



*The 2022
Lysle “Spike” Garnish
Scholar-Athlete
Awards*

Saturday, September 17, 2022

The 2022 Garnish Scholar-Athlete Awards

From the Director's Chair **George VanderZwaag** Executive Director of Athletics

Today we recognize 10 of our senior students as Garnish Scholars. The Garnish Program was created in honor of Lysle "Spike" Garnish, coach and mentor to many Rochester students from 1930 to 1948. He became a trainer and assistant basketball coach in 1931. He was named an assistant baseball coach in 1932. Spike was an assistant football coach from 1945-48.

The Friends of Rochester Athletics, through an alumni committee, reviews nominations of students from our varsity teams who have achieved at a high level in both their athletic and academic pursuits through their junior year. From these nominees, a small number are selected as Garnish Scholars.

Periodically, the Garnish Memorial Citation is given to a graduate, faculty member, or a staff member for dedication and contributions to the intercollegiate athletic program.

These students represent the ideal of the scholar-athlete. They lead our teams on the field of play, while doing outstanding work in the classroom. I am continually inspired by what our students are able to achieve when given the opportunities at a great institution like Rochester. What we know about the students that we recruit is that they set high goals for themselves inside and outside the classroom. What we learn from our Garnish Scholars, and reaffirm today, is that Rochester students are able to demonstrate educational excellence through an outstanding combination of athletic and academic achievement.

The Garnish Committee is proud to present to you these exemplary University of Rochester undergraduates and the Friends of Rochester Athletics continues to remind us of the values of this institution through the Garnish Program.



Top (L-R): 2021 Garnish honorees; Caden Cole, Brian Amabilino Perez, Will Eisold, Adam Hopson, Eleanor Mancusi-Ungaro, Kudzai Mbinda, Julianna Okoniewski, Joseph Rende, Olivia Waysack, Exec. Dir. of Athletics George VanderZwaag.
Bottom Left: Athletics Faculty Representative Gerald Gamm, Kailee Sowers, Emma Schechter and George VanderZwaag.
Bottom Right: George VanderZwaag and Amanda Strenk



Nick Annechino

FOOTBALL

HOMETOWN: Rochester, NY **MAJOR:** Neuroscience and Psychology

You have been a starter every game of your career thus far, how was it playing as a first-year, compared to now?

As a first year, the game seemed to move a lot faster. Guys were flying in and out of gaps and I was just looking to keep up and throw my body in the way. It was more of a survival game learning how to play college football on the fly. The teams we played were a lot bigger, and older than myself. Now as a senior, I can say the game seems to slow down. I'm able to determine where a player is going to go for the most part before he does it just from alignment and film. It helps being three years older and much stronger, as well, when it comes to how well I play.

What are some of the responsibilities you have as the center on the offensive line, besides simply snapping the ball?

Playing center means that I need to know the responsibilities of the entire O-line, as well as the general schemes of the offense and where we want the ball to go. On the line I make ID calls so that the unit knows who we will double teaming to on runs, or what linebacker we are responsible to block in pass protection. Depending on the front of the defense and what plays we are running, I am also capable of checking certain pass protections or runs in ways that will put the offense in the best position for success. I am the "center" of communication as well and ensure both sides of the line are on the same page. I, of course, do not do any of this alone. My O-line has seen many snaps together and usually what I am thinking, they are as well. Oftentimes, I receive suggestions from my guards pre-snap or calls from my tackles that will change our way of playing. I'm one part of a cohesive unit.

The football team motto is 'CLIMB', what does that acronym stand for and what does it mean to you?

Commitment, Little Things, Intensity, Mental Toughness, Brotherhood. For me, CLIMB embodies the keys to success not only in football, but also in life. Whatever we decide to do, we must care deeply for it and be passionate in order to succeed. This means taking care of the little things and having a microscopic attention to detail. Inevitably, there will be roadblocks to success along the way and overcoming adversity is just a part of the climb. Finally, brotherhood, which I feel is the most important part of the CLIMB, is about working as a team and enjoying the time we spend with one another and the people around us.

What are some of your favorite courses or professors here at Rochester? Explain why.

I enjoy my American Sign Language courses very much. I have taken two of them with Pamela Nickels and am currently in one with Tiger (my professors sign name). ASL has given me the chance to take a break from all my science and psychology courses and learn a very interesting language. My favorite psychology class has been Psych of Sex with Dr. Rogge because of the entertaining and open nature of his lectures and the topics we covered. For neuroscience, I enjoyed Basic neurobiology with Dr. Davis and Developmental Neurobiology with Dr. Wines-Samuelson. They are very interesting and related to my degree so I just enjoyed the topics as well as my professor's teaching styles.



Your plan is to attend medical school after graduation, what started you on that path and medical field do you hope to work in?

When I was younger I was very interested in playing football professionally, but when my dad told me how tall he was, I decided I would pick something more realistic and told him I would like to be a neurosurgeon. Playing football since the age of 5, I have been no stranger to doctors offices and that helped my interest in medicine grow. Throughout highschool I became very interested in CTE (Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy) in NFL players due to my love for football and that sparked an interest in neuroscience. Since college began, I have had the opportunity to work at Strong and have done so in pediatrics the past few summers. Most recently this past summer, I worked as an ambulatory technician at the general pediatric clinic at Strong as well as the pediatric hematology/oncology treatment center. I have found that I am great at working with kids and really enjoy doing so. In the future I would like to find myself in the field of pediatric medicine however I am unsure if I would like to work in surgery, oncology, or as a general practitioner.

What attracted you to attend the University of Rochester?

I have lived in Rochester my whole life. Both my parents graduated from the University of Rochester and my mom still works at the hospital to this day as a pediatric nurse practitioner. My interest in medicine and Rochester's excellent STEM programs is the main thing that hooked me. After a discussion with Coach Martinovich prior to the beginning of my senior year, I was sold and was offered conditional acceptance in August. I've been a Yellowjacket ever since.

Susan Bansbach

TRACK & FIELD

HOMETOWN: Baldwinsville, NY **MAJOR:** International Relations and Russian Studies

For your first three years on campus, you were a multi-sport athlete, competing in track & field and field hockey year round. How did you balance that along with all of your school work here?

Being a part of teams that prioritize academics keeps me accountable and on top of my work. My academic and athletic lifestyles align well because I study with my teammates who are also my friends. Playing a sport year round almost forces you to schedule and prioritize efficiently and effectively, so it's a blessing in disguise.

What is your secret to running fast, as you are one of the most decorated track & field athletes in University history?

I'm not sure there is a secret. Running is all about consistency and discipline. Putting in work in the off-season and following the training plans sets you up for success. Some things that I always make sure to do and have found most important are sleeping an average of eight or more hours each night, taking recovery days seriously, eating a lot of nutritious food, and keeping a positive mindset. Running is very mental, so I always remind myself that you need to have hard days to make competition days rewarding. It's natural to have a bad practice or race, you just can't let it discourage you. Having friends with the same goals also makes this so easy and well worth it.

You have been elected a team captain for the upcoming 2022-23 track and field season. How does that make you feel to be picked by your teammates and what kind of responsibilities does being a captain entail?

I feel honored that my teammates elected me as captain this year. I think that it's important to have a good team culture. My responsibility is to make sure that I can foster an environment where everyone feels comfortable and welcome, so that they can contribute to the success of our program.

You run the anchor on UR's 4x400 meter relay, what is it like getting the baton for that final lap, whether you are in front or trying to catch up in the race?

Running as anchor is my favorite leg to run. I get nervous watching the legs before me. However, I develop my running strategy based on what I see in each lap. As soon



as I get the baton in my hand, the nerves usually melt away and I just think about what I need to do to help my team win. Seeing the first three legs running their hearts out helps me dig deep and finish strong. Running with and for my best friends gives me a reason to run for more than myself. The most rewarding part is crossing the finish line and celebrating with my friends.

What are your plans for after graduation next spring?

I plan on attending graduate school and pursuing a career either as an Athletic Director or Track Coach.

What attracted you to the University of Rochester?

I was first introduced to the University of Rochester when my older sister played field hockey here. I always came to watch her games, and then realized during my college search that Rochester had everything I was looking for. I was originally recruited to play field hockey with the hope to also run track and field. Both Sam Albert and Wendy Andreatta were supportive of my goals and made the U of R feel like home. The opportunity to play field hockey and track here while getting my degree was too good to pass up.

Tejan Borchers

SOCCER

HOMETOWN: Decatur, GA MAJOR: Microbiology

The men's soccer team has a reputation for always being one of the best in the region and across Division III and is consistently qualifying for the NCAA Tournament. What do you think is the reason for that, from a program standpoint?

I think it is all in the recruiting process and the culture we have established here. Although it is very important to seek out players that perform on the field and in the classroom, good character is one of the most important features we look for. Having players that are self-motivated, hardworking, and disciplined is essential for success.

Your primary position is defense, so explain some of the strategies you take in defending top scorers from other teams?

I am often experimenting when defending. Every forward is different so you can't defend them all the exact same way. Sometimes it's all physical when defending against a forward with good hold up play. On the other end of the spectrum, the forward could be very elusive, requiring me to be aware of my surroundings so that I can track him. When an attacker drives at me, I tend to narrow down my tactics. I take away the goal side and essentially challenge them to try to run by me.

Talk a little bit about your work as a researcher in Dr. Yan Sun's lab at the UR Medical Center.

Working with Dr. Sun was a truly invaluable experience for me. In general, the work surrounded the abnormal replication of the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Through this lab I was able to learn several techniques and procedures that will be important for the future. At first, I was intimidated by everything I had to do and was very unsure of myself. However, with the help of others in the lab I was eventually able to do the work independently.

What are some of your responsibilities as the co-chair of the men's soccer Diversity and Inclusion committee, and how does it make you feel that the team has open discussions about race, culture and equity?

Much of the work on the diversity and inclusion committee involved having deep discussions, planning activities, and organizing presentations for the group.



It is encouraging to see how open people were to discussing topics that might lead to their own discomfort. I think civil and open conversations like this, especially amongst individuals that think differently, are imperative for growth.

What are some of the strategies you have in balancing being a varsity athlete while also excelling in your school work at Rochester?

I have found that I was most successful when I recognized that doing things sooner is always better than later. Setting aside time to strictly focus on school allowed me to get work done efficiently. This opened up time for me to devote to soccer and to social life on campus. However, with our busy schedules there sometimes is no strategy and it is simply down to doing the work whenever you can.

What attracted you to attend the University of Rochester?

What attracted me to the school was its research opportunities, its microbiology program, and the ability to play the sport I love. However, I have found that the best part is the connections you make on the way.

Jose Corredor Alvarez

SWIMMING & DIVING

HOMETOWN: Caracas, Venezuela **MAJOR:** Mechanical Engineering

Being primarily a distance freestyle swimmer, what are some of the keys to pacing yourself in races and not tire out in the early part of a competition?

Ideally you want to try to hold the same pace for the whole race because it is the most efficient way. To do so, I personally build my effort throughout, so for example when I swim the mile, I start out smooth yet strong focusing on my technique and then increase my effort every 300 yards, and in the last 150 I really get my legs going almost as though I was sprinting. That sort of progression in effort normally keeps my pace steady. The key thing for me is not to over-swim the first 100 yds of the race, which is very easy to do with all the adrenaline and excitement you have, but that's precisely why you need to hold off a bit at the beginning and let your body do the job. This all must be practiced in training though; I have gotten it wrong even at big meets before, but the more you do it, the more consistent you are at getting the pace right.

As a first-year back in 2020, you set the school record for the 500, 1000, and 1650-yard freestyle events. What was your reaction after accomplishing such a terrific feat?

I was ecstatic after breaking the 500 and the 1000, especially the former. Going for the three records was a goal I had talked about with my coaches that year, so it was definitely something I was working towards. However, I knew the 500 was going to be the hardest one because it's the shortest event of the three, and it was so satisfying when I broke the record because it went almost exactly as I visualized it. On the other hand, the 1650 was actually somewhat bittersweet. I was obviously happy to have broken it, but I also knew from the moment I saw my time that I was not going to make Nationals by very little (3 seconds in a 15-minute-race). I dreamt of qualifying for NCAA's my first year and knew my ticket to make it was going to be the mile, so I was dissatisfied with the result. That being said, I will give 100% to break the records again and qualify for NCAA's this season!

Prior to coming to Rochester, you were an open water National Champion back in Venezuela, what are the major differences and race strategies in competitive swimming in open water versus in a traditional pool?

Open water swimming is a completely different animal! I would say there are two main differences. First, it is very much a contact sport, so you better watch out or you may accidentally get hit in the face. Things like knowing how to defend your "personal space" and swim in very crowded waters become very important. Second, while in pool swimming you can have offensive and defensive strategies, it is more common to just swim your own race. This is completely different in open water swimming because the strategy is so much more important, and you rarely swim on your own in a competitive level- drafting saves so much energy. Knowing how to draft, find a group or your position within the pack, when and where to attack the lead, how and when to hydrate are all very important aspects of open water racing. It's really fun!

Explain the nuances of being in a sport in which you compete individually in races, but also are a part of a team competition at the same time? How do you support your teammates when you aren't competing in your own race? Swimming is technically an individual sport, but it feels like a team sport because you just spend so much time with your teammates. Some ways to support them during meets are cheering for them, keeping an eye on their events, encouraging them if they had a bad race (or maybe give them some space first,



it depends), or even being their counter if they are swimming a distance race. The team sport side of things can also connect back to the individual; being a supportive teammate can help boost your own morale because if you cheer on them and they have an awesome race, chances are you will feel pumped up for your own race too!

Do you have any favorite classes or professors here at Rochester?

It's hard to mention just a few professors, but Laura Slane has probably been my favorite; she's brilliant at teaching and she genuinely cares about her students. I had her for Statics (ME 120) and Engineering Computation II (ME 260), and in the latter I learned so much about MATLAB and the projects were very fun to do. My other pick would be Fluid Dynamics (ME 225) with Doug Kelley. It was a very structured course and I really enjoyed it (maybe partly because I am a swimmer?) There was also this really fun project in which my peers and I spent way too many hours competing on an airfoil design because we were just enjoying trying to get the best one. Finally, I am very excited because I am currently taking Biosolid Mechanics (BME 283) this semester with prof. Amy Lerner, which should hopefully enable me to explore my interest in Biomechanics.

What attracted you to attend the University of Rochester?

The first thing that got me was the "Ever Better" motto; I identified with the "Meliora mindset" before I actually even researched the school in full detail. After that, I liked the U of R because it's a top academic institution with a great engineering school and plenty of opportunities to do research early on as an undergrad (plus obviously a good athletics fit). Research-wise, I started with Prof. Ranga Dias as early as the end of my sophomore year! Another thing that attracted me was the international student body. Having people from all around the world enables you to broaden your horizons and develop some multicultural fluency. Furthermore, this also increases your chances of finding a group of friends that share a similar background (geographical, cultural, etc.) that you can call your "home away from home". I am lucky to have found mine here! Finally, coming from a very small school back home I was looking for a school that didn't feel overwhelmingly big. In that sense, UR is middle-sized but it still has that "community" feeling to it. How welcoming people were when I moved in was a sign that I made the right choice.

Rachel Dennis

CROSS COUNTRY/TRACK & FIELD

HOMETOWN: Renton, WA **MAJOR:** Mathematics

Being a cross country runner versus running in track & field competitions has to be drastically different. What are some of the big differences in terms of race tactics between the two?

In cross country the race strategy is much more dependent on the course. Hills, mud, uneven ground, and sharp corners all impact how I run, so I'm constantly adjusting to what's around me. In track, I can see my splits every 200 or 400 meters so I focus a lot more on the pace. I like to go into a track race knowing how fast I want each lap to be and adjust my pace based on what my splits are. In cross country there's also more of an emphasis on running as a pack. We want as many of our teammates running together as possible, because that way we all push each other to go faster. In track, however, we're spread out between more races. Only the top few runners in each race score, so moving up or down a few positions has a bigger impact. Since we don't have all of our teammates in the race with us, when we're not racing we support the team by cheering for whoever is currently competing.

You have competed twice at the NCAA Division III Cross Country Championships. What is it like running at such a huge meet, and how did you prepare for that competition?

It's really exciting running at such a huge meet. The whole course is surrounded by spectators cheering, the competition is incredible, and I know it's what I've been working towards all season, so I'm simultaneously excited and nervous. We always run the course the day before the race and I pay attention to where the best footing is, if there are spots where the course is narrow and people get crowded together, and other details that affect the race. On the day of the race, I focus on my warm up routine and try to do everything the same way I normally do to reduce pre-race nerves.

You were selected to be a team captain this year in all three sports (XC, indoor and outdoor track & field). How does it make you feel to be viewed in a leadership role, and what do you do to lead by example?

I feel honored being chosen as a captain this year and I do my best to live up to the role by using it to support the rest of the team. Our team does a fantastic job of lifting each other up during workouts and competitions, and as a captain I want to contribute to the positive energy. I try to model a balance between pushing myself to improve and taking time to recover. I do my best in every workout and commit to running high mileage, while also addressing potential injuries early and prioritizing sleep to keep the hard work sustainable.



What is your favorite event to compete in, cross country or track? And why?

I love cross country races because each race is unique. We get to run through parks, along the water, or on trails through the trees. I love running in nature, and the variety of courses keeps the races interesting.

Talk a little about your research work with Neural Networks and professor Alex Iosevich and what benefits will come out of the project.

The goal of the Tripods program is to give participants a chance to learn about neural networks and apply them in research. We were given the freedom to choose pretty much any research topic we were interested in, so my group decided to work on creating a program to find the optimal placement of electric car charging stations in a city. I learned a lot about the research process, specifically how to take a complex problem and pare it down to a simplified version that is relatively straightforward to solve, then add the layers of complexity back in to get more meaningful results.

What attracted you to the University of Rochester?

I visited Rochester in the spring of my senior year of high school and I really liked the atmosphere on campus. I could tell that collaboration was important and people seemed willing to help each other out. I also got the chance to talk with Coach Novara about running here and was excited about that possibility.

Hannah Keiper

SOFTBALL

HOMETOWN: Chester Springs, PA **MAJOR:** Marketing and Digital Media Studies

You recently completed an internship with Team USA softball in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma over the summer. Talk a bit about that and what were some of your favorite projects or moments during your time there?

My time with USA Softball as a Communication Intern this summer was nothing short of amazing, learning from and working with such a wonderful organization, I really enjoyed my time in Oklahoma City. My favorite projects/experiences were organizing and producing a content strategy for USA Softball Senior Women's National Team, traveling with them before the 2022 World Game and creating and publishing posts to advance the digital presence and reach of the team. Another experience was providing event coverage for the 2022 NCAA Women's College World Series, through social media, website updates and recaps while assisting in the editing of photos and videos for publication.

Over the past few seasons, Rochester softball has seen tremendous success, including reaching the Division III Championship Round for the second time in program history. Why do you think the team has succeeded so much and what can we expect for next spring?

A lot of our recent success can be attributed to the team chemistry we have as a foundation of our team culture. We are a very close knit team and that camaraderie and chemistry translates on the field. I also think that since part of our team had a taste of what it means to be in the Championship round in the early part of our career we are going to work hard to get back there, so I would expect big things from us this year.

What are some of the qualities you possess that make you a leader on the softball team, as you have been named a team captain for back-to-back seasons?

Communicative, determined, honest, accountable, encouraging, supportive

You step up to the plate in a big spot during a game, with runners on base and your team trailing...what is going through your mind during that at-bat?

Stay within yourself and think it is just like every other at bat. Don't make the moment too big and be confident.

What have been some of your favorite classes or professors here at Rochester?

Some of my favorite classes have included MKT 233: Advertising & Social Media, DMST 170: Design Fundamentals, MKT 235: Product and Brand Strategy,



FMST 161: Video and Sound Art, and CASC 358: The Leadership Experience. All of the marketing courses have really allowed me to dive deeper into the field of marketing and get some hands-on experience working on projects in the marketing world. The design and film class gave me a better understanding of the design aspects that I use in creating and designing now, and has sparked my passion in this field. The Leadership class was useful to better understand how to lead and how to be an effective leader for everyone around you.

What attracted you to come to the University of Rochester?

The University of Rochester provided me with the ability to explore what I wanted to do for my career. I did not have an exact idea coming in but the open curriculum allowed me to find that business and digital media were both passions of mine. The smaller school but big feel to campus life was also a quality I was looking for in a school, smaller class sizes but lots to do in and around campus. The athletic facilities and softball team was also a huge reason, the amenities including our field, the training room, etc. are amazing and a competitive team was also what I was looking for.

Abdelrahman Lasheen

SQUASH

HOMETOWN: Cairo, Egypt **MAJOR:** Finance

You were named 1st Team All-Liberty League and Rookie of the Year as a first-year. After earning those awards, what types of expectations did you put on yourself for the rest of your UR career?

Winning those awards never really influenced my expectations or my mindset towards my career to be honest, I always just tried to do my best in practice and in matches as I find myself accountable towards my teammates and coaches.

What was it like resetting yourself, returning to playing last year after missing out on a whole season due to COVID?

I was definitely a bit rusty in terms of competition so it was challenging at first. I had to push myself during practice matches and create game-like scenarios in order to prepare for official matches and get that sense of competition back.

As a team captain, what are some of the ways you try and lead by example for your teammates, both on and off the court?

Being honest is my approach as a team captain, I share everything with my teammates and it's important to create that trust between us. I'm also very close with my teammates which makes it easier for us to operate and support each other.

What is your mindset heading into a big match against some of the top players in the country and even players who are ranked among the best in the world?

I find it very tricky because in some ways there isn't much pressure since you're not the favorite to win, but I think that's the challenge going into these matches. I try my best to treat every match the same way so that I'm only focused on performance and effort rather than overthink the result.



What are some of your favorite classes or professors here at UR?

One of my favorite classes was ECON 108 taught by Professor Rizzo. Principles of Business Leadership was a very practical class that I thought I learned a lot from and was really interesting. I took it with Professor Andrew Marsherrall.

What attracted you to come to the University of Rochester?

I got in touch with Martin Heath first so knowing that he was a former world #3 ranked player definitely encouraged me to apply to U of R. I dug deeper and the curriculum was very attractive as well, being able to explore many different things. In addition, the amount of classes that are offered definitely convinced me.

Hannah Lindemuth

BASKETBALL

HOMETOWN: Oakdale, PA **MAJOR:** Accounting

You have been voted a team captain for three seasons, one of only two players in the last two decades in program history who can say that. What does it mean to you to take on that responsibility for the team?

It means the world to me to be able to be a captain and a leader on my team. The fact that my team has trust and faith in me is a huge honor that I never take for granted. It never feels like a responsibility because it is something that I love to do and having great teammates makes it easy!

As one of the teams top scorers all three years, what is your mindset in terms of trying to score as many points as you can during games?

The mindset I have going into each game is what can I do to best help my team win. I owe a lot of credit to my teammates for their continual trust in me on the court and putting me in great positions to score the ball.

Women's basketball just missed out on making the NCAA tournament last year, how are you and the team going to take that near miss and use it as motivation for the upcoming season?

The fact that we were so close to making the tournament shows how capable this team and program is to getting there. It instilled confidence even though it was devastating and we are using that as motivation. We now know what needs to be done to get to the next level and our team is working on those adjustments to reach our goals. I am very excited for this upcoming season because I know what great potential this team has.

What drove the interest in accounting? What are your hopes in the future in utilizing that degree?

My dad inspired me to be an accountant because of his great success in the accounting field. Growing up and seeing him enjoy the business world, I knew I wanted to go in that direction. I hope to attend graduate school to get my masters in accounting then sit for my CPA. I am leaning towards working in audit since it has a team environment.



You are an active member of VSAAC here at UR, what are your favorite moments working with other student athletes here on campus?

I love the student athlete community here at UR. Everyone is super supportive and I have met great friends. I have a passion for mental health among student athletes so being able to engage in those conversations means a lot to me. One of my favorite events hosted by VSAAC was pass, punt, kick where I got to put my football skills to the test while raising money for a great cause!

What attracted you to attend the University of Rochester?

I wanted a university where I could get a great education while playing basketball at a high level and Rochester was the perfect fit. It is a beautiful campus and the people I met were amazing. Also, the idea of playing in the UAA and traveling the country was a huge selling point as well!

Amanda Newell

ROWING

HOMETOWN: **Newton, NJ** MAJOR: **Biochemistry**

Rowing has the unique distinction of being a team sport where all the individuals in a race work for one goal together to make the boat go as fast as it can. Describe the team dynamic a little bit.

I would say that the team dynamic is very positive despite all of the stress that we put ourselves under. There are parts of the sport that are individualistic and others that are dependent upon a strong group identity. Seats in boats are earned by outperforming your teammates, but races are won by blending it with everyone in the boat. To claim a seat, you have to stand out. To win regattas, you have to blend in. Despite the competition for seats, the team dynamic is really supportive. During erg tests, we all encourage each other to push ourselves and finish strong. We all just love to be around each other.

You were a part of the Liberty League Novice Crew of the Year as a sophomore in 2021. Rochester won that award last year as well, so what do you think that says about the rowing program here at UR, looking ahead to this year and beyond?

The Rochester rowing program has always taken the development of new rowers very seriously to make the team as robust as possible. Because of this, our novice boat has taken the Liberty League Novice Crew of the Year title for several years in a row.

How did you get into rowing to begin with, as were a member of the swim team during high school back in New Jersey?

When I first came to campus, I was doing a lot of running to make up for the fact that I was no longer an athlete like I had been in high school, and it was so lonely. On my first day of classes, I walked past the rowing recruitment tent on the Wilson quad, and once the team heard I had been a swimmer, they convinced me to try it out. I was missing the team dynamic I had on both my high school and club swim teams, so I joined rowing to expand my athletic skill set and become a part of a team again.

What are some of your favorite memories on the rowing team? Any particular races or trips that stand out?

My favorite rowing memories are always related to our



spring break training trip. We work really hard all week but also have lots of fun. This past spring, we got to race UConn and UMiami at the end of the week and it boosted the confidence of the whole team and set us up for a really good season.

Talk a little about some of your favorite classes or professor here at UR. What did you like about them?

My favorite courses that I've taken here are Biochemical Mechanisms of Cellular Processes and Bioorganic Chemistry and Chemical Biology because I have always been fascinated by the underlying mechanisms of life. Despite this, my favorite professors have always been in the Russian department. Because the class sizes are much smaller, my Russian professors have been easy to connect with and always remember me in passing.

What attracted you to come to the University of Rochester?

The prestige of the school and the open curriculum attracted me to apply here, but I committed because of the research opportunities available on the River Campus and at the Medical Campus.

Scott Sikorski

CROSS COUNTRY/TRACK & FIELD

HOMETOWN: Chicago, Illinois **MAJOR:** Computer Science

Running cross country and track & field here at Rochester is a tough balancing act, as you are competing year round. What are some strategies you have used throughout your career to manage your coursework, while continuing to succeed in your athletic endeavors?

My best trick has been dedicated days such as “No Homework Saturday”. Saturday for us is usually race day or a very important workout so I like to treat Saturday as a day to focus on competing, recovering, and de-stressing after. Then Monday is for working on projects even if they aren’t due for a while when I know that we have a shorter, less intensive practice. Additionally, I found that being able to take classes with team members has been a crucial part in balancing everything. It makes the work easier when you have another person on the same schedule as you and then being able to work and study together.

Last year was a tremendous success for you individually, qualifying for the NCAA Division III championships in cross country, indoor track and outdoor track. What goes through your mind before a race at the NCAA meet?

The process honestly begins with our morning shakeout about 5 hours before the race to get the body fully awake and engaged. Then for about 3.5 hours, it’s trying not to think about the race and distracting myself which is a lot easier when I have everyone with me. Afterwards, I’m making sure that my schedule is set for balancing warmups and check-ins while I talk to Coach Novara about the plan once more, knowing that I’ll have to adapt during the race. Then on the start line, I end with being respectfully confident knowing that I deserve to be here as much as anyone else and that I can go out and win no matter how I felt when I woke up.

You ended your junior year placing 3rd in the nation in the 1500 meters during the outdoor season, and were honored as the Liberty League Track Performer of the Year. How did it feel to bring home those accolades after the year wrapped up?

To me, it was a display of a year’s worth of work and dedication. Track is very unique because you have the time each time you race so it can be hard to mentally stay in the competitive mindset when you have a slower time when what truly matters is the performance at NCAA’s. So being able to finish outdoor taking 3rd brought something real to put to the past year of work.

Talk a little bit about your research through the Mechanical Engineering Department at the UR Laser Lab. What kind of projects did you work on?

I work with Dr. Sefkow who is a senior scientist at the LLE and assistant professor in the Mechanical Engineering department. I have been working on developing, optimizing, and integrating a new particle in cell algorithm for simulating processes. I specifically have parallelized our developed algorithm in 3D on NVIDIA GPU’s to achieve a 100x simulation runtime save while consuming less memory and producing reliable results for large dynamic ranges of density, velocity, pressure, and temperature.



Are there any favorite professors or classes you have taken here at Rochester? What were they and why did you like them so much?

My favorite classes have probably been CSC 252 Computer Architecture with Dr. Zhu and CSC 455 Advanced Compilers & Optimizations with Dr. Pai. CSC 252 essentially taught the “magic” behind computers. It connected the surface level of programming while building some cool projects to make the computer do complex things. Then CSC 455 built off 252 and applied even more magic. It was a small graduate level course and Dr. Pai was able to teach the theory of why computers could do what they do while making computers smart. I actually wrote a project that is one of my main portfolio projects.

What attracted you to attend the University of Rochester?

My aunt, who lives in Buffalo, recommended that I check out the campus and I loved walking through the main quad, library, and Wilson Commons. Then the combination of clusters and UR being a R1 research university meant that I was free to explore engineering in a more practical sense as an undergraduate and only take classes that I wanted to take.