Mission: Outcomes
Veteran Alumni Make Columbia Proud

Dr. Trevor Dixon
’99PBPM
Rises Up and Gives Back
Letter from the Dean

GS itself has experienced its own transformation. For more than a decade we have worked to revolutionize the student experience from that of a commuter, coming to campus to take one or two classes a week, to one that allows for full integration in the Columbia community. This academic year, 75 percent of our students attend full time, compared to just 54 percent in 2005-2006. For more than a decade, we have addressed everything from students’ academic programs to extracurricular activities, while also overhauling our financial aid model and significantly increasing the availability of University housing. Additionally, the Office of the Dean of Students has worked tirelessly to create a cohesive student community. In 2015, a nontraditional student’s experience is one where he or she has significant resources available in order to succeed and thrive at Columbia and beyond.

The articles on the following pages highlight the extraordinary accomplishments of members of our community. I have no doubt that many of you will relate to the transformative power of a Columbia education cited throughout this issue. I am inspired by the paths of recent alumni, featured in the issue’s cover story (page 10), who are also U.S. military veterans—what they have accomplished as students, and now, as alumni. Furthermore, learning about the successes of Allison Fillmore Magliocco ’97 (page 17), Elaine Hochberg ’82 (page 30), and Trevor Dixon ’99PBPM (page 31) further confirms the power of our mission. As a publication and, more importantly, as a college, we have accomplished much. We have more work to do; however, I think it is important to take a moment to recognize the results of our transformation and how it has, and will continue to, foster personal triumphs for generations of GSers.

With warmest regards,

Peter J. Awn, Dean

From our students, who are transformed intellectually in the classroom, to our alumni, who transform the world around them with their accomplishments, to our school, and the incredible transformation that has taken place over the last 68 years, transformational is the best way to describe the School of General Studies.

The Owl, too, has transformed, as I was reminded recently by Frances (Petrinelli) Galton ’66, ’78GSAS and Brian Leary ’68, two alumni who helped to create the student newspaper after which this magazine is named. Dr. Galton was one of the first writers for the newspaper in 1965, reviewing theater productions and writing about issues facing students at that time. Mr. Leary recounted how in 1967 and 1968 they constructed the weekly publication in the basement of Lewisohn Hall before bringing it to the printer in lower Manhattan where they printed the eight-page paper using hot lead type. These stories are great illustrations of how far the School of General Studies has come, and how important our foundation is for our success today.

After more than 18 years as dean of GS, I continue to be inspired by how our students and alumni continue to transform themselves. During June’s All-Class Reunion, when I read the “Before GS and After GS” board (see page 32), it confirmed again how proud I am of all that we have accomplished together. Alumni shared concise before-and-after versions of their “GS stories,” highlighting the transitions they have made in life. Some of my favorites include transitioning from administrative assistant to director of public health for 13 Bronx schools, from an electronic store salesman to an English teacher at Baruch College Campus High School, and from an EMT/waiter to a debt and currency reporter for Dow Jones and Bloomberg News. The Reunion theme of transformation is a potent motif that continues to drive all that we do.

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With warmest regards,
After new arrivals signed and picked up their goody-bags in Low Rotunda, this fall’s School of General Studies New Student Orientation welcome assembly was held on Low Plaza. Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger welcomed 471 new matriculants saying, “We are all with you. We all want to be GS students.”

**In General**

Cody Wikes, a Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies major, won the prestigious FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) fellowship to study abroad in spring 2015 at SOAS, University of London, one of the world’s preeminent institutions for the study of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Meanwhile, Andrew Christian won a full-year FLAS to study Mandarin at Columbia for the 2015-16 academic year.

**Preserving culture, improving education, increasing scientific collaboration**

After winning the highly competitive U.S. Department of State European Institute Undergraduate Summer Fellowship, Catherine Matusik spent summer 2015 as an intern at the U.S. Mission to UNESCO in Paris.

**Student veteran Kristoffer Goldsmith, an active member of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, was instrumental in convincing federal lawmakers to pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act last February. According to Newsday, the Bellevue, N.Y. native, and triangle major, is proud to have worked with U.S. Senator Kristen Gillibrand to convince federal lawmakers to pass the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act.**

One such student is Emma Marquez Pole. While an undergraduate at the Chicago, Mexican American student designed her own women’s health research project. After graduation, she went on to work for an NGO doing cervical cancer research, and she ran a successful research training program, two weeks of which consisted of a fully funded, 11-week, summer resource grants to study or intern abroad.

Six GS students–out of an overall group of eight from Columbia University—received summer 2015 scholarships from the German International Scholarship Program, a program that gives undergraduates with limited financial resources grants to study or intern abroad. The six GS recipients were chosen from a pool of more than 6,300 applicants nationwide. GS students Woo Young Lee (China), Sang Ra (South Korea), Justin Wang (China), and Andrew Christiansen (Vietnam) were offered awards ranging from $2,500-$8,000 for study or intern abroad.

In March, The New York Times featured retired N.B.A. Golden State Warriors forward Troy Murphy, now a sociology major at GS. The piece detailed Murphy’s journey towards earning his bachelor’s degree.

**Political science major Arden Walentowski is a 2015-16 Presidential Fellow at the Center for the Study of Congress and the Presidency in Washington, D.C. She was also the 2015 recipient of the Phyllis Stevens Sharp Fellowship for Political Science Research.**

**Global Justice**

Serenà Mackoll ’15 spent spring 2015 as a Regional Programs Intern at the New York office of the Coalition for International Criminal Court. Her position required her to attend relevant meetings at the United Nations on behalf of the organization.

**Columbia P&S Linkage Program Draws More Postbac Students**

In its choice of Dr. Stephen Nicholas for Associate Dean of Admissions, a graduate of the care of HIV-infected children, Nicholas was a strong advocate for the medically underserved in Harlem and Washington Heights. “Putting a man like that in charge of admissions says a lot about the type of doctors they want to produce,” says Heyman-Kantor.

Rosner attributes this success to the great fit with the Postbac Premed Program student profile, saying, “We recruit students with life experience, students with a strong sense of personal commitment to the practice of medicine, students who are interested in working with underserved populations, and those are exactly the kind of motivation that we see in students that P&S is interested in recruiting.”

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Columbia/Sciences Po Dual BA Graduates Inaugural Class

By Nancy J. Brandwein

In May, 27 students graduated as the inaugural class of the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po. This joint-degree program enables students to experience a truly international education: undergraduates in the Program study for two years at the French university Sciences Po and then matriculate at Columbia School of General Studies where they complete their two degrees. Jessica Saarinen, Senior Assistant Dean of International Programs, says 63 first-year students enrolled in fall 2015, a testament to the Program’s growing reputation.

After a rigorous admissions process, the class of 2015 enrolled in fall 2011 at Sciences Po and studied the social sciences. Students chose to matriculate at one of three campuses—Reims, Menton, or Le Havre, each of which specializes in a region of the world: North America, Africa, and Europe at Reims; the Middle East and Mediterranean at Menton; and Asia at Le Havre. Then, once at Columbia for their final two years, students chose from one of 70 majors.

In her years of shipping and growing the Dual BA Program, Saarinen sees that the “kinds of students we’re looking for, students who want to learn as much as they can about the world around them.”

Close friends and Dual BA grads Adam Basuljevic ‘15 and Anton Bengt Fredriksson ‘15 are two such students. Originally from New York, Basuljevic radiates purpose and drive. Having been admitted into several lives, he thought, “What is going to differentiate me down the line?” so he took up the challenge of the Dual BA Program, both to stand out upon graduation and to study law as an undergraduate in France. In addition to participating in moot court competitions, Basuljevic reveled in the intimate international community of exceptional students in his Reims campus, even participating in student government. As director of nightlife, he spent his weekends in Reims, developing relationships with bars and clubs, organizing the interregional college program, and, of course, perfecting his French.

Fredriksson sought a European education for civil engineering. In terms of broadening horizons, this is what the Dual BA program enables students to do. His admission to Sciences Po came as a “…real shock,” he says. “I was absolutely impressed, intimidated. I had never studied the social sciences. All my previous coursework was in engineering and physics, whereas General Studies limited my work. “The Dual BA gives your Columbia University degree extra cachet.” —Anton Bengt Fredriksson, ’15

For both students, the program changed everything for me.”

In order to fund the ambitious project, JTS is setting the baseline for a $50 million campaign with naming opportunities for resources that will be a part of the new building. Institutional leadership is currently identifying architects and contractors with the aim of completing the existing library during the summer of 2016 and beginning construction immediately thereafter. If all proceeds according to administrators’ plans, the new building will open in 2019.

“Washington, we want to invigorate the community at large to its new auditorium and conference center. We need to have the right facilities to accommodate high-level discussions and events and transform JTS into a center for interfaith dialogue, not only in New York but also across the country and internationally.”

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With an eye towards repositioning their resources for the next century, the institution aims to establish its existing community base and attract the general public. “We want our library facility to showcase our treasures,” said Marc Gary, speaking about the largest collection of Hebraic and Judaic material outside of Jerusalem.

In JTS’s general collection there are 400,000 volumes, 25,000 rare, printed books, and 11,000 Hebrew manuscripts, including 150 precious Esther, Torah, Hakham, and Rabbinic scrolls, a few of which are hand-decorated. Under the capital plan, these treasures will be exhibited in an environment open to the general public.

Ultimately, JTS plans to draw the community at large to its new auditorium and conference center. “We need to have the right facilities to accommodate high-level discussions and events and transform JTS into a center for interfaith dialogue, not only in New York, but also across the country and internationally,” Gary said.

In addition to a new library that will include collaborative spaces; a new rare book room; and advanced technological infrastructure, the project includes constructing modern residence halls located within the flagship quadrangle at 122nd Street and Broadway. “We want to invigorate the community at JTS by providing more amenities to undergraduates and graduate students,” Gary said.

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“We’re really excited. There is a wave of enthusiasm among faculty, students, and administrators,” Gary said. It’s a reimagining not only of that campus, but also of our mission for the next hundred years.”
Lizzie Valverde ’15:
Embracing the Beauty of Things
Outside of Her Control

By Allison Scola

Even as a child, Lizzie Valverde fiercely sought excellence. She wrote her first poems at four years old, and by first grade she had bound her first chapbook. With such conviction, her childhood dream to become a poet “when she grew up” seemed promising, yet somewhere along the way, well-meaning advisors dissuaded her, suggesting poetry to be a wonderful hobby, but not a viable career path. As a teenager, Valverde gravitated towards fine arts, and after spending a year as an exchange student in Peru, she withdrew from high school, obtained a GED, and dedicated herself to preparing a stellar portfolio to gain admission to art school.

Like the enthusiastic child poet she once was, the young artist threw herself into her work. She gained admission to the School of Visual Arts in New York, yet after one semester, Valverde concluded that she did not have the distinct talent required to build a life as a professional sculptor—she aimed to be extraordinary at whatever it was she set out to do, and art did not fulfill that charge. Soon after, she matriculated at Loyola University Maryland to study public relations; however, her lack of sincere interest for the subject prompted her to withdraw before earning her degree.

While sorting through these disappointing setbacks and determining where next to put her energy, Valverde tended bar, tutored, and worked as a celebrity’s personal assistant.

In 2006, everything changed. At 28, she gave birth—two months early—to a baby girl. Her best-laid plans once again defied expectations. “Throughout my pregnancy, I was perfect,” explained Valverde. “Organic food … I gave up deodorant; no caffeine; no parabens. You name it … and she came early.”

“She” was Estella, named after Dickens’ Estella Havisham. Valverde was adopted as an infant, and so her baby daughter became her first blood relative. It was an epiphany. “There she was, this person who looked quite a lot like me—an experience I had never once shared with anyone before. The connection was bigger than I ever could have fathomed,” Valverde said.

Suddenly, my past and my roots and all of that mystery surrounding my identity were both heightened and simultaneously resolved.”

For a time, she was excited to study the human condition, but that interest faded after she learned about adoption. “I was interested in adoption and research, and even as a child, I was aware of it, but never had the possibility of adoption. When that happened, I thought, ‘Oh, okay, there goes my path in life!’”

In 2011, Valverde and her mother, whom, just prior to applying to Columbia, she was finally pursuing her passion. In addition to poetry courses, she matriculated at New York University’s MFA Creative Writing Program. It was a thrilling few days. The next semester Valverde learned that Beam would be teaching Literary Reporter, a nonfiction seminar. She considered enrolling, but because she had trepidation about delving into the world of nonfiction, she missed the first round of registration—the course was full. “On the first day, and one hour before the class, I was on SSOL [the online, student registration system] hoping a spot would open. I repeatedly pressed the Register button. Suddenly, a spot opened up and my registration went through. There was no time to look back or think it over!” Valverde, who lives an hour by car from campus in Hillsdale, N.J., “tore out of the house” to get to the class to guarantee her spot. When she arrived, there was a line out the door.

“I happened to sit across the table from Katy [Olson], who I recognized from the reading,” Valverde said.

As at the start of many courses, students were invited to introduce themselves and explain their interests in taking the course. As Olson listened to Valverde’s introduction, something clicked.

Immediately after class, she grabbed Valverde and pumped her with a series of “This is Your Life” questions. After a few minutes, the puzzle pieces of both of their infant adoptions fell together, and the two deduced that they shared the same birth mother. It was devastating.

“So much changed in that one moment,” recalled Valverde.

Together Valverde and Olson, who graduated from GS in 2014 and is currently a student in Columbia’s MFA Creative Writing Program, embarked on a journey of discovery. Over the subsequent weeks and months, they waded through the “awkward, funny, beautiful, painful, and miraculous moments” that grow out of such a stupefying revelation.

This past May, Valverde and Olson’s remarkable discovery was featured in The New York Times. On Class Day, the two were reunited with their biological mother in front of an international press corps. It was a thrilling few days.

Although not named valedictorian, Valverde graduated at the top of her class and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. This fall, with her childhood dream of being a poet in sharp focus, she matriculated at New York University’s MFA program in creative writing, most exciting perhaps is that she recently contracted with William Morris Literary agency to share her story—one of learning to embrace things out of one’s control and the beauty that that brings to life.

“Columbia not only shaped my story, but it also completely unhooked the mystery surrounding my identity were both heightened and simultaneously resolved.”

And while many of her classmates are pursuing their degrees full-time, Valverde works part-time as a reporter at the New York Post. “I do believe that some of the best writing is done in marginal time, in the spaces between,” she says. ‘When I was accepted to Columbia, I set out to be the very best,” said Valverde. “But I have since learned that perhaps being the best isn’t the most important thing. ... Sometimes you meet your biological half-sister in a Columbia classroom, and you realize the universe has other plans for you … better to be unforgettable than to be super averages."

Lizzie Valverde ’15 (center) with her daughter Estella (left) and half-sister Katy Olson ’14 (right)
While veterans have been drawn to the School of General Studies ever since its founding in the wake of World War II, in the 21st century a new generation of veterans has arrived at Columbia in significant numbers. And though these veterans have had a major impact on campus, from providing an important voice in classroom discussions to advocating for new policies, what’s even more impressive is what they have gone on to do next.

In 2002, the veteran community began to coalesce when GS students founded the U.S. Military Veterans of Columbia University, or MiVets, a student organization intended to bring together veterans. In 2008, 60 veterans were enrolled at GS, the largest veteran presence in the Ivy League. In 2009, the Department of Veteran Affairs announced the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the most comprehensive suite of education benefits for U.S. military veterans since the original GI Bill. That fall, veteran enrollment at GS rose by two-thirds, to 100. The next year, the number of veterans at GS doubled, and has continued to grow each year, with nearly 410 veterans studying at GS in the spring 2015 semester—still the largest number, by a wide margin, among any of Columbia’s peer institutions.

That significant veteran presence has been an important element in the school’s recruitment efforts. Andrew King ’15 offers an instructive example. A linguist in the Marine Corps’ 1st Radio Battalion who served in Afghanistan, King was stationed at Camp Pendleton when he heard from a friend and fellow Marine about a college that served veterans at Columbia University. He did some research, learned more about GS, and reached out to current student-veterans. After scheduling an interview with GS Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers through the base education center, King applied through the Marine Corps’ Leadership Scholars Program and was accepted, as was his friend Ben Vickers. Vickers and King graduated together this May: during their senior year, Vickers served as president of the MiVets, while King was the MiVets treasurer as well as the salutatorian of the class of 2015.

“Vickery and I wanted to talk to and bond with similar to what I had in the Corps,” King says. “The size of the community and how easy it was to connect are a big part of why I decided to come to GS.”

A MiVets-led mentorship program pairing new students with more experienced counterparts has helped veterans become acclimated quickly to the University and felt the ground running, while veteran alumni have been active in outreach to current students, providing an important sense of continuity and institutional memory. More than any other factor, though, the growth of the veteran community has been fueled by the efficacy of support systems—from academic advising to educational financing—that have long been in place to meet the needs of the school’s nontraditional students. For Rory Minnis ’11, that administrative support was instrumental in helping him to connect with his fellow students.

“There’s a unique working culture at GS,” says Minnis, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan as a sergeant and staff sergeant, respectively, in the Marine Corp. “They’ve tried to make GS look like a USO. You go into the GS Lounge, and it’s so multitudinous. Everyone’s coming from a different place and working on a different thing. But there’s a sense of commonality in the difference that stems from the support structure that’s in place.”

Columbia faculty members tout the benefits of having veterans share their experiences in the classroom; on a larger scale, the large veteran presence has also helped GS to advocate for new campus-wide policies and services—King cites housing accommodations for students with disabilities as one example—that in turn benefit a larger swath of the Columbia student body. But the impact of the veteran community radiates beyond Columbia, as Minnis points out.

“Less than 1 percent of the American population fought in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and you could do a demographic analysis to see how that’s concentrated socioeconomically and geographically,” Minnis said. “The danger is that, when these wars are over, there aren’t going to be constant reminders in the headlines or on the nightly news; they’ll fade very quickly from memory. The way to prevent that from happening is to look at the next generation of leaders, policymakers, NGO workers, journalists—it’s so important to have
veterans interacting with other students at the undergraduate level, because everyone branches off into different pathways. That’s why the mission of a place like GS is incredibly important in affecting questions that will be raised in the future.

Of course GS’s veterans are also making an impact themselves, in a wide variety of fields. King is now working as a consultant at Oliver Wyman; Minnis is in his second year at Yale Law School. Some veterans have undertaken advanced study at highly selective graduate programs, including Harvard Medical School, the London School of Economics, and New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts; others have returned to public service, using their expertise to work on Capitol Hill, in the U.S. Department of State, and at mission-driven nonprofits; still others have gone on to leadership roles at some of the world’s leading companies, including Accenture, Amazon, Bank of America, Barclays Bank, Boeing, Alit Hamilton, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, Google, McKinsey & Company, Morgan Stanley, UBS Financial Services, and Vacasa, to cite only a few.

GS plays a critical role in preparing veterans for future success, notes Elvis Canacho ’13, who served in the Marine Corps and the Army Reserves in Bahrain, Japan, Hawaii, and Iraq in security operations and as an infantry leader. Now in his third year as an MD candidate at Columbia’s College of Physicians and Surgeons, he credits both the Columbia curriculum and the advising he received at GS with preparing him for medical school.

“The intensity and rigor of the academic program, the support and resources, the students—everything was at a completely different level than what I was expecting, but rather than discourage or daunt me, it only pushed me and helped me to work on my weaknesses, so that by the time I got to medical school, I was ready,” he recalls. “I was very austere coming from the military and was succinct and direct when asked questions. A workshop from the premedical advising team completely changed the way that I interviewed by helping me learn how to express myself and articulate my thoughts. Retrospectively, I may have been able to obtain interviews at medical schools but I doubt they would’ve accepted me if I would’ve continued to interview in the way that I was accustomed.”

Reflecting on his career options and his experiences after graduation, which include studying Arabic and conducting research in Egypt as well as working for the Qatar Museums Authority in Doha, Minnis espouses a similar sentiment. “If you had told me in 2007 that I’d be at Yale Law School, I’d have laughed in your face,” he says. “I’m amazed at the opportunities I have right now that GS helped me to get.”

As the locus of the transition between military service and civilian life, GS marks a crucial period in the lives of veterans. As an incubator for academic and professional development—whether fostering an interest first kindled during military service, introducing new intellectual currents, or providing services such as advising, academic support, and career counseling—GS exemplifies what undergraduate education can accomplish.

“It’s been interesting to see the different conversations that happen among veterans and how they change as someone’s exposure to the academy changes,” King says. “You can really tell someone in their first semester from someone who’s been here. That’s one of the first things we tell new students; ‘You’ve got so many books to read.’”

“I think that general broadening of viewpoints is one of the most important things about GS. I’ve been exposed to so many different ideas, and so many possible options for the future.”

Spotlight on James J. Valentini Dean of Columbia College and Vice President for Undergraduate Education

James J. Valentini
Dean of Columbia College and Vice President for Undergraduate Education

When I was growing up,” recalled James J. Valentini, Dean of Columbia College and Vice President for Undergraduate Education, “if someone said, ‘One day, you’ll be dean of an Ivy League school,’ I would have asked, ‘What’s an Ivy League school?’”

Born and raised in the Appalachian town of Laf ferty, Ohio, which the 2010 census reported as having a population of 304, it was more probable that Valentini would have headed to a coal mine than to college as a young man. His father, a radio operator for the Ohio Department of Transportation, did not graduate from high school. His mother, a homemaker, did, but her education terminated there. It was their examples of hard work that inspired Valentini to excel as a student. After earning his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the University of Pittsburgh, he went on to earn a master’s at the University of Chicago and a doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley.

Valentini conducted postdoctoral work at Harvard University, where he was a researcher at Los Alamos National Laboratory, and a professor at University of California, Irvine before relocating to New York in 1990 to join the faculty of Columbia’s Department of Chemistry, where he focused his research on chemical reaction dynamics and the spectroscopy of molecular transients.

Throughout his tenure at Columbia, Valentini served not only on various committees, but also as chair of the chemistry department and as the department’s director of undergraduate studies. His upbeat tone of voice as he talks about teaching and interacting with students illustrates his passion for pedagogy. Moreover, when he discusses his current position as dean of Columbia College, he demonstrates an excitement about leading the College at a time when it is flourishing and the University, in his words, “is at a moment of particular prominence, recognition, and excellence.”

“We are preparing students for a world that neither we nor they can imagine,” he says. “Having students from throughout the globe, with every kind of perspective, background, interest, and expectation—and having four different undergraduate schools—enables that, since everyone interacts with everyone else. They learn as much from one another as they do from their instructors, and this is important for enhancing their lives.”

Valentini explains that his own story, with its modest start, is his source for relating to the diversity of students at Columbia, which is evidenced by the fact that since his time as a professor, Valentini has been a champion of GS and its students.

Valentini concludes pedagogical work with preparing him for medical school. “If you had told me in 2007 that I’d be at Yale Law School, I’d have laughed in your face,” he says. “I’m amazed at the opportunities I have right now that GS helped me to get.”

As the locus of the transition between military service and civilian life, GS marks a crucial period in the lives of veterans. As an incubator for academic and professional development—whether fostering an interest first kindled during military service, introducing new intellectual currents, or providing services such as advising, academic support, and career counseling—GS exemplifies what undergraduate education can accomplish.

“It’s been interesting to see the different conversations that happen among veterans and how they change as someone’s exposure to the academy changes,” King says. “You can really tell someone in their first semester from someone who’s been here. That’s one of the first things we tell new students: ‘You’ve got so many books to read.’”

“I think that general broadening of viewpoints is one of the most important things about GS. I’ve been exposed to so many different ideas, and so many possible options for the future.”

Valentini’s story is evidence of the broad perspective that a GS education can accommodate. “I think that general broadening of viewpoints is one of the most important things about GS. I’ve been exposed to so many different ideas, and so many possible options for the future.”
Sicong (Ellen) Mo, left, and Denise Marte share some study time in Butler Library. Mo, a native of Beijing, graduated with two bachelor’s degrees in May as part of the second class of students in the new Joint Bachelor’s Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong and Columbia University. Marte completed her Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Certificate in May. She is one of 37 graduates of the Postbac Premed Program who took advantage of GS’s linkage application agreements. She matriculated at Brown University’s Warren Alpert Medical School this fall.

PHOTO: ALAN ORLING
Thanks to our supportive alumni, the Annual Fund raised $1,053,646 from 1,726 gifts for fiscal year 2015. We were thrilled to set another record and to surpass $1 million for the second consecutive year. This year, we continued our momentum on Giving Day, October 21, when alumni, friends, and students raised more than $233,000.

By Allison Scola

At her Commencement ceremony in 1997, Allison Fillmore Magliocco was overwhelmed with gratitude. She remembers feeling grateful for having had the opportunity to study the great works of literature, art, and music; for instruction and guidance from renowned professors; and for the freedom to learn at Columbia as an adult student. When she heard GS Dean Gillian Lindt confer her degree, granting her with “the rights, responsibilities, and privileges, thereto attached,” the statement deeply struck her heart.

“It’s a responsibility. Take very seriously,” Magliocco says. “With all of the rights and privileges that we have as a result of a Columbia University education, we also have a responsibility. It would be very empty to have this kind of privileged education and not put it to good and share it with others.”

Magliocco has spent much of her adult life sharing the fruits of her success with others. After earning a degree in the sciences early in her life, she started her career in Denver, Colo., in E.F. Hutton’s analyst training program. Over the years, she built a notable résumé in asset management with E.F. Hutton, Fidelity Investments, and PaineWebber; however, in 1994, she decided to take a leave of absence in order to attend Columbia and earn the education she aspired to have.

While at GS, Magliocco majored in comparative literature with a focus in Italian. She spent a summer studying in Scandiano, Italy with Professor Jo Ann Gay Castelli; she took Shakespeare with Professor James S. Shapiro; and she honed her critical thinking and writing skills. Her professors and fellow students challenged her to think differently. Ultimately, the experience enhanced her strengths. “As a young person, I didn’t have a support system guiding me through the college search and application process. I found myself trying to figure it out for myself,” Magliocco recalls. “Coming out the other end of [my Columbia education] … experiencing all of the ways it has changed my life and developed me into the woman I am today—my career changed, my connection to my Italian heritage changed, my sense of philanthropy changed, and my personal politics changed.”

After graduation, Sierra Global Management, a New York-based European long/short equity hedge fund, hired Magliocco because of her analyst background, coupled with her newly acquired Italian language skills, experience of having lived in Europe, and Columbia University degree. Eventually, she became a partner responsible for investor relations, executive marketing, and operational management. Her work in the hedge fund industry enabled her to participate in social-justice causes, specifically those that assist women and children in need. She served as the philanthropy committee chair of the international nonprofit 100 Women in Hedge Funds and a board member of High Water Women, and she was a president’s council member of the International Women’s Health Coalition.

“I’ve experienced poverty. I know what it feels like. My Ivy League degree gave me the confidence to transform that experience and give me the courage to look into the eyes of confused children and terrified women in dire situations and treat them with dignity. It enabled me to support them,” Magliocco says. In 2007, Magliocco’s years of experience led her to become a cofounder and managing partner of Monitor Capital, LLC, a broker-dealer specializing in private placements for hedge funds and private equities. Then, in 2011, when her younger sister faced a life-threatening illness, Magliocco again shuffled her priorities. She asked her partners to buy her out and she became her sister’s healthcare advocate.

The time away from the industry changed Magliocco’s life. Once her sister received a clean bill of health, instead of returning to the world of finance, Magliocco decided to focus on her life in order to support her husband Joseph and stepson Matthew and to give more to philanthropic causes. That led Magliocco to play a vital role in 2013 during Columbia Giving Day, when she and Joseph supported GS’s Yellow Ribbon Program fund and a matching donation.

“For those people who didn’t start their lives in privilege, education is still the path to upward mobility,” Magliocco states. “Because so much of my current life can be attributed to what I learned at Columbia, I understand the value of having this educational opportunity. If I could change the doubting voices in one student’s head, I know I will have been successful. The point is, giving back is a responsibility.”

By Allison Scola

The NY Metro Chapter of Bank of America’s Military Support and Assistance Group invited GS alumni and leadership to Yankee Stadium to celebrate the Veteran Associates Program, an initiative to recruit and hire veterans at Bank of America. Pictured from left to right are Director of Global Transaction Services Mark Carnevale, Yankees reliever Mariano Rivera, Dean Peter Yan, and Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers.

By Allison Scola

“Allison Fillmore Magliocco ’97

“It would be very empty to have this kind of privileged education and not put it to good and share it with others.”
Class Day 2015

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT

1. 2015 Class Day Speaker Christopher Hood ’91
2. The graduates process into the ceremony.
3. Kirsten Jardine waves to her family.
4. Dean Awn and Christina Gray
5. Class Day band leads the procession.
6. Valedictorian Lindsay Hadad
7. City University of Hong Kong, Associate Vice President, Global Services Office, Dr. David Cheng, Dean Awn, and Sicong (Ellie) Mo
8. Chris Mulligan was awarded the Alumni Key Award.
9. Substantive Andre King
10. Precious Frazier and Antonio Frederikhou
11. Lizzie Velarde and daughter Estella, with Provost John H. Coatsworth

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GRADUATION
POSTBAC PREMED CLASS DAY 2015

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT

1. Juliana Gamino, Professor Lise Hazen, and Emma Marquez
2. Dr. George Horwitz delivers the keynote address.
3. Postbac Program Director Andrea Sunshine presents the graduates.
4. Reuben Heyman-Kantor delivers the student speech.
5. Nick Ramsey is congratulated by Dean Chiu.
6. Ying Zhou with Assistant Dean Limary Carrasquillo
7. Denise Marte collects her scrubs with her family.
8. Premedical Association President Isaac Hughes and Senior Associate Dean Victoria Roner
9. Senior Assistant Dean Mike Allen with Matthew Wright and his mother
10. Jared Wise and family with Postbac Program Director Andrea Sunshine
11. Carly Ray receives her alumni pin from Ashley White-Stevenson '14.
Donna De Santis received a B.A. in ethnic studies and the United States. Several segments on which he worked for CBS News and 60 Minutes, coordinating and producing stories from Afghanistan, Iraq, Spain, and locations throughout the United States. Several segments on which he worked for 60 Minutes earned him Emmy, Peabody, and DuPont-Columbia University Alfred I. duPont Award. Reuben entered the Columbia Pre-MBA Program in spring 2014 and was on Dean’s List for the entirety of his enrollment. He was accepted via linkage to Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, where he enrolled in the fall.

Born in Pakistan, Amna Perez moved to the United States at the age of four and was accepted into St. Mary’s College, Maryland, where she majored in psychology. After graduating, she enrolled in the Columbia Postbac Premedical Program and graduated in 2015. She is now pursuing a medical degree at New York University, where she plans to continue her passion for improving the lives of underserved communities.

Born and raised in New York City, Stephanie graduated from Columbia University in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in economics after graduating, she broke from a strong family tradition of careers in finance in order to pursue her love of science and desire for a life in medicine. As a student in the Postbac Premedical Program, where she learned about being an orientation leader, peer advisor, and held leadership roles in the Premedical Association (PMA) and Surgery Club. In winter 2014, she served as a medical field clinic volunteer for VIDA (Volunteers in Disability and Protective Adventures), traveling to Nicaragua and Guatemala to help local doctors perform basic medical exams, take patient histories, and provide vaccinations and PEP smears. As a Postbac student, Stephanie volunteered in the emergency department at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s hospital and in the cardiothoracic surgery department at Columbia University Medical Center. Stephanie completed coursework for the preméd program in May 2014 and was preparing of medical school fair operations for the PMA during her application year.

Born in Lincoln, Austria, Dominik Kolj graduated from the University of Vienna with a degree in international traveling. He completed his B.A. in international studies at the University of Vienna and then enrolled in the Columbia University Student Family Network (CUFSN). Through her work with CUFSN, Amna strove to support an underserved segment of the GS community: students with spouses and children, who experience heavier demands on their time. Working with these organizations, she succeeded in making a difference in people’s lives, and she received the Spirit Award in recognition of her remarkable service. A GS Ambassador for General Scholarships, Amna graduated with a major in English and comparative literature. She has been accepted to the Ford Foundation Pre-MBA program, which provides guidance and resources to women who are interested to pursue an MBA degree.

Sicong (Ellen) Mo graduated from the Joint Bachelor’s Degree Program between the City College of New York and the University of Hong Kong and the School of General Studies. A mathematics major with a concentration in statistics, Sicong is a language and culture enthusiast. While at GS, she pursued her interests in financial markets and quantitative analysis both inside and outside of the classroom, serving as a teaching assistant for the courses Analysis and Optimization and Computational Linear Analysis. During her time at GS, Sicong spent her weekends and summers volunteering in local communities. Aside from academic and volunteer activities, she enjoys international traveling. Sicong is currently pursuing a career as a financial analyst at Morgan Stanley.

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Kaitlyn Gilliland took her first pre-ballet class at the age of four, and spent the next twelve years studying at the mosquito of her mother and grandmother, who founded the theatre. At 16, she moved to New York City to train with the School of American Ballet, where she received the Mae L. Wien Award for outstanding promise. From 2006 to 2011, Kaitlyn danced with the New York City Ballet as a member of the corps de ballet, but after several discouraging injuries, she decided to stop dancing to pursue her education. While at GS, Kaitlyn found her way back to dance, performing with the Columbia Ballet Collaborative and joining the faculty at the School of American Ballet. She recently appeared at the Joyce Theater and plans to teach summer master classes across the country. Undecided about the path she will eventually pursue—either in the field of psychology, with a specific focus on neuroscience, or the contrasting world of business—Kaitlyn is interested in connecting her future graduate studies with her passion for dance and the arts.

Molly Heller came to Columbia from Palos Verdes, Calif., where she was very active in both her school and community. She continued pursuing her passion at GS, where she directed the 121st Annual Varsity Show, an annual musical that celebrates life in Columbia. In addition, she wrote the lyrics for Kaitlyn Gilliland’s song, a new musical that was performed at Barnard College in Fall 2014. She is a graduate of the GS Joint Program with List College at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and she served for two years as president of the List College Student Council. Upon graduation, Molly received two degrees, one in modern Jewish studies and one in theatre and drama arts. With her cowriter, composer Fenanda Douglas-Schott, she revised Mad Madam Song. The revised version, now titled Fluff, premiered at the New York International Fringe Festival in summer 2015.

A native of China, Junjie Jiang had always dreamed of having a solid education that would foster her interest in service and leadership. As the top student in her area, Junjie was admitted to one of the most prestigious high schools in Shanghai, and consecutively won academic prizes and awards for public service and environmental protection. As a long-term community volunteer, she served as a minister in the student government and president of a student company. She came to Columbia as a visiting student, and fascinated by the liberal arts education the University offered, applied to GS and was accepted. She won a service award at the GS Student Leadership Awards, and is now pursuing East Asian Studies at Harvard University.

GS Class of 2015 Salutatorian Andrew King served as a military linguist in Afghanistan, brokering conversations between civilians and Afghan National Army officials. He completed his military service a week before starting classes at Columbia. During his time at GS, Andrew majored in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African studies, with a focus on language and culture. Contributing to a thriving veterans’ community, he volunteered with Team Rubicon for Superstorm Sandy relief efforts and actively served as a teaching assistant for the GS Student Leadership Awards. King is now pursuing East Asian Studies at Harvard University.

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Ivy League baseball champion Joey Falcone knows firsthand how it feels to succeed thanks to hard work. At 17 years old, after graduating from Bolton High School in Alexandria, La., Falcone enlisted in the military, believing it was the best option for his future. He had lost interest in academics, and, though he loved playing baseball as the school’s right fielder, he had not distinguished himself enough to gain the attention of any college teams.

In the military, Falcone was a Marine Corps combat medic, and he served tours of duty in Iraq in 2007 and 2008 and in Afghanistan in 2009. “It was nasty business,” he said about his experience as a medic. “You see stuff you don’t want to exist.”

After six years in the military, Falcone was discharged and again stood at a crossroads, deciding his next path in life. He arrived at two answers: go to college and play baseball. Falcone’s love of the game began at a young age. His father, Peter Falcone, played in the major leagues for ten years, pitching for the Giants, Mets, Cardinals, and Braves, and passed his affinity for baseball on to his son. Falcone said his passion for the national pastime grew stronger toward the end of his military service. “My desire to play and give it a shot never left me,” he said. Having underperformed academically in high school, he had difficulty finding a college baseball team that would recruit him. So, looking to strengthen his portfolio, Falcone enrolled at College of Staten Island where he could play baseball while improving his grades. His plan worked. At Staten Island, he bolstered his grades and his game, and eventually he applied to and was accepted to GS.

He matriculated in spring 2012. During his first semester, Falcone approached the Lions’ head coach Brett Boretti about joining the Columbia baseball team. Boretti’s decision to add Falcone’s bat paid dividends. The next season, he helped the Lions win their second Ivy League championship in six years, and he was voted to the All-Ivy second team. During his career as an outfielder and designated hitter for Columbia, Falcone helped lead the team to three consecutive Ivy League titles and a strong showing in the 2015 NCAA tournament. In 2015 he was a unanimous choice for the All-Ivy first team, and was also named second-team All-America—the first Columbia player to receive that honor since 1984.

Meanwhile, off the field, Falcone applied his military training, balancing the demands of Columbia’s academic workload and his athletic schedule to graduate with a degree in history. In early summer 2015, soon after graduating, Falcone signed a minor-league contract with the New York Yankees, with whom he will pursue his goal of playing professional baseball.
Craig Wilson ’95

What work have you been doing with the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA)?

I am a new member of the GSAA Communication Committee. I’m always eager to stay connected to Columbia and GS, so this affords me a good opportunity to do just that, as well as meet other alumni. As for the work, I have contributed to the weekly posts found on the GSAA LinkedIn site that highlights and links alumni to information and resources that they may find valuable in their professional lives.

What drives you to contribute to the GS alumni community?

Simply stated, GS changed my life. Like other GS alumni, I had pursued other passions in my twenties. In my case, it was television news. Since graduation, I've been fortunate to be asked to participate in various GS panels or workshops over the years. I always appreciate the warm greeting I receive from Dean Aven. But it is my interaction with current GS students—whether it be at a networking workshop or speaking to a small group about journalism—that is the most rewarding for me. The questions are always smart and sharp.

What are you currently doing career-wise? Where do you work and what do you do?

I am fortunate to have returned to my passion: television news. Since graduation, in 1995, I have worked for CBS News as a producer, writer, and editor. I've covered nearly all the great and dreadful events of the last two decades. I gave up my staff job a few years ago, which allowed me a more flexible schedule and time with my wife and two children. Still, I’m fortunate to be an in-demand freelancer who produces the weekly “Eye Opener” for CBS This Morning Saturday, writes the news for Charles Osgood on CBS Sunday Morning, and acts as a backup writer on the CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley.

What do you do for fun in your free time?

I'm Canadian, so I depend on snow for a lot of my fun. I love downhill ski as much as possible, and wherever possible. My favorite escape is to ski the powder in Alta, Utah, or make a run home to ski the slopes in Banff National Park in my home province, Alberta.

What is your favorite Columbia GS memory?

My favorite GS memory actually happened a few years ago, which allowed me a more central role. It was painted as an immediate reaction to the Nazis' devastating casual bombing practice during the Spanish Civil War. I was struck by my realization of the moment—the Balkan war—and my recognition of the work. I would have known neither had it not been that I was required to study art history to complete my European history degree. I credit Columbia for that—and changing my life.

What is your favorite Columbia GS graduate?

Simply put, I do not have a favorite Columbia GS graduate. Everyone I have met is passionate, driven, and a positive force for change in our world. I am most impressed by those who use their education to make a significant impact on the world in a way that is both meaningful and sustainable.

Where do you work and what do you do?

Since GSAA's inauguration in 2014, more than 800 alumni have attended GS events, and more than 120 volunteers have participated in GS programs and committees. The new organization has solidified its bylaws, and the Communications Committee will reveal a redesign of the GS alumni website—with changes intended to make it a center of alumni news and information—in the months ahead.

Columbia Alumni Benefits

There are more than 320,000 Columbia alumni worldwide, and multiple ways to connect with this powerful network.

• CAA Arts Access

Exclusive events and discount tickets for performances with fellow Columbia alumni.

• CAA Travel Study Program

Share travel experiences with fellow alumni that are often enriched by the participation of Columbia faculty members.

• Campus Facilities

Take advantage of campus facilities including:

• Center for Career Education
• Dodge Fitness Center
• Alumni Center
• Faculty House
• Butler Library

Columbia Alumni Directory

• Join us in person at events worldwide
• Connect with others through the Columbia Alumni Directory
• Join the CAA and GS LinkedIn groups
• Participate in social media channels across the Internet

For more information regarding your alumni benefits, visit http://alumni.columbia.edu/alumni-discounts.
After a full day of lectures, tours, lunches, and receptions, on Saturday evening, May 30, alumni in attendance at this year’s all-school Reunion were energized. Beginning with Friday night’s recent alumni party at Stage 48 nightclub, 171 graduates of the School of General Studies had gathered together to celebrate their alma mater, reconnect with old friends, and network with new ones. Reunion Committee Chair Elizabeth Hollister ’07, along with a long list of volunteers including Yael Israel ’84, Adam Coslin ’96, and Luz Maria Lambert ’04, ’OSCE, hosted graduates from classes reaching as far back as 1950. Although particular attention was paid to those who graduated more than 50 years ago—affectionately recognized as the “Golden Owls”—such as Jules Wertheimer ’50, Nicholas Falcone Arena ’50, Grace Krumwiede ’52, John McLaughlin ’54, and Joyce Hurley ’58, alumni across the decades, such as Elaine Bernstein ’72, Catherine Scott ’84, Stephen Negron ’91, and Estelle Rabon ’97 were present.

The evening’s featured speakers talked about the transformative power of Columbia and the School of General Studies. Lizzie Valverde ’15, a creative writing major, recalled how encouragement from her professors and generous scholarship support made it possible for her to strive towards her personal best. Maurice Decaul ’12 reminisced about the community of fellow student-veterans he encountered after serving in Iraq and how his academic advisor, Phil Mondoma, coached him through challenging phases of his tenure. Both expressed their appreciation for the transformative power of GS.

To that end, on a set of easels, all alumni were invited to display cards that detailed the remarkable transformations they experienced through opportunities afforded them as a result of their Columbia educations.

During her remarks, however, General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA) Co-Chair Mason Beard ’04 reminded attendees that their GS story continues. She detailed the accomplishments that the new GSAA made during its first full year in existence, explaining that more than 800 alumni attended events and programs throughout the year, and more than 120 volunteered in various committees. Beard invited alumni to stay engaged with Columbia and GS, explaining that their participation will add value to their educations and careers, strengthen the greater community, and contribute to current students’ post-graduation successes.

See gs.columbia.edu/2015-reunion for the full Reunion 2015 recap.
Elaine Hochberg ‘82, ‘85BUS

From City Kid to Model Executive

When you shake Elaine Hochberg’s hand, you immediately realize why she has had a successful career in business: She possesses a firm grasp, and her eyes transmit a character that is at once pragmatic and warm-hearted. One of eight children, Hochberg grew up in a lower-middle-class, urban family. Her mother worked during the day and her father worked at night. “I’m a New York City kid,” Hochberg says proudly. “I lived in the projects and went to Stuyvesant High School.”

Having excelled in the third class of girls to enroll at one of New York City’s top public secondary schools, upon graduation she was awarded a United Federation of Teachers UFT scholarship. In fall 1975, Hochberg headed west to University of Wisconsin at Madison to pursue her passion for Latin and the classics in the Integrated Liberal Studies program. However, after battling fatal ice storms during her first year, she decided that Wisconsin was not for her. She returned home to New York, and consequently gave up her UFT scholarship.

A strategic thinker even at a young age, Hochberg sought other means to pursue her education during an era when financial aid was scarce. She learned that if she worked full time at Columbia University and took evening classes, she could cover her expenses. Soon thereafter, she landed a position as a librarian in the University computer center and enrolled at the School of General Studies. GS gave her the flexibility to work and study, and its vibrant atmosphere enabled her to pursue a new love: French language and literature.

Hochberg’s success, however, is not only limited to her career as a marketing executive. Since moving to Forest Laboratories in 1997—where, until a recent acquisition, she served as Chief Commercial Officer—her work contributed to almost two dozen product launches that resulted in billions of dollars of revenue. Products such as the antidepressants Celexa and Lexapro and the Alzheimer’s medication Namenda achieved sales of $1 billion. Her focus, competence, and acumen delivered results both professionally and personally.

Under her watch, sales of Children’s Advil doubled. “I’m a salesman at heart,” Hochberg says. “I understand where the other person is coming from, and because of my education, I am able to edit out, get to the point, and deliver results.”

Such self-assurance and tenacity has driven Hochberg’s 30-year career as a marketing executive. Since moving to Forest Laboratories in 1997—where, until a recent acquisition, she served as Chief Commercial Officer—her work contributed to almost two dozen product launches that resulted in billions of dollars of revenue. Such self-assurance and tenacity has driven Hochberg’s 30-year career as a marketing executive. Since moving to Forest Laboratories in 1997—where, until a recent acquisition, she served as Chief Commercial Officer—her work contributed to almost two dozen product launches that resulted in billions of dollars of revenue. Products such as the antidepressants Celexa and Lexapro and the Alzheimer’s medication Namenda achieved sales of $1 billion. Her focus, competence, and acumen delivered results both professionally and personally.

“I understand where the other person is coming from, and because of my education, I am able to edit out, get to the point, and deliver results.”

Elaine Hochberg

Corporation, where over the next six years she adeptly rose through the ranks. In 1991, after joining Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories in St. Davids, Penn., as a senior product manager, Hochberg led the initiative to convert Children’s Advil from a prescription medication to an over-the-counter product. The couple raised two children who have excelled themselves. “Your other person is coming from, and because of my education, I am able to edit out, get to the point, and deliver results.”

“I’m a salesman at heart,” Hochberg says. “I understand where the other person is coming from, and because of my education, I am able to edit out, get to the point, and deliver results.”

Elaine Hochberg

By Allison Scola

Rise Up / Give back

By Robert Ast ’08

“Growing up in Brooklyn, I wasn’t trained to become a physician,” Trevor Dixon ’99PBPM notes. “This was during the drug epidemic in the late ’80s/early ’90s. About 90 percent of my friends from those days are either locked up or dead, and these were bright kids.”

Born in Jamaica and raised in East Flatbush, he credits a neighborhood mentor, a music store owner named Witty, with helping him to avoid a similar fate. “He said, ‘You don’t really belong here. I see more in you,’” Dixon recalls.

He went on to earn an associate’s degree in chemistry from New York Technical College and then a bachelor’s degree in ultrasound technology from SUNY Downstate, all while working full time, first at a bakery and then at Consolidated Edison. When he was nearing graduation, another mentor, the late Professor Jacqueline Jakway, encouraged him to apply to the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program.

“She saw my enthusiasm about wanting to learn more,” she says. “She said, ‘I know you’ve been in Brooklyn your whole life, but maybe it’s time to get out of Brooklyn. There’s a wonderful program at Columbia, and the students who come out of it seem to do well in medical school.’”

Dixon applied to the program, and was accepted, attending classes at night while working as an ultrasound technician at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn. Dixon proved to be a different academic experience, from the large introductory classes with few African-American students to the intensive coursework and competitive atmosphere.

“It was a culture shock,” he says. “It was hard, but it helped me to see who I was and where I come from; you don’t really know where you come from until you go somewhere different.”

Dixon quickly adjusted, making some close friendships and, through his Postbac advisor, finding a mentor in Dr. Gerald Thomson, a professor and senior associate dean at Columbia’s College of Physicians and Surgeons, who helped him prepare for the medical-school application process. He earned his MD at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and, drawing upon his previous experience, began to specialize in emergency ultrasound medicine. Knowing the frustration of being a minority in programs, his own training is “the principal diagnostic tool used by trauma surgeons on unstable patients,” Dixon says.

Given the importance of mentorship in his own life and career, it is no surprise that Dixon has gravitated toward professional opportunities that allow him to serve as a teacher and mentor, with stints at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, the University of Missouri, and now Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, where he currently serves as the director of emergency ultrasound.

“As a doctor I go, that’s the job I choose to take,” he says. “It’s not about chasing the money; it’s about being in an academic center where I can teach residents and medical students.”

“I’m grateful for the opportunity Columbia provided. I’m humbled by this whole journey more than anything else.”

Dr. Trevor Dixon ’99PBPM

He has also embarked upon a comprehensive initiative to improve health care in Jamaica, first on his own and then through the JAHJAH Foundation (Jamaicans Abroad Helping Jamaica At Home), which he founded and now chairs. “My mother died in 2005, and I felt that I wanted to give back to Jamaica as a tribute,” he said.

Initially he traveled to Jamaica and worked with Kingston Public Hospital to train its staff on ultrasound technology, and then, in 2003, created the foundation to formalize and expand its efforts.

The foundation’s two primary areas of focus reflect Dixon’s priorities: bringing together healthcare professionals from the U.S., U.K., Canada, and Jamaica for conferences on ultrasound medicine and pediatric cancer and promoting access to medical services and education.

On the latter front, much of JAHJAH’s work strives to partner with the community and celebrate Jamaican culture—even down to its name, a nod to the Rastafarian term for God, “ Jah.”

From mounting healthcare clinics at dancehall parties to enlisting the support of reggae legends Beenie Man and Bounty Killer.

“It’s so natural for me to do this work with the JAHJAH Foundation,” Dixon says. “In Brooklyn, music is how I kept in contact with my culture, especially reggae music, which speaks about suffering and fighting against oppression.”

In broadening his experience, the Postbac Program helped Dixon on his path to activism and a career in medicine.

“One of the things that pushed me to be a physician was the underrepresentation of African-Americans,” Dixon says. “I thought that it would be important for patients to see someone who looks like them, and now that I’m in the hospital, I see how the patients look at me, and even if they don’t say it, I can sense the pride they feel. It’s humbling. “I’m grateful for the opportunity Columbia provided. I’m humbled by this whole journey more than anything else.”
When World War II ended, Dr. Seymour Koenig, who had been serving in the U.S. Navy for a year and a half, was given a choice to stay in the military or return to civilian life. Having started at Brooklyn College prior to his deployment, he opted to return home and take advantage of the G.I. Bill's educational benefits. Like thousands of new veterans, he inquired about matriculating at Columbia. Because he had excelled in mathematics at Brooklyn College, his first inclination was to apply to the School of Engineering; however, after reviewing the course offerings, which included building radios and designing transformers and motors, his impression was that he would find studying physics more stimulating.

"GS presented me with the freedom and flexibility to follow what my interests were, so I followed my curiosity," Koenig said.

While at GS, he took every mathematics course available at the University. After earning his Bachelor of Science in 1949, he subsequently pursued his master's at Columbia, and eventually earned a PhD in physics in 1952.

"It was an exciting time," Koenig said, recalling when he defended his thesis in Schermerhorn Hall. "Fifteen people were sitting on the committee, every one of whom went on to receive a Nobel Prize for their work."

Those scientists included Charles Townes, who is credited with inventing the laser—a unique expertise that culminated in co-authoring the 2005 book "The Real Androbots: Acculturation in the Folklore of the Navajo Eden: New Mexico, 1550-1750, Archaeology, Language, and Religion of the Peoples of the Southwest," which was published in 2005.

"I know this is a bit out of context," Koenig said, "but I have to mention that while working with the Watson Lab, I was able to explore my interest in tribal art such as rugs, pottery, and dolls. Over time, they accumulated into a 6' x 6' tapestry, "Entrance II," in 1964 for which I was featured in an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). "Entrance II" is part of MoMA's permanent collection."

"Things were very different when I started—the technology was so rudimentary," said Koenig, who was recently appointed to the Board of THC Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

U.S. Navy Veteran Seymour Koenig's '49, '52GSAS, Contributions to the 1955 Nobel Prize and the Dawn of the Computer Age

Robert Goldfarb '54 recently penned an article for The New York Times that focuses on the importance of veteran hiring initiatives. In the piece, Goldfarb demystifies issues corpora-
tions and nonprofits may face while hiring re-
tired service men and women. The article also offers advice to veterans seeking employment.
Shelly Rybak-Pearson ‘76 blended fact and fiction when she wrote The Bus to Jerusalem, published by Xlibris earlier this year. The story draws influence from Jewish mysticism and is based on true events lived by the author’s parents. Rybak-Pearson is the founder and director of the International Foundation for the Arts, Inc. A Costa Rican native of Lithuanian Jewish descent, she spearheaded a campaign to install a monument in Lithuania’s capital city, Vilnius, to commemorate the survivors of the Holocaust.

Herbert Kuhner ‘59 lives and works as a writer and translator in Vienna. After emigrating with his parents to the U.S. in 1935, he returned to Austria in 1963, and has subsequently been an advocate of the literature of Austrian-Jewish poetry.

Author Alan Winter’s ‘59 latest novel Inside Out and Else’s Son launching in 2018 is a study of love, forgiveness, and understanding the dark side of the human spirit. Winter’s previous book, Savior’s Day, was selected as a “Best Book of 2013” by Kirkus Reviews. Winter has also published two other novels, Sometime Else’s Son and Snowflakes in the Sahara.

Shelly Rybak-Pearson ‘76

John Seaman ‘66 recently published Memory and Moses: What Films Can Teach Us About Memory (2017) in which he is a Professor Emeritus of psychology and neuroscience and professor at Wesleyan University. His latest book shows how the treatment of memory in popular movies can shed new light on how human memory works.

1970s

Roger Pilon ‘71 (D. Phil., and his wife Julia Geran Pilon, Ph.D. have generously created a new fellowship program available exclusively to Columbia University School of General Studies students. The Roger Pilon Fellowship will annually award two qualified GS students who plan to pursue academic or legal careers $10,000 each.

Diane M. Falk ‘73 is a freelance writer-editor, researcher, and Ambassador for Peace with the Universal Peace Federation. She writes for scholarly publications with an emphasis on youth issues and the media, artist biographies, and arts and culture.

Two-time Oscar nominees and production designers Kristi Zea ‘74 was featured past July in an article published by The Journal News. Her most recent work as a “creator of environments” can be seen in the film The Intern, starring Anne Hathaway and Robert De Niro and the NBC network’s The American Odyssey. Additionally, Zea is currently working on a documentary about visual artist Elizabeth Murray.

Frances (Pettinelli) Galton ‘66, ’78GSAS holds a PhD in dramatic theory and criticism from CUNY where she taught for 20 years. Once she retired from teaching, she founded American Playwrights Theatre, a professional theater company in New York City, which she ran from 1997 to 2003. Since 2005, she has lived in Massachusetts, where she has lead a troupe of actors in their 80s through 90s, producing original works about seniors that have been presented around the country.

Robert Barasch

On November 16, Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger dedicated the Susan K. Feagin Welcome Center at the Columbia Alumni Center. “In recognition of her extraordinary accomplishments and exemplary service to the University according to a special Trustee resolution, Susan Feagin ‘74 has had a distinguished career at Columbia, most recently as Special Advisor to President Lee C. Bollinger, an American screenwriter in search of a screenplay. The two became connected by a fascination with 39 black and white photographs of spiritual places.

This past summer, Tom Bovo ’61 displayed a collection of photos titled “The Other Side of Summer” at 440 Gallery in Brooklyn, N.Y. The exhibit featured images Bovo captured in Santa Barbara, Calif. In a June article in Brooklyn Magazine, Bovo discusses his first photography series shot outside of New York City.

Garden City High School student Esteban Ortiz wrote an award-winning essay about his mother Cecilia Sacoto de Ortiz ’82 for the Hispanic Heritage Essay Contest sponsored by Chrysler and Calification. Her son’s essay describes how Sacoto de Ortiz inspires him despite health challenges he has faced. Esteban’s essay can be read at www.gnews.com.

New York City-based interdisciplinary musician, theatre artist, independent scholar and teaching artist Tamara Cacahour ’83 won a 2015 Bronx Council on the Arts BRIO grant in music composition. Her work, Queens Solo: A Study of Gender in Music for Strings and Harp, was presented at the International Alliance of Women in Music International Online Conference and performed at the Two Lands, Once Voice Festival in Rome, at Lefrak Concert Hall at Queens College, and under the auspices of the New York Composers Circle at the Leon and Normy Thalia Theater at Symphony Space.

In 2015, Cashour conducted the Orlando Legname’s chamber composition Vorticist d’etre at St. Peter’s Cloisters concert space.

Lauree Feldman ‘86 is a photographer, artist, writer, world traveler, and communications professional. She is a three-time grant recipient from the New York Foundation for the Arts. This year she self-published a book of photographs she took during her travels in Tibet. A beautiful coffee table book, Tibet contains more than 200 color photographs chronicling a personal journey through the country. Its contents are presented in four sections: narrative, people, art & architecture, and landscape. More at www.laureefeldman.com.

Tibet

In October, Dr. James Mabry was inaugurated as the fourth president of Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts. Mabry graduated from GS in 1981, after which he went on to the London School of Economics for a Master’s of Science and then returned to Columbia for a PhD in U.S. History. The position Mabry held prior to his presidency at Middlesex was Vice President of Academic Affairs at Mesa Community College in Mesa, Arizona.

Mabry’s path to GS began as a civilian employee of the U.S. Air Force in Germany, after which he received an associate degree from the University of Maryland in the six years between high school and matriculating at GS. He believes that his experience as a GS student was the first step of what later became his mission to provide opportunities for students in higher education.

“GS changed my life and put me on the path to where I am today,” Mabry said.

Mabry expressed his goals in an interview with The Beacon Citizen in December: “I want all community college students to have an opportunity to learn and succeed.” Mabry has spent most of his career in community colleges, first as a teacher. He said that he “wants higher education to be accessible and to create learning environments that are welcoming and promote success.”

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1980s

Architect and writer F.D. Rick Shands ’80, ’82 GSAPP currently resides in Abu Dhabi. Born and raised in New York City, Stockholm, London, Jeddah, Kuwait, and Malta, he drew upon his life experience when writing his first novel Frame 39. The recently published work follows John, a Swedish architect commissioned to design a center for world peace in Malta. Featuring eminent architect Leen van der Sluis and Jennifer, an American screenwriter in search of a screenplay, the two become connected by a fascination with 39 black and white photographs of spiritual places.

James Mabry ‘81, ’98GSAS Named President of Middlesex Community College

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“I am looking forward to a great new challenge knowing I am stepping in to lead a strong organization with many great people,” Mabry said.
1990s:
President of Kellog Europe Christopher Hood ’91, ’92BUS addressed the Class of 2013 at this year’s Class Day celebration. During his inspirational speech, Hood discussed his career path, starting as a successful chef and then, after attending Columbia GS and Business School, moving on to a career as an executive for Proctor and Gamble and eventually Katogu.

Award-winning film editor Maki Kamitusa ’93 recently edited the new Michael Mann film Blackhat starring Chris Hemsworth, Viola Davis, and Wang Leehom. A longtime editor, Kamitusa was born in Houston and raised in Hiroshima, Japan. In addition to studying at GS, she attended the NYU-Maurice Kanbar Institute of Film & Television at Tisch School of the Arts. Kamitusa has worked on more than 25 films.

Former editor-in-chief of The Owl (1992-2000), Melissa Bell ’93 wrote the libretto for the new stage musical Don and the Deep that premiered at New York’s Theatre East in June. Devil and the Deep is a reimagining of Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic Treasure Island.

Julia Bacha ’93 was awarded a 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship in film. Since graduating, Bacha has worked as a filmmaker and media strategist and as creative director at non-profit JustVision. Her award-winning documentary films such as 2004’s Control Room, 2006’s Encounter Point, and 2009’s Budrus have received accolades throughout the world for fostering constructive conversations about some of the most divisive issues of our times.

Mary Prendergast ’93, ’95SOA received a 2015 Academy Award nomination for best documentary feature for Finding Vivian Maier. Prendergast worked as an associate producer on this critically acclaimed film tour about a nun whose unknown cache of photographs earned her a posthumous reputation as an accomplished street photographer.

This summer, Alessandra Ciucci ’95 joined Columbia University Department of Music as an assistant professor of ethnomusicology. Prior to this appointment, Ciucci served as a full-time lecturer of ethnomusicology in the Northeastern University College of Arts, Media and Design. Ciucci received her PhD in music-ethnomusicology from CUNY Graduate Center and was a Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Columbia Department of Music from 2008-2010.

In May former high fashion model and now practicing psychiatrist Lauren Helm ’95PBPM, PS ’03 profiled a piece titled “Proof It’s Never Too Late To Pursue Your Calling” in O, The Oprah Magazine.

2000s:
Dr. Elizabeth V. Velilla ’02 was awarded the Latino Alumni Association of Columbia University’s Woman of the Year award as the youngest and first Latina associate dean and director of research operations at the United States West Point. Velilla, who was recognized for this honor at the 16th Annual El Regreso gala in March at Low Memorial Library, also serves as assistant professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. After earning her BA in psychology from GS, Velilla attended the Graduate Center of the City University of New York where she received her PhD in social/personality psychology.

Ariel Beery ’05, CEO of MobileOCT, won the Tel Aviv installment of Elevator World Tour, a program that gives entrepreneurs an opportunity to pitch their ideas to influential investors, while actually in the world’s most impressive elevators. One hundred Israeli startups had the opportunity to give an elevator pitch to investors in Tel Aviv’s Azrieli Center. Beery successfully proposed MobileOCT’s smartphone add-on device that helps doctors in developing countries diagnose cervical cancer early, garnering $100K for his company.

Gene Park ’07 runs Toneburst Audio, an audio engineering, sound editing, design, and Foley studio that specializes in mixing and designing sound for narrative and documentary films, advertising creative, and short-form content. Over the past five years, eleven of Park’s films have been shown at Sundance Film Festival; at this year’s DOC NYC festival, two films which Park mixed, comeback of Oshin of Oshin and Boshen, were shown.

Attorney Christopher Riano ’07 has been serving as the chair of the Columbia University Senate Rules Committee. In this capacity, he was instrumental in fostering through a landmark change in the University’s Rules of Conduct that protect the rights of students who are covering protest activity.

Danielle Aarons ’08 (née Klein) and husband Ari Aarons are excited to announce the birth of their son, Skyler Dean Aarons. Skyler was born on March 16 in New York City and was 8 pounds 4 ounces and 21 inches.

No Place for a Lady

2010s:
Mako Kamitusa ’92 was profiled in a piece titled “Proof It’s Never Too Late To Pursue Your Calling” in O, The Oprah Magazine.

Julia Velilla ’11, ’12JRN received accolades throughout the world for her film Encounter Point, which followed a Palestinian teenager struggling to reclaim his home in East Jerusalem from Israeli settlers, won the Homeland Award. Her TED talk “Pay Attention to Nonviolence,” was selected as one of the best talks of 2011 and has been viewed by over half a million people worldwide.

Lukas Huffman ’11, ’12JRN was awarded an article that appeared on Vex. The article details Buckwalter’s coverage of the Khairlanji massacre, a vicious crime that involved the rape and murder of a mother and her daughter and two sons in September 2006. Buckwalter is currently a news producer at France 2 television in Washington, D.C.

Lucas Hoffman ’11 is a film director working in Brooklyn NY. Earlier this year he was interviewed by The Inertia regarding his career and latest film, When the Ocean Met the Sky, which he directed and cowrote. The film about three estranged brothers has won several awards on the festival circuit. Prior to attending GS, Hoffman spent ten years as a professional snowboarder. He is currently working on a feature film about a female snowboarder.

In fall 2015, at the height of the Ebola crisis, Dr. Neil Shahrestani ’11 was interviewed on CNBC discussing stocks for biotech companies that were developing drugs to fight the deadly virus. Shahrestani is now chief investment officer of Aravan Capital in Dallas, Texas, a longshort equity healthcare hedge fund that he cofounded.
Ryan Kendall ‘14 Featured in Speak Now

In 2010, Ryan Kendall ‘14 was a key witness in Hollingsworth v. Perry, the federal trial that challenged California’s Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage. Kendall’s testimony during the intense, 13-day trial included recounting the trauma he experienced as a teenager from having undergone conversion therapy, a discredited process that claims to change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. His contributions to building the case against Proposition 8 are now featured in a new book by NYU Law Professor Kenji Yoshino, Speak Now: Marriage Equality on Trial. The Story of Hollingsworth v. Perry (Crown Publishers).

Participating in Hollingsworth v. Perry instilled in Kendall the confidence to apply to GS and complete his undergraduate degree. Today, Kendall is a candidate for a Juris Doctor in the Epstein Public Interest Law and Policy Program at UCLA School of Law.

In April, Brenda Jackson, ‘12

In August, Miguel Morel, ‘12 and Kyle Riggle ‘12 were featured in Pennsylvania’s Daily Local News for their work as General Manager and CEO, respectively, of Orth Cleaners. The two have set out to revolutionize the clothing cleaning business by putting customer service at the center of its suburban Philadelphia-area enterprise. Along with a sister brand, they purchased Orth in October 2014, and since taking over operations in February, they have used mobile technologies and an environmentally-driven mission to overhaul the business, to name just a few improvements.

In late 2015, Fadel Friedlander-Fulkerson ‘14 enrolled at New York Law School with scholarship support. The 59-year-old former opera singer and radio broadcaster completed G3 in 2014 after a 30-year break from her first four years of school in the 1980s.

In March, The New York Times reviewed guitarist Jonathan “Yonatan” Gat’s ‘14 performance at Union Pool in Brooklyn, N.Y. Gat’s latest album, Director, on the label Joyful Noise was released earlier this year. The record of 11 punk-inspired, improvisational, psychedelic pieces was recorded in less than three days. Gat has been presenting concerts in the U.S. and internationally.

In early 2015, Elizabeth Walsh ‘14 was one of 40 U.S. recipients awarded the prestigious Gates Cambridge Scholarship, full-tuition scholarship to the University of Cambridge. She will use the grant to complete a Master of Philosophy in social anthropology.

Born in Addis, Ethiopia, Atiti Worku ‘14 is a former model and Miss Ethiopia working to transform our conception of the word “beauty.” Her TED talk entitled “Looks Aren’t Everything, Believe Me, I’m a Model” is one of TED’s 20 most popular talks. It addresses society’s biases on benefits of beauty.

In February, Russell was featured as Self magazine’s cover story.

Recording artist and performer Johnathan Celestin ‘13 released “Be-You-tiful,” a music video about self-empowerment with an anti-bullying message. In addition to the video, Celestin called upon fans of his music to create their own “My Own Be-You-tiful” messages. Watch Celestin’s “Be-You-tiful” video along with other songs on YouTube. More at JonathanCelestin.com.

In 2015, Gerald Jackson ‘13 lends five Aelfie Films, an independent film company that focuses on music videos, promotional videos, film shorts, and motion pictures based in Jacksonville, Fla. Jackson is currently distributing the feature film Truly Everlasting, based on a novel by Brenda Jackson, and this year he began production for a new film titled Missy’s Musical Maudventure, which is currently in post-production.

GIVE TODAY AT GS.COLUMBIA.EDU/GIVE

“...It’s not only what you learn inside the classroom, but also the experiences along the way—Columbia transforms you…”

– Aries Dela Cruz ‘09GS, Anthropology Major

ILLUMINATE CHANGE
On Giving Day, October 21, 2015, Dean of Students Tom Harford baited alumni, students, and colleagues with a game of chance. The second annual Drench the Dean event whetted the interest of many who hoped to leave him soaked and push GS ahead in the day’s fundraising efforts. Both succeeded: Dean Harford left the afternoon all wet, and GS raised $233,000 for student scholarships during Giving Day.