



Notable Alumni

Using the Power of Words To Reach Millions of Patients

Doctors with degrees in English literature could be said to possess astonishing foresight. It's one thing to give a piece of advice to a single patient in a doctor's office. It's another to disseminate that advice to millions through the power of words. Dr. Nicholas V. Perricone '70, who holds a B.S. in English Literature, is one example of a scientifically gifted individual who also knows how to tell a story. Now a widely published author, he is a prominent dermatologist and founder of the science-based skincare company, N.V. Perricone Cosmeceuticals. Two of his books, "The Perricone Prescription" and "The Wrinkle Cure," are New York Times bestsellers.

"From a very young age, I had a vision of being part of a larger movement, with the goal toward helping people," he says.

With a bachelor's degree in English literature from UNH, a medical degree from the College of Human Medicine at Michigan State and a residency at Yale, Dr. Perricone's education in the liberal arts and the sciences has also given him an understanding of basic human needs. He has helped Catholic Family Services build a community center, school and health clinic on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, Brazil, where children and pregnant teenagers will be housed, educated and saved from the degradations of living on the streets.

"If you passionately believe and love what you're doing, I think success will be guaranteed, although it may not always take the path you originally had in mind," he says. His path started with an English degree from UNH.

"Little did I know that I would go on to medical school, start a company and begin to write books," he says. "This background has been invaluable in giving me the tools I needed to clearly express myself."

Dr. Nicholas V. Perricone '70



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A Life of the Mind: Probing the Brain's Complexities

As a boy, James V. Cassella '76, spent long hours lining up building blocks to create small cities. He liked figuring out how objects worked. After taking an after-school psychology course in high school, he realized that he liked figuring out one object in particular: the human brain.

“UNH was clearly part of my success. It was a place where I thrived.”

He majored in Psychology at the University of New Haven, then pursued the subject for a Ph.D. at Dartmouth College. A post-doctoral fellowship in the Psychiatry Department of the Yale University School of Medicine led to a chance encounter with his future wife, Denise, in a Yale passageway. Marriage, two children — daughter Jessie, a sophomore at Santa Clara University, and son Bryan, a junior at Los Altos High School — and a job as an assistant professor of Neuroscience at Oberlin College in Ohio freed him from a future as a professional student. He was, officially, launched.

A phone call redirected him. A group of friends from Yale wanted to start a biotech company, so he moved back to Connecticut to join the highly successful startup Neurogen. “I realized that not many people knew much about the brain, and I felt that I might actually be able to make a contribution to the science, so I kept getting in deeper and deeper,” he says.

Now the senior vice president for research and development for Alexza Pharmaceuticals, a fast-emerging California pharmaceutical company, he is fully immersed in the life of the brain. During the past 20 years, he has translated his knowledge into the discovery and development of novel drugs and treatments for neurological and psychiatric disorders. The University helped him get there.

“UNH was clearly part of my success,” he says. “It was a place where I thrived.”

James V. Cassella '76

