk this tightrope of allowing people, especially those who are vulnerable financially and socially, to pursue their livelihoods—but first, they have to be healthy.”

A fall reopening would include on-campus instruction as well as classes with access for remote learning, a mixed model accommodating all students.

To ensure that the nation isn’t caught off guard again, Hill would like to see increased funding and support for emergency pandemic preparedness. This includes preparing the next generation of epidemiologists and infectious disease specialists, in which he sees Quinnipiac playing a role.

Hill also would like to see a master’s program in global public health established at the university. He envisions Quinnipiac students taking the lead in combating future crises.

In the meantime, Hill knows thousands of health care alumni are hard at work fighting the pandemic, while thousands more alumni are donating their time, money and supplies.

“‘As we often say,’ Hill noted, ‘it will require all of us to be Bobcat Strong.’"
we all need to look inside and say, ‘What can I do?’
COVID-19 fears set aside for the sake of journalism

For Kevin Rincon ’10, a broadcast journalist for WCBS 880-AM and CBS 2 in New York City, the hardest part of covering the COVID-19 pandemic wasn’t building a makeshift studio in his living room.

He managed to pull together enough cords, computers and cameras to make it work. The hardest part was covering an invisible virus sweeping through America and the world without mercy or remorse.

“You know something terrible is going on. You know that an absurd number of people are dying and getting sick, but you can’t see what’s causing it,” Rincon said. “I can’t wrap my mind around that. It’s not like a natural disaster or a bad car crash. You literally can’t see what’s causing this.”

The outcomes, however, have been all too visible to Quinnipiac alumni reporting and producing the news: hospitals filled with desperately sick patients, doctors and nurses with bruised faces after working marathon shifts in masks, families aching to comfort loved ones with a kiss, but forced to wave through a window—if that was even allowed.

“You know something terrible is going on. You know that an absurd number of people are dying and getting sick, but you can’t see what’s causing it,” Rincon remarked in May. “It’s more than the numbers, of course, although those are important. It’s about sharing the stories that bring people a better understanding of what’s going on. It’s affecting all of us, so the storytelling has become much more personal.”

During a CBS 2 broadcast April 29, Rincon spent some time with Lauren Negron, who takes the subway from the Bronx to Manhattan each morning to shop for groceries and deliver them to her clients. “Being labeled an essential worker, you really empower that, and you really take that on,” Negron told Rincon in a masked interview. “I’m doing a service some people wouldn’t want to do or some people are too afraid to do.”

The same could be said for journalists covering the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s a profession’s call to duty.

Julia Perkins ’16, a reporter for the Hearst Connecticut Media Group, finds the work consuming and critically important. “It’s impossible to disconnect from the coronavirus,” said Perkins, who served as editor-in-chief of The Quinnipiac Chronicle as a senior. “But I think most people really appreciate the local aspect of our coverage.”

Although Perkins has done most of her reporting at home, she has covered several assignments in public, including a March 27 press conference when Danbury Hospital completed its 25-bed mobile hospital for potential overflow patients.

“Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz was there, and all the reporters were standing 6 feet apart because of social distancing,” Perkins said. “But once things got started, I realized it was really hard to hear everyone from where I was standing. So I moved a little closer to another reporter, which may wasn’t the best idea, but I needed to hear. I needed to do my job.”

Perkins also has written about the socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus in the Danbury area. “I’ve written a bunch of stories about the increased need for food and food pantries with people being out of work,” Perkins said. “It’s so hard because as a society, you want to be safe and be home, but you need to work so you can put food on the table.”

Jon Alba ’15, a reporter and host at News 13 in Orlando, Florida, believes a great 30-minute sports show requires memorable storytelling, seamless production, even a little risk-taking. But this spring, it also required creative mic setups and getting sources to trust in-person interviews all over again.

“I’m used to taking a clip-on mic, rolling my camera, and sometimes, that produces the best stuff,” Alba said. “These days, I set up my personal podcast mic stand, put in a handheld mic, and have people speak into that. It’s definitely not as visually stimulating as I’d like, but it gets the job done.”

More than that, it gets stories that are richer for the effort. How pieces are written, how they are edited and produced, it all matters—especially now. So does integrity.

“It’s finally getting a little easier to get people to do interviews in person. It really comes down to trust,” Alba said in May. “It depends on how you talk to people. First impressions matter. How you explain your intentions is also very important.”

Sharing a story is one thing. Telling it boldly and sometimes unconventionally is quite another.

“You’ve always been one to flex my creativity and think outside the box,” Alba said. “These are unprecedented times, but this is still your job. Yes, you’re being thrown into the elements, the
center of all this, but this is the job you signed up for—and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Matt Finn, a national correspondent for Fox News, agreed. Finn spoke with Ben Bogardus, an assistant professor of journalism, during a Zoom webinar in April titled, “Delivering News from Home: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Journalism in a Health Crisis.”

Finn spoke to the Quinnipiac audience from a rental car in Chicago parked outside McCormick Place, the largest convention center in North America and among the largest in the world. The mammoth facility was being turned into another overflow hospital for COVID-19 patients.

“I just spoke with the lieutenant general of the Army Corps of Engineers,” Finn told the group from inside his car, which had suddenly become a mobile newsroom with a laptop, cell phone and other gear. “Everyone is hurting right now, so whenever I’m in these types of situations, you kind of step back.”

For safety reasons during the pandemic, Finn did many of his interviews with a stick mic or a boom mic attached to the end of an extra-long boom mic pole. Fox News also set up his apartment with professional lighting and other equipment so he could broadcast and conduct interviews from his kitchen.

In New York City, Marcus Harun ’14, MBA ’15, works as a segment producer at MSNBC. He writes scripts and stories for shows. He researches questions and background for anchors. He works with graphic artists and video editors to align content for broadcasts. He supports senior and executive producers—all from home.

“I feel like this is the most important work I’ve ever done,” Harun said. “The numbers are off the charts right now in terms of how many people are watching—more than 1 million. It’s more important than ever to get it right.”

Harun understands the urgency. To be closer to MSNBC, he moved from Connecticut to New Rochelle, New York. In early March, New Rochelle became America’s first COVID-19 hot spot after more than 100 cases were diagnosed there.

The shift to working from home took place soon after. Just like that, the studios and control rooms at 30 Rockefeller Plaza were condensed into laptops and living rooms across the tri-state area and around the country.

“The technology is amazing, but the speed in which people figured out how to do this is even more amazing,” Harun said. “Being able to do our jobs at a time like this, when the news is changing so fast, it’s absolutely critical.”