

Annual Report

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Letter from the CEO

Dear Community Partners:

When I look back on 2025, the word that comes to mind is momentum. Upstate Venture Connect was created to do one thing exceptionally well: connect people and ideas in a way that helps high-growth founders succeed without requiring them to leave Upstate New York to do it. This year, that mission felt more tangible than ever.

In 2025, we doubled down on what makes UVC special: curated relationships, founder-first programming, and a deeply human approach to ecosystem building. We focused on depth, trust, and outcomes and our results speak for themselves.

At the core of UVC is our founder community. This year, we expanded and activated our network of experienced entrepreneurs (UNY50) across the region and beyond. What continues to inspire me is how generous this community is. Founders who have exited are showing up to mentor first-time CEOs. Operators are making warm introductions without expecting anything in return. That give-first culture is the heartbeat of UVC.

In 2025, we leaned into experiential programming as a strategic tool not just for inspiration, but for tangible outcomes. Our first event Founder Fusion roadshows brought 14 Upstate founders into rooms they wouldn't otherwise have access to: with investors, corporate partners, and industry leaders in DC. This proved a much needed model for our founders to expand their connectivity and bring it back home and allowed us to do 4 more in 2026.

One of the most meaningful evolutions at UVC this year was the continued growth of our Community Advocate program. We expanded a boots-on-the-ground model that empowers trusted local leaders to act as connectors, scouts, and champions in their regions. These advocates are the reason we're seeing stronger founder referrals, deeper regional engagement, and more inclusive access to UVC's network. This model is becoming a blueprint for how ecosystem building can scale without losing its soul.

None of this work happens in isolation. To our donors, sponsors, and partners: thank you for trusting us and standing behind this mission. To our board and advisors: thank you for your steady guidance and belief in what we're building. And to the founders: thank you for taking the risk. UVC exists because of you.

Olivia Goldstein
CEO, Upstate Venture Connect

About Us

Founded in 2010, Upstate Venture Connect (UVC) provides thought-leadership, intelligence, and network building opportunities for entrepreneurs in Upstate NY. UVC currently supports over 700 high growth businesses by making personalized introductions and hosting invite-only gatherings. UVC is a 501c3 non-profit.



Our Vision

Our region has the assets to create thousands of high growth, venture backable companies. These innovation oriented enterprises create wealth-building career opportunities that can retain college-educated talent and preserve the quality of our local communities. We believe in:

1**Giving first**

Giving first is about helping anyone, especially entrepreneurs, without any expectation of getting something back.

2**Strengthening personal networks**

People who give first create powerful networks, which adds incredible value for entrepreneurs.

3**Scaling connectivity**

As personal networks get connected, a global network emerges offering unprecedented resources to founders in communities big and small.

2025 Year in Review

FOUNDER NETWORK & UNY50

This year, UVC made more founder referrals than ever before: **545**. Founders in our network have access to peers and UVC's deep network of experts, investors, and service providers. We also expanded our founder programming to include travel to regions outside of the state, such as the Founder Roadshow: Upstate to DC. UVC also made a concerted effort to identify more UNY50 members, increasing membership from 50 to 61 members.

UNLEASHED RETREAT, FOUNDER FUSIONS, SPECIAL EVENTS

UVC continues its strategy of hosting invite-only gatherings for new and experienced founders. We thoughtfully curate each get-together to deepen relationships. In addition to our flagship event, the Unleashed Founders Retreat, UVC hosted a sold-out Upstate Founders Fete in February, welcomed Brad Feld to Upstate NY in June, and hosted an NYC Founder Fusion and CEO Dinner during NY Tech Week.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATE PROGRAM

This year we expanded our Community Advocate Program, bringing on advocates in the Capital Region and Southern Tier in addition to the Rochester and CNY/Mohawk Valley regions. These individuals are our localized presence in regional ecosystems, responsible for engaging local founders and bringing them into the UVC network for more connectivity. In 2026, we will be expanding again into the Hudson Valley.

719

High growth companies tracked in Upstate NY in UVC Database

266

Companies receiving direct support from UVC

42

Partner events attended or participated in by UVC team

16

Curated events hosted by UVC

266

Unique, high-growth founders supported by UVC

2025 Financials

2025 Revenue

Sponsorships	\$132,000
Foundation Support	\$302,050
Donations	\$96,250
Program Revenue	\$34,835

Total

\$565,135

2025 Expenses

Founder Support	\$416,702
G&A	\$49,137
Marketing	\$52,339

Total

\$518,178



2026 Goals

1

Expand Founder & UNY50 Networks

Broaden the reach and inclusivity of our network by attracting more founders through Community Advocates, and attracting new UNY50 members across Upstate expats.

2

Strengthening Personal Networks

People who give first create powerful networks, which adds incredible value for entrepreneurs.

3

Scaling Connectivity

As personal networks get connected, a global network emerges offering unprecedented resources to founders in communities big and small.

**We Need
Your
Support**

Everything UVC does is intended to build a community of founders helping each other. This is a long term project that goes beyond the timeline for most grantors. Therefore, we rely upon the support of individual donors and corporate partners. Please consider including us in your giving plans.

uvc.org/donate

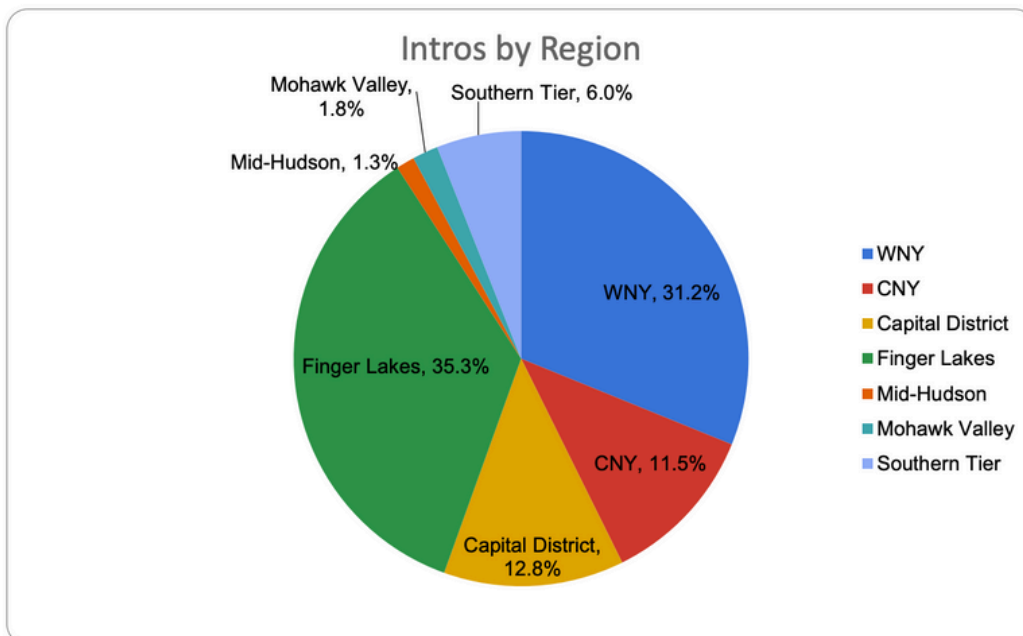
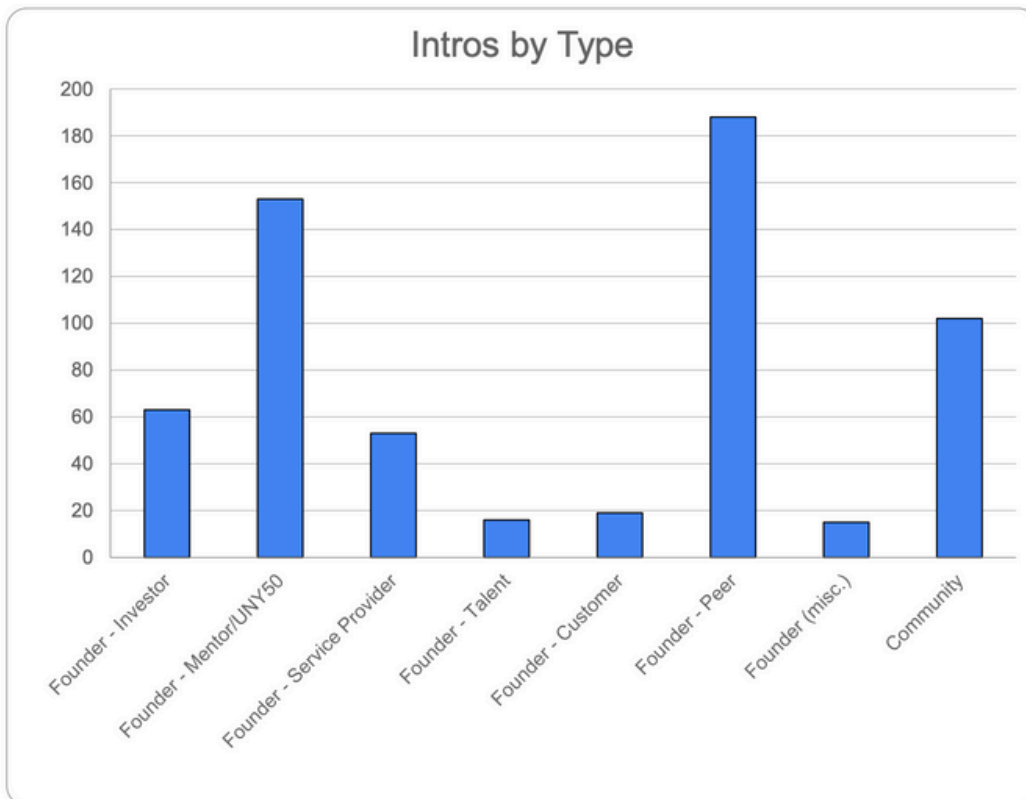


2025 Metrics

OVERVIEW

2025 Founder Engagement

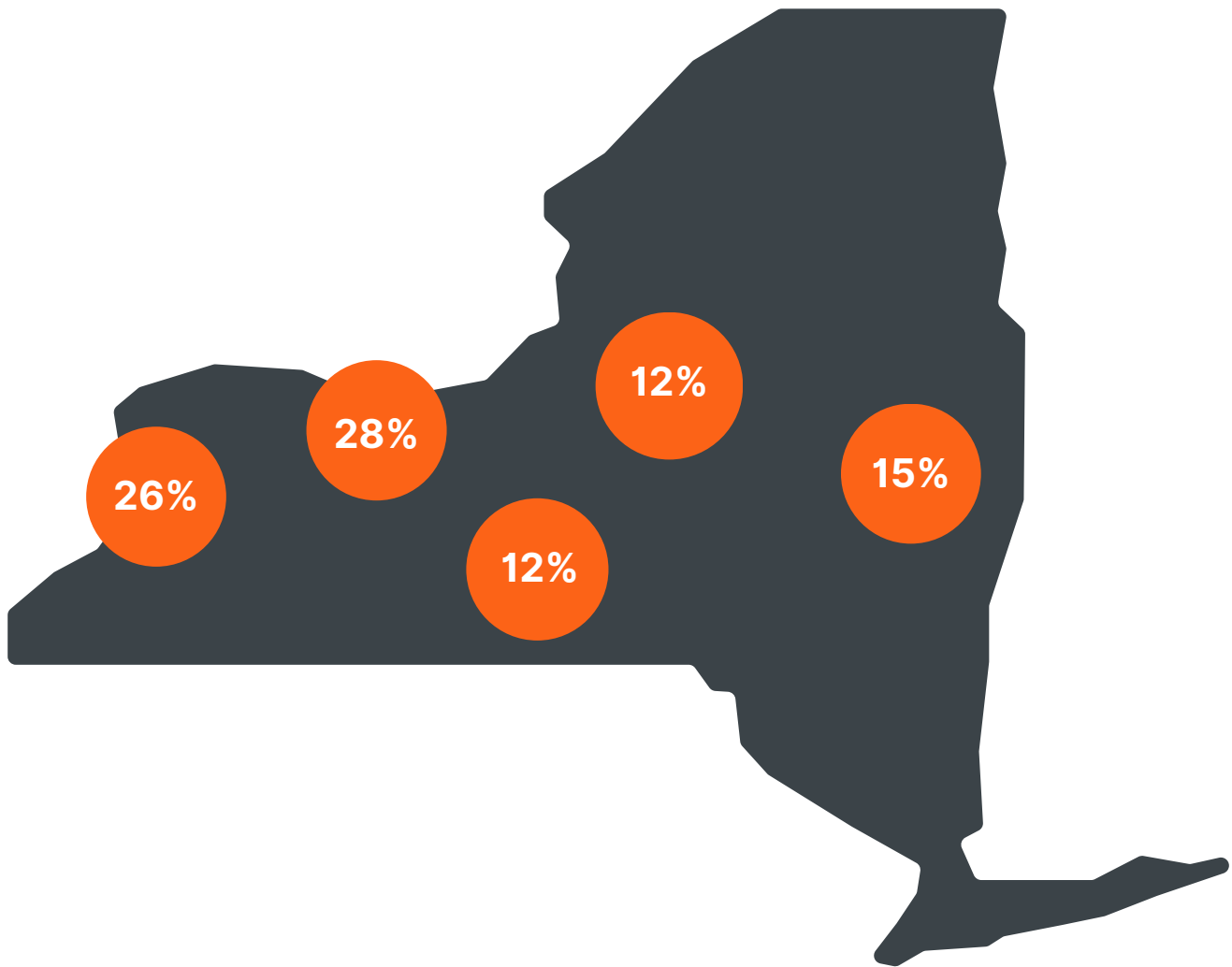
*UVC facilitated **545 curated introductions** for high-growth companies in 2025.*



STATE-WIDE SNAPSHOT

High Growth Company Database

We are tracking 719 high-growth companies across Upstate NY.



IMPACT BY REGION:

Western New York



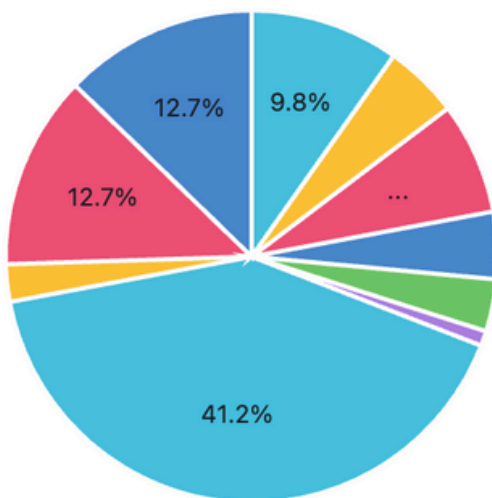
187 high-growth companies in region
101 received UVC support

267 founders identified in region
133 founders impacted by UVC

197 founder introductions

Fireside Chat with M&T Bank in Buffalo

Intros by Type



Connection Type

- Founder - Investor
- Founder - Mentor
- Founder - Service Provider
- Founder - Talent
- Founder - Customer
- Founder - University
- Founder - Founder
- Founder (misc.)
- Community (misc.)
- UNY50

IMPACT BY REGION:

Finger Lakes



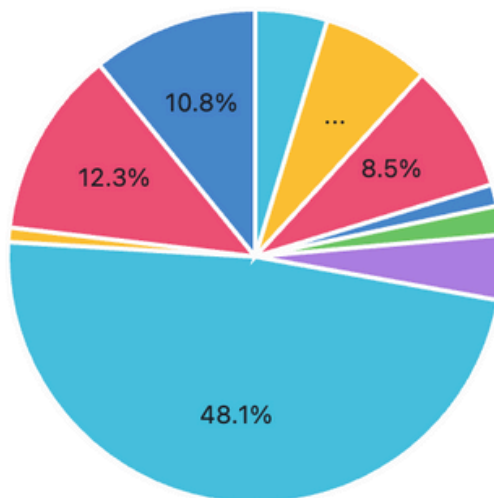
198 high-growth companies in region
107 received UVC support

229 founders identified in region
129 founders impacted by UVC

205 founder introductions

Tour of the Golisano Institute in Rochester

Intros by Type



Connection Type

- Founder - Investor
- Founder - Mentor
- Founder - Service Provider
- Founder - Talent
- Founder - Customer
- Founder - University
- Founder - Founder
- Founder (misc.)
- Community (misc.)
- UNY50

IMPACT BY REGION:

CNY, Mohawk Valley, North Country



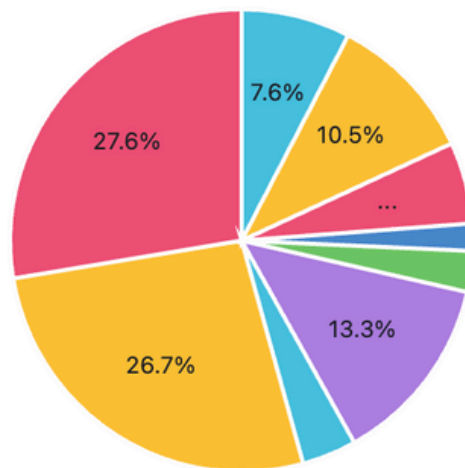
101 high-growth companies in region
81 received UVC support

145 founders identified in region
94 founders impacted by UVC

122 founder introductions

Tour of new INSPYRE Innovation Hub in Syracuse

Intros by Type



Connection Type

- Founder - Investor
- Founder - Mentor
- Founder - Service Provider
- Founder - Talent
- Founder - University
- Founder - Founder
- Founder (misc.)
- Community (misc.)
- UNY50

IMPACT BY REGION:

Southern Tier



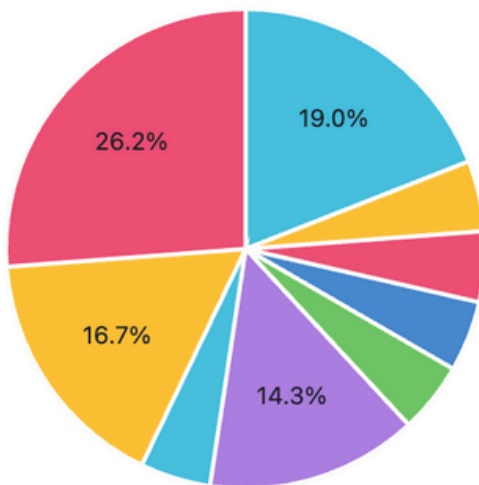
84 high-growth companies in region
48 received UVC support

104 founders identified in region
54 founders impacted by UVC

38 founder introductions

*Cornell & Ithaca representing
at Unleashed*

Intros by Type



Connection Type

- Founder - Investor
- Founder - Mentor
- Founder - Service Provider
- Founder - Customer
- Founder - University
- Founder - Founder
- Founder (misc.)
- Community (misc.)
- UNY50

IMPACT BY REGION:

Capital Region & Mid-Hudson



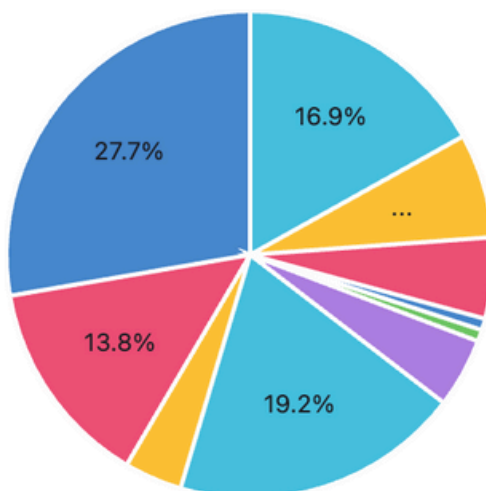
110 high-growth companies in region
80 received UVC support

132 founders identified in region
85 founders impacted by UVC

118 founder introductions

Brad Feld visiting Upstate NY

Intros by Type



Connection Type

- Founder - Investor
- Founder - Mentor
- Founder - Service Provider
- Founder - Talent
- Founder - Customer
- Founder - University
- Founder - Founder
- Founder (misc.)
- Community (misc.)
- UNY50

Unleashed Founders Retreat

This year's retreat gave founders a chance to step back from the day-to-day chaos of entrepreneurial life, reflect on broader strategic challenges, and connect with fellow Upstate New York founders. Founders enjoyed an unplugged environment while building connections with successful entrepreneurs and the next generation of unicorn CEOs.

The 2-day retreat featured small group conversations, curated networking, and activities that lent themselves to fostering relationships. The retreat also celebrated the Upstate startup community through annual awards. The 2025 Deal of the Year recipient was Fleetworthy. Community Catalyst Awardees were presented to Kara Jones, Jack McGowan, and Kelly Reardon.



Sept 11 & 12, 2025



Saratoga
Springs, NY



Over 50% of attendees
made 4+ new connections



Over 25% of attendees were early-stage or student founders



“Really appreciate this event, the people, and all the effort you put in to make it look effortless. Special thanks to David and Jeff for being such wonderful ambassadors for Saratoga Springs!”

- Cale Van Buren, Rockefeller Capital
Management



Network Building Outside Upstate

in 2025, UVC honed in on not only on finding expats with Upstate ties, but on bringing Upstate founders to different geographies to network and further their company's growth.

Through Springboard funding from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, UVC launched the Upstate to DC Founders Roadshow in 2025, connecting startups with national investors and federal innovation networks. This initiative represents a new era of visibility and momentum for high-growth companies across Western New York, and Upstate as a whole as we look to expand up on this programming in 2026.

UVC also continued with its Founder Fusion events, which bring together entrepreneurs and emerging founders from Upstate NY with other networks and communities. These curated events are designed to foster meaningful connections and facilitate valuable discussions, bringing in top notch speakers including the co-founders of Wayfair, GLG, The Laundress, and more.



“

Participating in the Upstate to DC Founders Roadshow was an incredible opportunity to represent Rochester's innovation ecosystem on a national stage.

- Ian Gauger, COO, Circle Optics

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Sponsors

Our work would not be possible without the invaluable support from our sponsors. Thank you for enabling our success and impact this past year.

SUSTAINING PARTNERS



CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

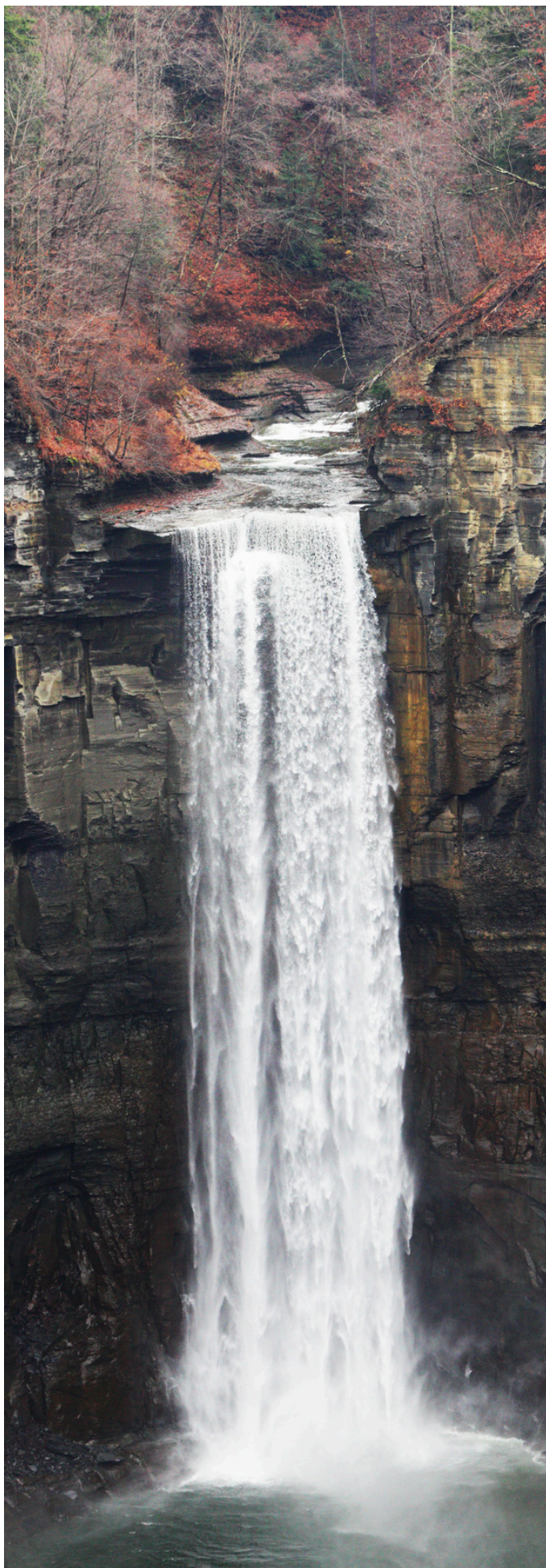


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