Cathy Hao ’13 has a quiet voice, easy smile and polite manners that belie a tenacious drive to help others. She’s conducted research in three laboratories, examining colon cancer cells, counting nanoparticles and controlling experiments related to cognition. She’s worked with people with HIV/AIDS in Kenya, which the United Nations says is the second-largest urban slum in Africa, testing blood and counseling the infected. She’s spent time at a rural clinic in Guatemala administering injections and assisting births. And for six years she’s volunteered once a week at the Dr. Garabed A. Fatali Community Free Clinic in Binghamton.

Many people don’t accomplish as much in a lifetime, but Hao is only 20 years old. And there’s more: She’s shadowed five doctors; roughed it all over New England as a volunteer on an Appalachian Trail work crew; counseled kids with muscular dystrophy at summer camp; is an undergraduate teaching assistant; and even spent a summer modeling for Abercrombie & Fitch.

That’s an abbreviated list from just the past two years.

“Part of my personality is I’m very stubborn,” Hao says. “When I have these visions I just kind of go for it. I don’t really like people stopping me from doing other things. I think when you’re young it’s good to gain experience because the more experience you have adds to your character, to your individualism and your understanding of the world.”

Through all the volunteering and travel, the pre-med double major (biochemistry and neuroscience) has maintained a 4.0 grade-point average and figured out the area of medicine she wants to concentrate on.

“I’m really interested in oncology,” she says. “It’s hard because most of your patients do die, but oncologists see their patients once a month, once a week, constantly, and really get to know them and have intimate relationships. They really depend on you because when they have a terminal illness like cancer, they really need your help to guide them through the toughest time of their life. You play a much more important role in their life, and I really like that.”

Hao’s dedication to community has earned her both the Robert Mancini ’80 Scholarship for Commitment to Helping the Indigent and the Binghamton University Forum Scholarship.

As seen as Bob Pompi landed at Binghamton University to teach physics in 1968 (it was Harpur College then), he connected with the Harpur Jazz Ensemble.

“It was one of the most enjoyable things that I was able to do in my 45 years at Harpur College. SUNY Binghamton, the University Center at Binghamton and Binghamton University,” the associate professor says dryly.

When he started, the ensemble was for students only, but the director, Al Hamme, let Pompi play saxophone on the condition he could never take a student’s spot. Pompi agreed, playing on and off over the next four decades.

“In my life it was crucial,” he says. “Jazz was something I started when I was 14 years old and at 71 I’m still playing with groups. It’s part of who I am.”

But Pompi and his wife, Karen, worried about the future of the ensemble. Funding the arts is always a challenge, more so in a tough economy. They wanted to guarantee an outlet for students wanting to participate in the “indigenous American art form.” Consequently, the Pompis gave $100,000 to support the Harpur Jazz Ensemble through an IRA charitable rollover, which allows people 70½ and over to transfer up to $100,000 from a traditional or Roth IRA to a charity without paying federal income tax on the withdrawal. (Congress enacted the rollover in 2006, but it’s set to expire at the end of this year.)

“I wanted to see it thrive,” Pompi says. “So my wife and I talked about it and we thought that setting up an endowment account that could generate several thousand dollars a year would be something that would ensure that this group, which I have so thoroughly enjoyed either playing with or listening to, would survive in perpetuity.”

The gift is also a way to honor the great musicians he’s played with in the ensemble, people like Steve Davis, who Chick Corea said is “playing some of the most melodic improvisations ever heard in jazz,” and Matt Koza, now the director of the Artie Shaw Orchestra.

“Just incredibly good, gifted individuals,” Pompi says. And with his support, the Harpur Jazz Ensemble will turn out jazz greats for generations to come.

As a CFO, Randy Borkenstein ’87 knows that developing and retaining talent is key to organizational success

For Randy Borkenstein ’87, the connection to his alma mater isn’t complicated. “I loved going to school at Binghamton,” he says amid the noise and tumult enveloping Tau Alpha Upsilon’s 50th anniversary reunion as fellow fraternity brothers frequently interrupt him to say hello. “I established a connection with the school because of terrific memories of the time spent here.”

Seeing an opportunity to improve the University, he and his wife, Anita Borkenstein ’86, support the Jean-Pierre Mileur Harpur College Faculty Development Fund, which helps Harpur College build and maintain an extraordinary staff of professors.

“Managing a business has taught me to appreciate the value of retaining key employees,” he says. “Keeping turnover low is a competitive advantage. The Mileur Fund provides the dean the financial flexibility necessary to develop and retain key faculty members, so they stay longer and positively influence the University culture. That’s a tremendous benefit.”

Borkenstein says it was TAU that first taught him to give back through the fraternity’s frequent volunteer participation in University Foundation phonathons, cold-calling alumni to ask for donations for the University.

“Just incredibly good, gifted individuals,” Pompi says. And with his support, the Harpur Jazz Ensemble will turn out jazz greats for generations to come.

For the love of helping others

Looking over her list of accomplishments, it’s hard to believe Cathy Hao ’13 just completed her sophomore year.
At this year’s spring Commencement, I had the privilege of seeing nearly 3,200 degrees conferred, the largest Graduate School ceremony in school history, and a Harpur College ceremony that filled nearly every seat at the Events Center. I really enjoy seeing the pride in parents’ faces as students celebrate the culmination of all their hard work.

Our students’ success is a testament not only to their own efforts, but also to the support and commitment provided by our alumni and friends. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the remarkable achievements of Bold.Brilliant.Binghamton – The Campaign for Binghamton University.

We publicly launched the comprehensive gifts campaign just over a year ago and now count nearly 30,000 individuals helping to make Binghamton one of the best universities in the nation.

I am incredibly proud of our alumni and friends who have committed themselves to making a difference. Your support of Bold.Brilliant.Binghamton is already making a difference. It is helping us attract the most qualified students and develop innovative and challenging academic programs that push our graduates to the front of their chosen fields. It is assisting our faculty in their pursuit of new knowledge and enabling the University to develop the resources necessary to sustain our tradition of excellence. You are making our University — and our world — better.

Because of the generosity of our alumni and friends like you, the campaign has already raised $91,220,858 for Binghamton University and its students. But we have a long way to go to reach our goal and the clock is ticking — we have just a year to raise the final $4 million. It’s a challenge, yet I’m confident we’ll make the goal because your commitment is powerful evidence that our friends and alumni value the University and are working to help it reach its potential.

C. Peter Magrath, President