

# THE OWL

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES



**Introducing New GS Dean  
Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90**

**Offering More Than Access,  
PALS Equates to Success**

**The Inspirational Journey  
of Dr. Hua Yu '83**

2017-2018

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# LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear GS Alumni and Friends,

I have just finished my first eight months as dean of this extraordinary college, Columbia University School of General Studies. In this short time, I welcomed to Columbia the spring 2018 entering class, inaugurated GS's newest Dual BA program (with Trinity College Dublin), hosted nearly 20 colleges and universities to discuss new approaches to transition for service members and veterans in partnership with the Department of Defense under the auspices of the Center for Veteran Transition and Integration, and celebrated graduation with the wonderfully accomplished class of 2018.

I have met so many talented and brilliant undergraduate and Postbac Premed students and alumni. I have never been more proud to call GS my alma mater and I am honored, as a member of the Columbia faculty, scholar, and alumna, to assume the mantle of GS leadership from the amazing Peter J. Awn.



If there is anything I have learned in my brief tenure as dean, it is that the GS community is strong and thriving, and that the strength of our community, the GS family, is vital for current and future generations of GSers. This strength is evident when I meet our peer advisors who take time out of their own busy lives to help their classmates succeed. It's also embodied in the time our alumni donate to mentor current students and provide networking and career opportunities, and in the financial support so many alumni provide in their philanthropy to GS. As I continue to meet as many students as possible, and as I travel the country and the world to meet as many alumni as possible, I look forward to getting to know you and working with you to build an even bigger, more vibrant GS community.

I hope you'll take a few minutes and get to know me (See article on page 10.). For those of you who have not connected with GS in a while, I hope you'll take the opportunity to reconnect. As you will read in this issue of *The Owl*, big things are happening, and we are poised to make incredible accomplishments in this new era of alumni leadership.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Rosen-Metsch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90  
Dean



*Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch is married to GS alumnus Benjamin Metsch '89. They have three daughters Morgan, Gabriella, and Sophie.*

## IN GENERAL

# New Trinity-Columbia Dual BA Program Will Foster Anglophone-European-American Perspective

By Nancy J. Brandwein

With the addition of a new international dual-degree program with Trinity College Dublin in 2018, Columbia University School of General Studies (GS) will have a trio of top-flight dual-degree programs in its portfolio, each with a different academic and geopolitical focus. The Dual BA Program between Trinity College Dublin and Columbia University joins GS's two previously launched international dual-degree partnerships with Sciences Po in France and the City University of Hong Kong. "Trinity is poised to become the leading Anglophone university in Europe, post Brexit," said Associate Dean of International Programs and Special Projects, Jessica Sarles-Dinsick, who is curating the new program. She added that having "an Anglophone perspective that is also very much a European perspective and then the added American perspective was really attractive to us."

The conversation that sparked the Trinity Dual BA Program began two and a half years ago when Trinity graduate and Columbia Executive

Vice President for the Arts and Sciences, David Madigan, floated the idea of approaching his Trinity contacts to gauge their interest in a partnership of this kind. Dean Emeritus Peter Awn noted that the enthusiasm on both sides of the Atlantic was strong from the beginning, and said, "Because students will be engaging in research jointly-supervised by faculty from both universities in their final year, the amount of collaboration necessary ... is quite high, and we're seeing an equal level of excitement about the transatlantic exchanges these joint supervisions will inspire."

Students will enter the program in Dublin, spending their first two years in one of four program areas: English studies, Middle Eastern and European languages and cultures, history, and European studies. Sarles-Dinsick said a key attraction of the Dual BA Program is that during their tenure at Trinity, students take a traditional, intensive European approach to one field of study. During their final two years at Columbia, they further explore their interests with a related major. Dean Awn said Irish students

"will find the Columbia Core particularly attractive, as it gives them an opportunity to explore passions and talents outside of their academic major..." adding that Trinity students will be "impressed by the strength of the Irish-American diaspora" in New York City.

Ireland, "land of saints and scholars," will also hold immense appeal for American students. Professor Darryl Jones, Trinity's Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, wrote in an email, "Trinity is the university of Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, and Samuel Beckett, and we like to think that the rich and often contradictory energies that contributed to those great writers still animates the spirit of the university." Beyond the appeal for students, however, this and other dual-degree programs foster global partnerships during an uneasy time. Professor Jones wrote, "Universities should be able to help solve the world's problems, or at least some of them. Isn't that partly why we exist? But no one university can do this alone. The great universities of the world need to work together."



PHOTO: ELLEN BARROSO

*A delegation from Trinity College Dublin along with administrative officers from Columbia University gathered in February to formally launch the new Dual BA Program between the two schools. The delegation from Trinity included President Patrick Prendergast, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Darryl Jones, Vice President for Global Relations Juliette Hussey, Dual BA Program Director Zuleika Rodgers, and others.*

**The new Dual BA Program between Trinity College Dublin and Columbia University spans two continents and two cosmopolitan cities, offering students the opportunity to enhance their global outlook and develop their language skills and communication abilities to a high level.**



The bracelets pictured were created by participants of **Crafting for a Cause: A Wellness Initiative**, a student organization within the Columbia Premedical Association established to provide premed students with a safe space to unwind through making jewelry together. Participants also engage in community outreach at organizations such as **The Dwelling Place**, a women's shelter in Midtown Manhattan, where they connect with residents through crafting.

## Academic Resource Center Offers Support to Tackle the Bumps in the Road

By Nancy J. Brandwein

"I don't know how I would have made it through that first semester without the Academic Resource Center (ARC)," said Adam Taylor, a biochemistry major taking premedical coursework in the School of General Studies. Taylor is a United States Marine Corps veteran who had been out of school since 2008, when he left University of Delaware. By his own admission, during his previous tenure as a college student, he did not have a great track record. So, during his first semester at GS when he was feeling overwhelmed by the demands of academic and family life—he had a two-year-old at home—Taylor went twice a week to the general chemistry study group and also attended peer tutoring sessions. He graduated in May with a 3.84 GPA.

The ARC plays a crucial role for GS students like Taylor, who matriculate with unique educational and life experiences. With the help of the center, they learn to apply the skills they have cultivated outside the academy to the Columbia classroom setting. Today, in addition to traditional tutoring in math, science, foreign languages, and economics, the 20-year-old ARC provides a full suite of programs and services designed to support GS students in transitioning to campus and achieving academic excellence.

One new program, launched in 2015, is Reading and Argument Coaching. ARC Director Sara Remedios says, "There is a

huge amount of reading assigned here, and understanding how to approach that reading critically and efficiently is a learned skill." Coaching gives students a place to develop new reading strategies and talk out complex ideas in preparation for class discussions and writing assignments.

Whether a student just came out of AP classes or spent six years as a performer, Remedios hopes they will visit the ARC during their years at GS. "Our belief,"

Remedios says, "...is that support is not remedial. Every student should be asking for help; it's an expected part of how the university works." Chances are they will be getting help from students who have been in their shoes, such as Adam Taylor, who acted as a tutor through his graduation. Remedios says, "Our strongest tutors once came in for tutoring themselves." This positive feedback loop of tutees and tutors is the biggest endorsement of ARC's vital contribution to GS students' success.



Associate Dean of Students and Director of Academic and Learning Initiatives Sara Remedios counsels student Sondra Woodruff. Above: Math tutors Tamila Pashae Alamdari and Ronald Telemarque lead a study group.



PHOTOS: ALEXANDRA LEVIN

# JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY BECOMES AN INCUBATOR FOR THE ARTS

By Nancy J. Brandwein

At Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), centuries-old sacred texts are the impetus for creating performance art and theater through a new artist-in-residence program.

For ten years, JTS has hosted a robust visual-artist-in-residence program run by renowned painter and sculptor Tobi Kahn, and this last fall, Rabbi Bronwen Mullin added a performance wing as the school's first rabbinic-artist-in-residence. Actors, poets, choreographers, and composers, among others, have been implored to join a burgeoning community of performance artists who are charged with finding inspiration from Jewish texts and lore. Co-facilitated by musician-in-residence Dr. Galeet Dardashti, the residency's first theme is "Outcry."

A third artist-in-residence, Jon Adam Ross, friend and collaborator of Rabbi Mullin, brings his In[heir]tance Project to JTS. Inspired by sacred texts and working in collaboration with local communities, Ross' performance pieces begin with participants' ideas and questions and end with a co-created script.

With this new extracurricular initiative, "JTS seeks to be on the cutting edge of contemporary ways to think about Judaism, and art is a very powerful tool to do that," says Anna Serviansky, Assistant Dean, List College.

Rabbi Mullen emphasizes that Outcry and the In[heir]tance Project aim "to demonstrate the inherent timelessness of our narratives and traditions. Their provocation and protest in the face of injustice are incredibly relevant today."

For instance, the In[heir]tance Project epitomizes the dialogue between history and modernity and post-modernity. A developing

theater piece curated by Ross, it explores the story of Exodus as a narrative of freedom. Ross says the Exodus story, "is a text of aspiration, of redemption. And for many of us, we feel society (and ourselves) waking up to oppression on a steadier basis in this very moment." While developing the piece, he worked separately with student participants at JTS and members of Exodus Transitional Community, a re-entry program that serves formerly incarcerated men and women in East Harlem. The two groups came together for the first time in November to share their work and interpretations. The work had its first public performance in March.

While the performance residencies explore Jewish themes, Tobi Kahn's visual arts workshops focus on the development of a visual vocabulary and art as self-expression for people who are not traditionally artists. Kahn is particularly gratified when workshop participants go on to explore art further. For example, one woman went on to pursue an MFA and a Christian chaplain who participated, now incorporates artistic creation into his chaplaincy.

It is likely the future will see joint exhibitions between the visual arts and performance residencies and collaborations with other Columbia programs, such as creative writing. Certainly, the opening of JTS's new performance space in fall 2019 is generating excitement for a full season of Jewish-themed art and performances.

*Note: All three programs are open to anyone in JTS, including General Studies-List College Dual degree students, and to all students who are taking Jewish studies. Contact Rabbi Bronwen Miller at brmullin@jtsa.edu for more information.*

*The In[heir]tance Project, a theater piece curated by Artist-In-Residence Jon Adam Ross, brought together JTS students with members of Exodus Transitional Community in East Harlem. The first public reading was in March.*

# Hands-On Research Inspires and Prepares Premedical Students

By Nancy J. Brandwein

In the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), life is on the edge and the margin for error is incredibly small. Nevertheless, in the Mount Sinai Hospital NICU, a Columbia Postbac Premed Program student is volunteering with doctors on a potentially lifesaving research project.

During her final semester of studying premedical sciences at Columbia, Madeline D'Agostino explored the effects of the conditions and equipment to which preterm infants are exposed in the NICU—from various isolettes to feeding tubes. D'Agostino's volunteer research associate position not only gave her access to an exclusive part of the hospital, but it also allowed her to be, as she explains, “actively involved in collecting samples, recording data, and interacting with patient families, nurses, and doctors in the NICU—all experiences that I am glad to have before I begin my medical education.”

Students in the Postbac Premed Program must conduct clinical work and research as part of their premedical preparation, and, fortunately, to fulfill their requirements, they have ample part-time opportunities through

**“Involvement and exposure is the most important thing.”**

*Andrew Sunshine, Director, Columbia Postbac Premed Program*



PHOTOS: IRENE TSAI

research associate programs at hospitals across the city from the Pediatric Research Associate Program at Mount Sinai, which was co-founded by a Postbac Premed alumnus, to the Columbia University Medical Center Emergency Department, Weill Cornell Medicine, Metropolitan Hospital Center, and others.

Research associate (RA) programs make students more competitive applicants for medical school and give them hands-on clinical and research experience. Director of the Postbac Premed Program Andrew Sunshine says, “These programs have served significant numbers of our students really well. Literally hundreds of our students have participated over the last 10 to 15 years.” And the benefits flow both ways. Sunshine explained that since these programs began in emergency departments during the 1980s, it has become clear that they have helped advance developments in clinical care, which has a lot to do with the availability of premedical students' contributions.

## Necessary and Pioneering

Sunshine said several Columbia Postbac Premed students at CUMC Emergency Department are helping researchers determine the effect of listening to classical music on senior citizen patients. Caroline Cole PBPM '17, during her application year, for example, was grateful for the months she spent volunteering part-time as an RA. A professional, Julliard-trained harpist, Cole says, “When I learned the study ... involved

music, I was elated! When enrolling patients, they often wanted to chat, and the study topic led to sharing our interests in music and getting to know each other, even if only briefly. I hope a stressful situation for these patients was made less so.” Cole says that while she gained many things from volunteering, not the least of which is that it likely led to her current job as a clinical study coordinator, “these interactions were the most meaningful.”

While both Cole's and D'Agostino's research experiences were in highly specialized environments, Sunshine points out that all RAs learn skills applicable to any branch of medicine. He notes, “It's more important for premeds to find a volunteer position that involves them and gives them an opportunity to be as close to medicine as possible. For an uncredentialed student ... [direct] involvement and exposure is the most important thing.”

**Required clinical work and research opportunities make Postbac Program students more competitive applicants for medical school, and importantly, it gives them hands-on experience. Additionally, the presence of Postbac students has given medical departments capable volunteers who have contributed to advanced developments in clinical care.**



# Nearly 20 Years of First-Generation Student Success

By Kathrin Havrilla

It starts as the classic story of the American Dream: Cesar Idarraga '18 was born in Colombia in a family of four that immigrated to the United States in 1985 in search of better opportunities for their two sons.

But after his parents divorced and his older brother was jailed, Idarraga's grades began to slip dramatically. His mother, working minimum wage factory jobs, tried to refocus him on college, but she couldn't articulate why it was the right choice, as no one in their family had ever attended.

Eventually, Idarraga shifted gears, enlisting in the U.S. Army and taking classes at a local community college, before dropping out to care for his mother after her diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. When she passed away, Idarraga desperately wanted to fulfill her dying wish for him to complete college, but he just couldn't afford it.

Soon, a phone call from Columbia University School of General Studies (GS) Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS) would change everything for the better. A math major who graduated in May, Idarraga found his foothold at Columbia.

"PALS provided me the opportunity to attend one of the best universities in the world at no cost. I've found an elite community of self-evaluation and self-integrity here, and I know I can overcome any struggle."

## Access + Support = Opportunity

Created at GS in 1999, PALS helps students just like Idarraga fulfill their goals of not just a college education, but a degree from one of the finest institutions in the world—tuition-free and with all of the academic and emotional support they'll need.

"There are lots of similar programs that provide the financial support," says Sara Remedios, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Academic and Learning Initiatives, who joined the GS administrative team in 2014. "But at PALS, we know that, as Harvard sociologist Anthony Jack has said, providing access without support is not opportunity. Our goal is to build a community that supports one another through the inevitable challenges of being a student at an Ivy League university—to really make GS feel like a home for our students."

While there is no "typical" PALS scholar, they do share a few things in common: They are first-generation college students from historically underrepresented groups at Columbia who have both high financial need and a history of high academic achievement.

"Each of our students is exceptional," says Remedios. "Whether they were born and raised here in the city, or they come from halfway across the world—and New York is a completely new place, they all bring incredible life experiences and passions to the table. Having them in our community makes it richer."

## Making the World a Better Place

Another strong component of PALS is the service work that students undertake.

"The idea of PALS is to pay forward opportunity," says Remedios. "We require 15 hours of leadership or service per semester, but students regularly double or



triple this commitment because they have such a strong passion for serving others.”

Even before they enroll in GS, PALS scholars are deeply involved, from working on the prison justice movement to developing sustainability initiatives to championing women’s rights.

One such example is Jena Diawara ’18, who came to the United States after high school from Mali in West Africa. After obtaining her associate’s degree in chemistry from Georgia Perimeter College, was thrilled to be accepted to GS and be selected for PALS.

“Coming from Mali, you don’t expect to go to an Ivy League school,” says Diawara. “After I was accepted, I began to think about all of the people just like me in Africa who don’t have the opportunity to go to school, and I wanted to do something to help.”

Diawara created Education Outreach, an academic training program that helps students in West Africa pass their high school and college entry exams through videos, class exercises, and guest speakers for added motivation.

“We went to Mali for the pilot program of Education Outreach and taught one year of math in one month,” says Diawara. “Thirty children attended every day, and they loved this opportunity for education so much that they cried when we had to leave.”

Since graduating from GS, Diawara is working on Education Outreach full-time, along with her team of Columbia students from across the University’s schools and colleges. Her goal is to build a permanent formation center in Mali so that the young students can reach the potential she knows a strong education can give them.

**“PALS has been an inspiration for me; it changed the way I see life. Success is about finding your full potential and helping others do the same. Every student here is dedicated to changing the world and making it better.”**

**Jena Diawara ’18**

## **Columbia Leading the Way Among Top Universities**

Thanks to increasing availability of higher education and a priority on growing diversity, the national college landscape is changing. But while the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that around 30 percent of all entering freshmen are first-generation college students, most elite universities across the United States still have a little catching up to do, with according to the *New York Times*, their first-generation first-year numbers coming in around 12-15%.

Columbia is unique among peer institutions, with first-generation student numbers that meet the national average—nearly double that of other elite schools. Thanks in part to programs like PALS, the School of General Studies can continue to fulfill its mission to offer a horizon of opportunities to non-traditional students from all backgrounds.

## **Supporting Passions; Realizing Dreams**

Randy Armas ’15 came to GS and PALS after growing up in Cuba. He left with his family for political reasons and reunited with family in Miami. After starting as a premed student at GS to follow in his father’s footsteps, Armas realized that his real love was in architecture, and opted to change majors with the support of PALS.

“Changing my degree to architecture meant adding on another year of school,” says Armas. “But I want to make something beautiful out of my life. I had the full support of the people in PALS, from the administrators to my fellow students, and I know now that I wouldn’t be where I am without their help and encouragement.”

These days, Armas is in his last year of obtaining a graduate degree in architecture at Columbia, where he uses space as a medium to foster relationships. He has spent the past two summers getting hands-on experience at architectural firms in Tokyo and Berlin, and hopes to stay in New York after graduating to start his career.

“When I started at Columbia, I felt like a bit of an outcast, but I found my family here through a group of students with movie-quality hardship stories who have transcended into courageous, intelligent, successful people. I’ve discovered all that I want to be and achieve in life, and I have PALS to thank for that.”

# **Constructive Conversation**

**By Allison Scola**

Just as the Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS) builds a bridge to Columbia for nontraditional students from all backgrounds, the PALS student scholars themselves set out to build a bridge among those with different political points of view. In response to the polarized climate leading up to and after the 2016 election, this past November 1 and 2, during a community art installation event called “What Divides Us? What Connects Us?,” undergraduates Shane Scott, Damian Hernandez, Jena Diawara, and Khalfani Mothudi, along with other PALS scholars, actively engaged students, faculty, staff, and other passersby in constructive conversation regarding topics such as criminal justice, gender, gun culture, economic and social class, LGBTQ issues, free speech, and more.

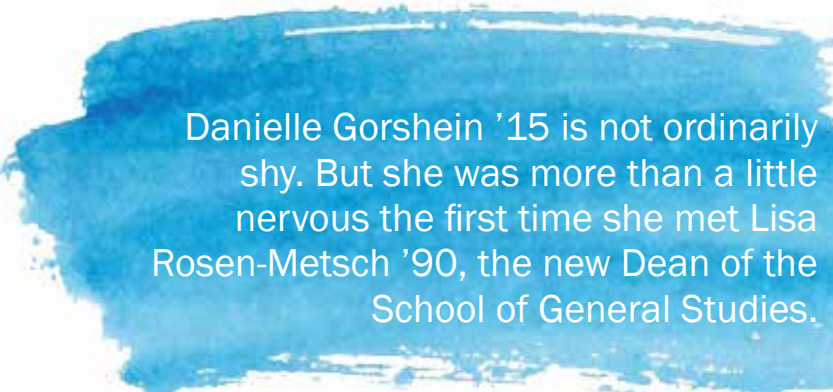
Self-elected participants passing through Dodge Plaza were invited to choose a symbolic brick from a pre-constructed wall and repurpose it to build a bridge, all while discussing their ideas about the chosen topic. “Only one person wasn’t willing to engage in conversation in a productive way,” Sara Remedios, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Academic and Learning Initiatives, said.

Meanwhile, the student-hosts had their perspectives challenged and widened, with criminal justice and gender being the most popular topics of discussion. At the conclusion of their dialogue, participants were invited to walk over “the bridge” to mark the moment.



A portrait of Lisa Rosen-Metsch, GS's New Dean. She is a woman with long dark hair, wearing glasses and a blue and purple patterned top. She is sitting in a wooden chair in a lecture hall, with rows of empty seats visible in the background. The text "GS's New Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 Motivates and Inspires" is overlaid on the image in large white font.

**GS's New Dean  
Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90  
Motivates  
and Inspires**



Danielle Gorshein '15 is not ordinarily shy. But she was more than a little nervous the first time she met Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, the new Dean of the School of General Studies.

By Alexander Gelfand  
Photos by Sara Fox

And that's understandable. When Gorshein encountered her in 2014, Rosen-Metsch was chair of the Department of Sociomedical Sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health. She was also an internationally renowned scholar whose research on HIV treatment and prevention had shaped federal policy on HIV/AIDS interventions, and changed the way health providers approached HIV testing and counseling.

"She has been a national leader in developing an understanding of how to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations, specifically people with HIV who are also drug users and abusers, in order to contain the epidemic, meet the health needs of that group, and work towards prevention," says Linda Fried, Dean of the Mailman School. And her influence has been felt in other areas, as well. In collaboration with the School of Social Work, for example, Rosen-Metsch established a program on criminal justice and public health that has helped open a national dialogue on incarceration as a public health challenge. As David Madigan, outgoing Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, puts it: "Lisa has the kind of scholarly chops that people respect."

Gorshein, meanwhile, was just entering her senior year in the joint degree program offered by GS and the Jewish Theological Seminary—the same joint program that Rosen-Metsch completed a quarter century earlier. And she was looking for a job; something that would satisfy both the requirements of her senior fellowship at JTS and her interest in healthcare.

Yet the thing that Gorshein remembers most vividly from their initial meeting was not how intimidating Rosen-Metsch was, but how warm and helpful she turned out to be.

"I was just astounded by how friendly and welcoming she was," Gorshein recalls. "Lisa took me under her wing and has served as a mentor to me ever since."

It's not unusual for world-class scholars to earn plaudits for their professional accomplishments, and Rosen-Metsch has garnered plenty. What may be less common, however, is for colleagues and students to hail them for being exceptionally decent, caring, and compassionate—qualities that are central to Rosen-Metsch's leadership style.

"She brings a high degree of altruism and commitment, and that matters to people—it motivates and inspires everybody," says Fried, who credits Rosen-Metsch with transforming her department at Mailman not only by strengthening the curriculum, but also by improving student and faculty mentoring, recruiting a new and highly diverse group of young scholars, and creating "the conditions in which everyone could flourish."

Rosen-Metsch herself emphasizes that her decades of research and teaching have all been aimed at making the world a better place—a mission whose origins she traces to her days as an undergraduate at GS. "My time as a Columbia student was truly transformative," she says, echoing a sentiment that she heard from every one of the GS students who interviewed her during the selection process.

Rosen-Metsch herself emphasizes that her decades of research and teaching have all been aimed at making the world a better place—a mission whose origins she traces to her days as an undergraduate at GS.



Rosen-Metsch grew up in Oceanside, Long Island, in a family of teachers—her father taught social studies in Canarsie, her mother science in Far Rockaway. She chose to attend GS because of its unique joint program with JTS, which allowed her to study sociology at Columbia and modern Jewish studies at List College. The program introduced her to social science research and brought her into contact with a number of prominent scholars, some of whom were affiliated with the department she would eventually chair at Mailman. (It also brought her into contact with her husband, Benjamin Metsch, '89.) And it afforded her the opportunity to work with AIDS researchers at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic—an experience that changed her life.

While researching barriers to HIV testing among gay men, Rosen-Metsch had the opportunity to see how concepts that she was learning about in the classroom, such as the impact of stigma and discrimination, played out in the real world. And being in New York City, a center of AIDS activism, opened her eyes to the power of social advocacy in public health, as she witnessed a grass-roots movement help turn HIV/AIDS from a fatal disease into a chronic one by driving key changes in government policy.

Inspired, Rosen-Metsch devoted her career to understanding the social determinants that drive inequities in healthcare, and developing interventions to address them.

Toward that end, she demonstrated the value of conducting on-site HIV testing at substance abuse programs—work that led the Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse to develop an HIV/AIDS awareness toolkit for substance use treatment providers. She proved that providing costly risk-reduction counseling to everyone who receives HIV testing does not, in fact, reduce sexually transmitted infections; and established that resources could be better spent getting people who were recently diagnosed with HIV into care.

Most recently, she spearheaded a project to develop a mobile HIV clinic targeted at substance abusers in low-income neighborhoods in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is largely fueled by injection drug use. “It’s a way of meeting people where they are,” says Rosen-Metsch, who points out that substance abusers are unlikely to seek help at traditional clinics. (Gorshein, who majored in Hispanic studies, helped translate interviews with study participants from Spanish into English, and ultimately co-authored a journal article on the project.)

Given her already full plate, Rosen-Metsch was not looking for a new job. But when Peter Awn announced that he would be stepping down as Dean, Rosen-Metsch approached Madigan to see if she could help with the transition. “As a GS alumna who loves this school, I went to see David to see if I could be on the search committee,” she says. Over the course of their conversation, however, Madigan began to wonder if Rosen-Metsch might be interested in throwing her own hat into the ring.

She was. And when the search committee that she had initially envisioned joining eventually interviewed her, it was obvious

that she had ended up on the right side of the table.

“She just blew us away,” says Madigan. “It was clear that we had the perfect person right in front of us.”

As a GS alumna, Rosen-Metsch understands where the School is headed and what it needs from its next Dean—from continuing to expand its joint programs and strengthening alumni relations, to addressing the housing and financial needs of current and future students. “My main job is to ensure that students for generations to come will continue to have the opportunity to engage in the education and experiences that GS has to offer,” she says.

But she also has a unique ability to connect with the GS student body—an ability that is rooted both in her intimate knowledge of the School, and in her fundamental warmth and humanity.

“She’d be a fabulous Dean at any school,” says Madigan. But because the student body at GS is so diverse, he adds, it’s especially important to have someone “who can connect with all kinds of people at all different stages of life—and Lisa can do that.”

Gorshein, who now works at a research firm here in New York City, agrees, and suggests that Rosen-Metsch will help build an even stronger sense of social cohesion on campus.

“Lisa’s warmth, and her consistent commitment to connecting people, will be the thread that weaves the fabric of the GS community together,” she says.

For her part, Rosen-Metsch is looking forward to advancing the mission of the college that has had such a powerful impact on her own life and career.

“There really is nothing like the School,” she says. “In and of itself, by its very nature, it is changing the world.”

**“She just blew us away. It was clear that we had the perfect person right in front of us.”**

**David Madigan,  
Executive Vice President  
for Arts and Sciences**

## Spotlight on David B. Madigan

### Outgoing Executive VP and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Professor of Statistics



PHOTO: JENNIFER PELLERITO

By Adrienne Anifant

academic departments and their faculty and 40 centers and institutes.

Although Madigan resigned from this administrative position, he will remain on the Columbia faculty as Professor of Statistics. Under his visionary leadership and commitment to shared governance, he helped to broaden the scope and depth of Arts and Sciences' teaching and research with progressive campaigns and innovative projects that are working to enhance global human welfare and expand diversity and equality across all platforms.

"I deeply believe this university is an extraordinary place with an incredible potential in the world and responsibility to do well by our amazing students," said Madigan.

One of Madigan's major priorities while Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences was to improve faculty diversity. "This is an imperative," said Madigan. "Without all kinds of diversity—diversity of ideas, diversity of backgrounds, diversity of ethnicity and race—we're stymied. A diversity of ideas is needed to solve big problems in the world and also to be effective in terms of educating our students." The University has committed 100 million dollars over the next five years to achieve this goal.

If Ireland is known for its great storytellers, Madigan is an expert in telling the stories within big data. In addition to Madigan's roles in administrative leadership, he is an award-winning professor of statistics, who has conducted numerous research studies in data science and statistics.

"It is the golden age for data," said Madigan. "Big data is the cutting edge. It's increasingly touching every academic discipline, so to have strength in data science is a key objective for Columbia." Graduating with a PhD in statistics from Trinity College Dublin, Madigan went on

Originally from the windswept midlands of Ireland, outgoing Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Statistics David Madigan is a long way from home. He was born in Athlone, the heart of Ireland, on the River Shannon beneath a sky full of tempestuous clouds—thick, gray, and looming in the morning, then poked with holes in the afternoon, filtering white sunlight onto fields of long, green grass.

"I'm not one of those people who ever figured out what I wanted to be. I didn't wake up when I was eight years old and decide I wanted to be a statistician," said Madigan. "I drifted into it."

His modesty belies Madigan's extraordinary distinguished career in academic leadership and teaching at one of the world's top-rated research universities and his work as a renowned data scientist credited with over 200 published articles in scholarly journals. In addition, Madigan held the position of Executive Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences from 2013 to August 2018. In this role, he and his fellow leaders were responsible for the governance of Columbia's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, which comprises 27

**DAVID B. MADIGAN**

**Faculty member since: 2007**

**Education:** BA, Trinity College Dublin; PhD, Trinity College Dublin

**Favorite place in the United States?**

Nantucket, Massachusetts

**Favorite place in the Ireland?**

Dingle in County Kerry, where I spent my childhood summers

**Who do you most admire in history or in the present and why?**

Gandhi for his extraordinary ability to accomplish things in a non-violent way.

**What is your favorite book?**

*The Hare with Amber Eyes*, by Edmund De Waal and *Essays* by Michel de Montaigne

**Fun Fact:** I love to watch snooker online. I am a big fan of Ronnie O'Sullivan.

to be a consultant statistician and data scientist for multiple corporations and the Federal Drug Administration. For the past 10 years he has focused on healthcare data, most recently working with the interdisciplinary collaborative Observational Health Data Sciences and Informatics to develop "methods that allow scientists to generate reliable evidence from large-scale patient data."

"Solving problems using data has always excited me in all areas. I love working in collaboration with disciplinary experts. That is what excites me—using data to actually solve problems that people care about in the world."

Madigan's proclivity for cooperation and working in collaboration with others towards a better humanity is the impetus for success in the various positions he has held.

"I like to be a part of the institution, to be part of the very fabric. To influence the direction it goes in."

# THE GENERAL VIEW



PHOTO: EILEEN BARROSO

A photograph of two young women sitting at a table with microphones, engaged in a conversation. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a white, textured sleeveless top and a necklace. The woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a white sleeveless top. They are both smiling and looking towards each other. In the foreground, there are water bottles and glasses on the table.

## Shedding Light on the GS Difference

Current students Steven Ballew, Raisa Flor, and recent graduate Justice Betty '18 (along with Estrella Verenice Castillo, not pictured) spoke about transitions, community, and the GS difference at the 2017 Alumni Reunion. The conversation informed alumni attendees about current student experiences—everything from dynamics between students in the classroom to engagement in campus activities and how GS is preparing undergraduates for after graduation from the moment they set foot on campus.

# GS ANNUAL FUND 2017

Last year, **1,677** donors contributed **\$936,126** to the GS Annual Fund, the primary fund for alumni giving. Gifts to the Annual Fund support General Studies and Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program student scholarships as well as contribute to scholarships for students in PALS and Yellow Ribbon Programs.



**\$2.2M**  
Peter J. Awn Scholarship Fund raised over \$2.2 million from 296 donors.

**Columbia Giving Day 2017**  
On October 18, 2017, the GS community raised **\$215,703**, which will go directly toward supporting scholarships for our students.



On October 18, 2017, alumni and students celebrated **Giving Day 2017** at Columbia University Club of New York in Midtown Manhattan.



**Leadership Society Giving Day Kickoff Event**  
The annual GS Leadership Society Giving Day Kickoff Event was held October 12, 2017 at the home of Rozanne Gooding Silverwood '17 and Mark Silverwood with remarks by Dean Awn as well as GS alumna and PALS scholar Tamila Pashae Alamdari '18.

*Did you know?*

## 2017-2018 SCHOLARSHIP CELEBRATION

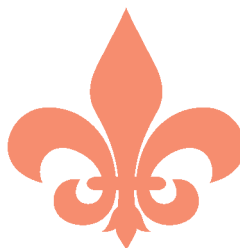
The 2017-2018 Scholarship Celebration was held on November 14, 2017 in the Low Memorial Library Rotunda. The evening celebrated student achievements and recognized the generous community of donors who support scholarships at GS.

Donors who contribute \$1,000 and more annually are recognized as members of the GS Leadership Society. In thanks for their generosity and commitment to the School, members of the GS Leadership Society receive special invitations and communications throughout the year as well as additional recognition on our annual donor roll. To participate, please email Skylar Failla, Leadership Gift Officer, at [s.failla@columbia.edu](mailto:s.failla@columbia.edu) or call 212-821-7492.





# LEADER AND SCHOLAR



GIVING



By Eric Butterman

Former Dean Caroline Bynum had a significant impact of the trajectory of GS in 1993 when she started the process of focusing GS's mission on its degree programs. Today, with her planned gift, she will ensure that GS students will be able to pursue a Columbia education.

Caroline Bynum, a former MacArthur Fellow, was dean just when the School of General Studies needed her leadership the most.

Caroline Bynum may be best known at Columbia for becoming the first woman appointed as University Professor in the school's history, but few may realize the effect she had briefly as dean of the School of General Studies from 1993 to 1994. Starting the process of separating the college division from the non-degree offerings, her initiatives ushered in a new era for GS and its place in Columbia's academic community.

And what did she do, just as hints of the move's success were starting to occur?

She walked away.

"I remember the president of the university saying when I was dean, 'You'll be president some day, too,'" Bynum recalls. "But I told him that being a professor was what I'd rather be. That's what I was hired to be in 1988, and that role with students was most important to me."

Without doubt, her credentials as an academic and career as an educator certainly supported that conviction. One of the top authorities on medieval history, she even won one of the most coveted prizes in the world, the genius grant known as The MacArthur Fellowship, holding it from 1986 to 1991. "I think my reaction to getting it is the same as it is for a lot of recipients," she says. "You question whether you deserve it and you feel guilt about how you can ever live up to the opportunity you've been given. It just leaves you humbled."

One of the reasons for the award is her authorship. Penning 10 books and garnering many accolades, she may be best known for *The Resurrection of the Body*, winner of the Phi Beta Kappa Ralph Waldo Emerson Prize. She was also recognized for her excellence in teaching when Columbia presented her with the Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching in 1997. "That one ranks up there in terms of any recognition I've ever received," says Bynum, who also served Columbia as the Associate Vice President of Undergraduate Education.

Today, Bynum is university professor emerita at Columbia and professor emerita of medieval European history for the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J. Enjoying a time when things have slowed down a bit, she looks at how well General Studies is doing today and is happy to think she may have had a part in it. But, Bynum offers, she always wants to be remembered as much for being a professor grateful to have worked with her students.

"The challenge we faced when I was dean above all was money for scholarships," she says. "This is still a challenge, but as the prominence has improved for GS, which is now very high nationally and in New York. It's definitely increased the donations coming in ... I think I was a good person for the dean position for what was going on at the time. But we are what we are. I was a professor."

# GRADUATION

# CLASS DAY 2017

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT



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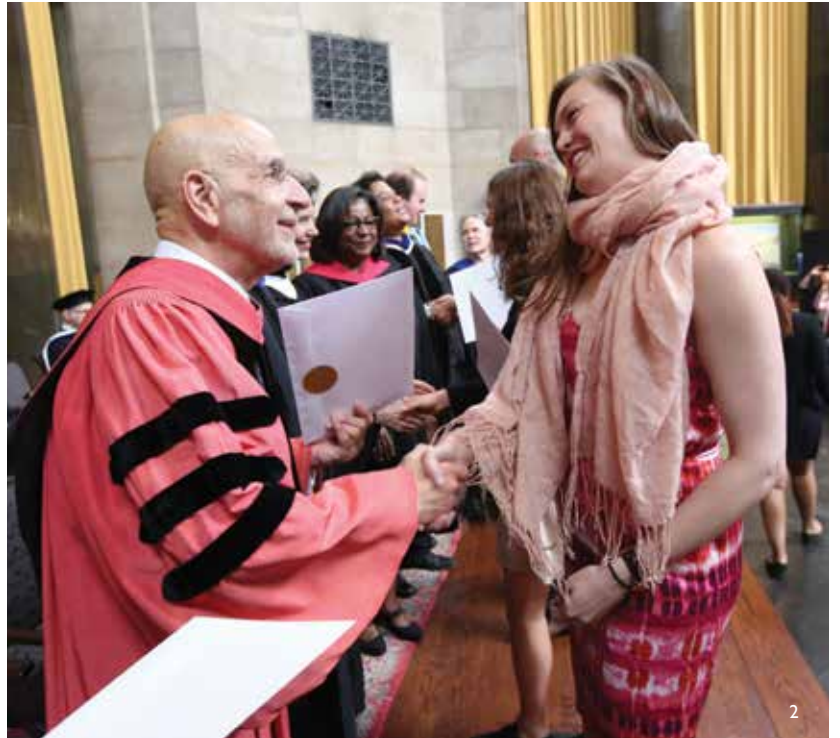


1. The graduates begin their procession on the Lerner ramp.
2. Class of 2017 Salutatorian Rozanne Gooding Silverwood addresses her fellow graduates.
3. Dean Peter J. Awn congratulates graduate Stephen O'Connell.
4. Graduates celebrate their achievement.
5. Graduates celebrate their day.
6. Class of 2017 Valedictorian Colin Valentini addresses his fellow graduates.
7. GS Dean Peter J. Awn addresses the Class of 2017.
8. Class Day Keynote Speaker Julia Bacha '03, Peabody Award-winning filmmaker, Guggenheim Fellow, addresses the Class of 2017 and their guests.
9. Jesse Dean '08 presents the Alumni Key Award to graduate Erin Giventer.



# POSTBAC PREMED CLASS DAY 2017

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT





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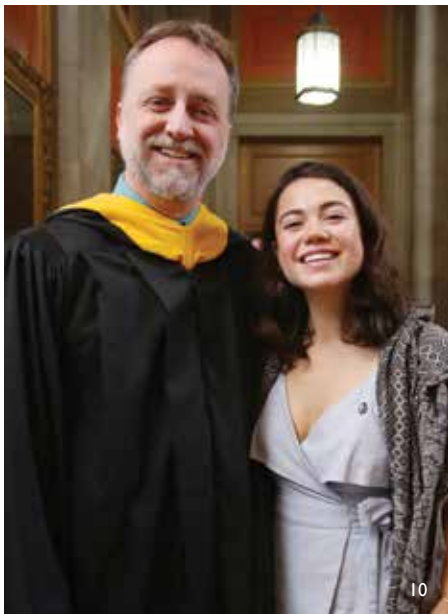
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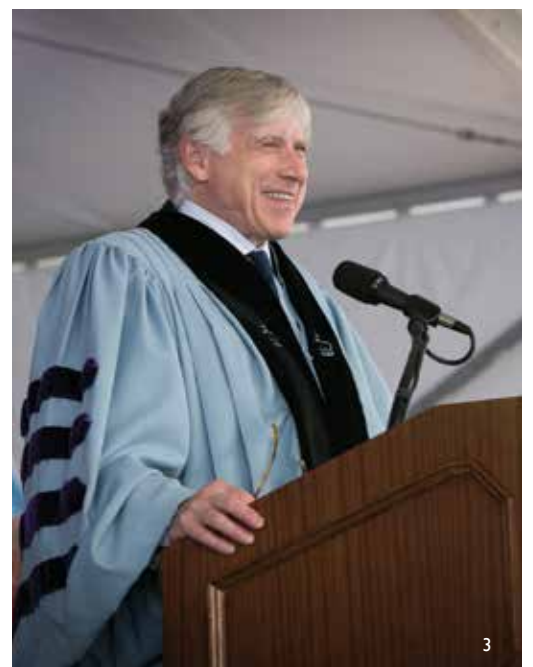
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1. Postbac Program Director Andrew Sunshine with graduate Caroline Cole.
2. Dean Peter J. Awn congratulates Tara Richter Smith.
3. Student speaker William "Billy" Buffington IV addresses his classmates.
4. Assistant Dean Limary Carrasquillo with graduate Paul Nagao and Katherine French.
5. Audience members cheer on the graduates' achievements.
6. Dr. Hilda Hutcherson delivers the keynote address.
7. Assistant Dean Limary Carrasquillo with graduate Patricia Chen.
8. Tamara Maswoswe shows off her new scrubs.
9. Julia Romano was proud to receive her scrubs.
10. Senior Assistant Dean Brian (Mike) Allen with graduate Emma Bethel.

# GRADUATION

# CLASS DAY 2018

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT





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1. GS graduates commemorate their achievement with Dean Rosen-Metsch.
2. GS Graduates celebrate their accomplishments.
3. Columbia University's 19th president, Lee C. Bollinger, regales GS graduates.
4. 2018 GS graduate, Shanna Polley, celebrates with her grandfather, Milton "Mikey" Meshirer, who graduated from the School of General Studies in 1954 after returning from the Korean War.
5. Tamila Pashaee rejoices moments after walking across the stage to receive her bachelor's degree.
6. GS Class Day Keynote Speaker, Sasha Cohen '16, Olympic medalist, U.S. Olympic Committee representative, addresses the Class of 2018 and their guests.
7. 2018 GS graduate and GSSC President, Samantha Demezieux, cheerfully embraces Dean Rosen-Metsch.
8. The graduation cap of Leyla Martinez reflects upon her GS story.
9. Marysol Yoo (GS Salutatorian) and Justice Betty (GS Valedictorian).

# POSTBAC PREMED CLASS DAY 2018

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT







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1. *Wafaa El-Sadr, Columbia University Professor, Dr. Mathilde Krim-amfAR Chair of Global Health, director of ICAP, delivers the keynote address.*
2. *Kingsley Cruickshank, Postbac Class of 2016 (left), Postbac graduate Stefanie LaGalia (center), and guest (right) celebrate Postbac Class Day.*
3. *Postbac Class Day Student Speaker, Chioma Iwelumo, address her classmates.*
4. *Elizabeth Basow receives her certificate from Dean Rosen-Metsch.*
5. *Postbac student, Ariana Farahani, and Columbia professor, Joseph Ulichny.*
6. *Kristyn Stolze embraces Dean Rosen-Metsch in celebration.*
7. *Michael Drasher and guests enjoy the reception after the Class Day ceremony.*
8. *Postbac graduates rejoice in their accomplishment.*
9. *Postbac graduates Meraash Mahajuodeen and Paige Lazar proudly collect their Columbia Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program scrubs.*



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# NEW GRAD NOTES 2017

## GS Bachelor of Arts Recipients



Raised by a single mother, [Vida Biggins](#) dropped out of school and began working at the age of 14, eventually building a successful career that included positions

at American Express and Tiffany & Co. In 2012, she completed her GED and enrolled at the State College of Florida, where she excelled academically and was elected as the president of both the Honor Society and the African American Student Union. In the spring semester of 2014, Vida transferred to GS and was awarded a PALS scholarship. She served as the multicultural affairs representative on the General Studies Student Council, as vice president of the Students of Color Alliance, and as a student partner with the Center for Career Education. Vida graduated *cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. She now works as a management consulting analyst with Accenture. Her long-term goal is to use her experience in consulting to influence the standard for corporate culture to be more inclusive—especially regarding women of color—and to make the case for more direct involvement in underserved communities as a corporate responsibility.



Born in North Korea, [Austin Hyeon](#) fled the country at the age of 12 to escape famine. Within two years, he was captured and repatriated by Chinese authorities, and by the age of

18 he had been imprisoned five times in four countries due to his status as a defector. Eventually, he escaped to South Korea, where he enrolled in middle school and worked hard to catch up after missing six years of schooling. Upon graduating, he spent two years studying at a bible college in New Zealand, after which he moved to the United States, where he attended a community college in Texas. Austin enrolled at GS in the spring of 2015 and served as president of the Koreans in General Studies

student group while continuing to volunteer with Durihana Mission, the organization which helped him escape to South Korea. A member of Phi Beta Kappa and recipient of the GS Service Award, Austin graduated with a degree in political science with a focus on international relations. He is currently working as a strategic advisor with the Human Rights Foundation.



After graduating from high school with honors one year early, [Oscar Alvarez](#) began his soccer career in Colombia and played for several years, eventually obtaining a contract within

Bogotá Fútbol Club. However, having gained perspective while recovering from several training injuries, he decided to take a step back from his career as an athlete. It soon became clear that Oscar valued higher education over professional sports. He enrolled at GS in 2013, where he developed a passion for finance. As a student, Oscar founded Columbia's Private Equity Group, co-founded Columbia Venture Partners - CVP, and helped start the Columbia University Undergraduate Committee on Global Thought. He also participated on Columbia's Ballroom Dancing Team. Additionally, during his time at Columbia, Oscar held numerous jobs. He worked in the office of U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat and as an investment banking analyst with Credit Suisse. He served as a teaching assistant in the Department of Statistics, for Columbia Business School's Private Equity Program, for Columbia Law School's Corporate Law and Policy Program, and for the Initiative for Policy Dialogue, Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz's think tank on international development. Oscar graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics-mathematics. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the GS Honor Society, and now works full-time as a technology investment banking analyst with Credit Suisse while he continues his education through Columbia's JD/MBA program.



Born in Maryland, [Likolani Brown](#) moved to New York City at the age of 16 to study at the School of American Ballet. Though she was accepted to several top-tier colleges

after completing high school, including both Harvard and Princeton, she chose instead to pursue a career in dance at the New York City Ballet (NYCB). During her first year in the corps de ballet, she enrolled at Fordham University, where she excelled academically, consistently receiving a dean scholarship for academic excellence while working 12-hour days, six days per week, with the NYCB. Likolani enrolled at GS in 2010. During her time at Columbia, she volunteered in the emergency department at Mount Sinai St. Luke's and served as a member of the NYCB Council on Diversity, which advises the School of American Ballet on ways to address issues, direct resources, and administer a student life program that supports dancers of color. Likolani was inducted into the GS Honor Society and Phi Beta Kappa and graduated *summa cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in biology. Likolani has retired from the NYCB and has been accepted to NYU School of Medicine with a full scholarship.



[Ajay Mehta](#) took an extended leave of absence from college in 2011, during which time he founded a technology startup called FamilyLeaf, with the mission of helping families

around the world stay in touch. The company was accepted into well-known incubator Y Combinator and named one of 2013's "Coolest College Startups" by *Inc. Magazine*. Later, he also worked as a freelance journalist, primarily writing about India and the internet, with published works in *New York Magazine* and *The Caravan Magazine*. Ajay enrolled at GS in 2014 and was inducted into the GS Honor Society. He graduated *magna cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in computer science and is now leading the U.S. expansion of Wealthsimple, a financial services company based in Canada.

## Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Graduates



**Emma Bethel**, a native of Bethesda, Md., graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with a Bachelor of Arts in international affairs in 2014.

During her time at Washington University, she served as a foreign relations intern in Israel for The Geneva Initiative. She also served as a sexual assault and rape crisis counselor and peer leader and interned at Planned Parenthood, experiences that prepared her for a position as the communication and outreach coordinator for NO MORE, a public awareness campaign aimed at ending sexual assault and domestic violence. Driven by a desire to work in women's healthcare and make a greater impact as a physician, Emma enrolled in the Postbac Premed Program in spring 2016 and was on the dean's list for two semesters while serving as co-president of the Columbia chapter of the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA). In addition, she volunteered as a host for the Premedical Association medical school fair and as a research associate with the Columbia University Medical Center Division of Gynecologic Specialty Surgery. During her application year, Emma continued her research at the Columbia University Medical Center, working at a dermatology and facial plastic surgery practice.



**Patricia Chen**, a native of Princeton Junction, N.J., graduated from Princeton University in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in ecology and evolutionary biology,

earning certificates in both dance and African studies as well. After graduation, she joined the Princeton First Aid & Rescue Squad as an EMT-B, having been inspired by the physicians who saved her father's life. In the fall semester of 2015, Patricia enrolled in the Postbac Premed Program, and was named to the dean's list during each of the four semesters she was enrolled. During her time in the program, she served as an orientation leader, a member

of Stressbusters, a committee member for the GS Mid-Semester Success Series, and a board member for the Social Justice Medicine Club. She also worked as an information specialist for Go Ask Alice!, an online health Q&A resource maintained by the University. Additionally, she served as a research associate in the Emergency Department at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center and continued volunteering as an EMT. A recipient of the GS Spirit Award, while applying to medical school, Patricia worked as a research assistant at Memorial Sloan Kettering's Integrative Medicine Service.



Born in Fresno, Calif., **Sheng Chow** graduated *summa cum laude* in 2007 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in fashion design from the Fashion Institute of Technology, where

she worked with several notable designers such as Janet Nelson Kumar, Carolina Herrera, Pamela Roland, and Isaac Mizrahi. After graduation, she continued to volunteer with New York Cares while starting a family. Inspired by the commitment of the physicians who saved her life after complications delivering her daughter, Sheng enrolled in the Postbac Premed Program in the fall semester of 2015. During her time in the program she was named to the dean's list every semester while serving as a member of the Premedical Association and the Integrative Medicine Club. She pursued her research interests by volunteering as an intern on the Financial Incentives for Smoking Cessation (FIESTA) study at the VA Hospital and NYU School of Medicine comparing the impacts of financial incentives on participants' smoking habits. Sheng was accepted to the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons through its linkage agreement with the Postbac Program and has already begun her studies as a member of the class of 2021.

Born on Long Island, **Kathleen Duffy** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and French from the University of San Diego in 2012 and went on to study health policy and management at the CUNY School of Public



Health at Hunter College. She worked as a clinical quality coordinator and later as a specialist for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, providing

support to medical providers in underserved communities. She also served as the community outreach coordinator for AmeriCorps VISTA at the Tulane Center for Public Service. Motivated by a commitment to public health and medicine, Kathleen enrolled in the Postbac Premed Program in 2015. During her time in the program, she co-founded and served as president of the Emergency Medicine Club. She was also a member of the grant-writing team for GlobeMed at Columbia and a medical coordinator for ProviderLoop, which aims to reduce cardiovascular-related hospital readmissions. A recipient of the GS Spirit Award, while applying to medical schools, Kathleen volunteered as a project coordinator for the Hypertension Screening Project at Mount Sinai Health System, which works to prevent heart disease among New York City firefighters by early diagnosis and treatment of hypertension.



Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 2012, **Shloimy Gold** graduated *summa cum laude* from Touro College with a Bachelor of Science in accounting after spending seven years immersed in religious

studies. Post-graduation, he worked in investment banking and wealth management with Andrew Garrett, Inc. while volunteering with Kids of Courage, an adventure camp for young adults who suffer from terminal illnesses and disabilities. Motivated by this experience, Shloimy enrolled in the Postbac Premed Program in 2015. During his time in the program, he worked as a clinical research associate at the Mount Sinai Emergency Department while continuing to volunteer with Kids of Courage. Shloimy matriculated at New York Medical College.

# NEW GRAD NOTES 2018

## GS Bachelor of Arts Recipients



Born and raised in Iran, [Tamila Pashae Alamdari](#) married at a young age and ultimately filed for divorce from her abusive husband, with whom she has one child. Realizing

that her educational aspirations could only be pursued in the United States, and hoping to set a good example for her son, Tamila left Iran to pursue her dream of building a stable life for her and her son. After a 15-year hiatus from education, Tamila began taking classes at Harold Washington College in Chicago, where she was awarded a full-tuition scholarship. She maintained a 4.0 GPA while earning her associate's degree in accounting and business and was named valedictorian of her graduating class. During her time majoring in economics at GS, Tamila mentored young girls in Iran via her Instagram account, which has 35K+ followers. Often times, she harnessed this technology by livestreaming herself doing homework while encouraging her followers to do their studies along with her. She is a PALS scholar, a Women's Forum of New York Education Fund Fellow, and a member of the GS Honor Society. Tamila graduated *magna cum laude* and is pursuing an advanced degree at Stanford Graduate School of Education.



Valedictorian of the GS Class of 2018, [Justice Betty](#) was born and raised in Toronto, Canada where she pursued volunteer positions at varying levels of government on

more than a dozen political campaigns, spoke at political conventions, and founded a civic entrepreneurship startup—the Political Youth Network. At age 17, Justice was admitted to the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po and moved to France in the fall of 2014. She served as vice president of the Columbia Organization of Rising Entrepreneurs (CORE), the student representative on the Columbia Alumni Association 2023 Task

Force, a volunteer coach for Columbia Youth for Debate in New York City public schools, a GS Tour Guide and Ambassador, a Columbia representative to the United Nations Youth Forum, and an organizer for Columbia's first women's conference, She Opened the Door. A member of the GS Honor Society and the Phi Beta Kappa Society, Justice was named to the Dean's List every semester, is a member of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, and was a recipient of the Dean's Scholarship. She graduated with two bachelor's degrees: one in social sciences from Sciences Po, and one in political science from Columbia.



[Kevin Graves](#) was born and raised in the Midwest. After moving to New York City, he began to explore his passion for working as a DJ and music producer, landing on the Top

20 Billboard Dance Remixes chart three times. Kevin previously attended LaGuardia Community College where he revitalized and became president of LaGuardia's chapter of Psi Beta National Honor Society in Psychology. During his time majoring in psychology at GS, Kevin was a Peer Advisor and Spanish tutor with the Academic Resource Center and was a founding member and leader of the Recovery Coalition. Kevin was a finalist for the Truman Scholars Association and The Fulbright Program, recipient of the Dean Peter Awn Scholarship, and a member of Columbia University Psi Chi Honor Society. Upon graduation, Kevin was named as the recipient of the Alumni Key Award, which is awarded

each year to a graduating senior for exceptional academic achievement and a demonstration of ongoing commitment to leadership and service to the School of General Studies community.



[Queenie Luo](#) was born in Beijing, China and immigrated to Vancouver, Canada with her family when she was 16. At only 19, she became the youngest designer to have work shown at

Vancouver Fashion Week and went on to spend 3 years studying fashion design at Parsons School of Design. During her time majoring in religion at GS, Queenie focused on studying the intersection of fashion, sustainability, and Buddhism. Queenie was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and was selected for the Phi Beta Kappa Prize, awarded to the candidate who best represents the ideals of the society—intellectual integrity, tolerance for other views, and a broad range of academic interests. A member of the GS Honor Society, Queenie graduated *summa cum laude*.



Born in Poland, [Pawel Maslag](#) and his family immigrated to New Jersey when he was one year old. Pawel's journey to GS included serving as a City Year AmeriCorps member and

forming a nonprofit organization, The Great Youth Movement, which supports teenagers with autism by creating a healthy peer-led community facilitated through exercise and fitness. He attended Borough of Manhattan Community College/CUNY before transferring to GS to major in sociology. While a student at GS, in summer 2017, Pawel biked across the country to raise funds for cancer research. He also served as Community Service Representative on the General Studies Student Council and as the School of General Studies Policy Representative on the Ivy Council at Columbia University. Upon graduation, Pawel was named as the recipient of the Campbell Award, which is awarded each year to one graduating senior who shows exceptional leadership and Columbia spirit.

Congratulations  
Grads!

## Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Graduates



**Samantha Pascal** was born and raised in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. At the age of 17, as a result of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, she and her mother were trapped

under their house for hours. Sadly, Samantha's mother did not survive the tragedy. Months later, Samantha moved to Flint, Mich. to be close to other family members. She enrolled in high school while still learning English and adapting to a new culture in the United States. After graduating with honors, she attended Mott Community College, where she was named to dean's list and was inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. Eventually, she transferred to GS to complete her bachelor's degree in human rights. Her second cousin, who is also from Haiti but who Samantha did not know existed, subsequently enrolled at GS. The two met and discovered they were related while participating as fellow members of the highly-selective Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS), a scholarship designed to provide access to a Columbia undergraduate education for students who might not otherwise be able to attend an Ivy League university.



Salutatorian of the GS Class of 2018, **Marysol Yoo** moved to New York City in 2016 after taking night classes at a Texas community college. She enrolled at GS where she

explored psychology and worked with Professor Nim Tottenham in her Developmental Affective Neuroscience Lab. A fitness enthusiast, Yoo founded My 1 Body 1 Life, a nonprofit whose mission is to emphasize the interconnectedness and importance of mental and physical health. Marysol was named to the Dean's List in each of her semesters at GS and was inducted into the GS Honor Society, the Phi Beta Kappa Society, and Columbia University Psi Chi Honor Society. She was awarded the Clayton A. Blaylock Scholarship and was chosen as a Gilman Scholar.



**Elizabeth Basow** was inspired to pursue a career in medicine after having worked in Haiti at Zanmi Beni, a home for orphaned and abandoned children with disabilities that

is run in partnership with nonprofit Partner in Health. Elizabeth created profiles of 28 children, cataloguing their therapies. She then employed the information to develop a database of potential donors who might finance wheelchairs and other adaptive equipment for the children. Having majored in philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology at Washington University, from where she holds a bachelor's degree, Elizabeth worked at the New England Center for Children, a residential facility for children with autism, where she designed behavioral programs before enrolling in the Postbac Premed Program.



Having been on the team of West African Medical Missions since 2009, **Michael Drasher** has seen a few things first hand, namely the 2014 Ebola outbreak. In his role as an

international field operator and social media specialist, he has conducted market research, designed promotions, and published articles in *VICE News*, *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, and the *American Journal of Medicine and Hygiene*. A graduate of University of Minnesota with a major in anthropology and management, while at GS, Michael, who is also a percussionist, was a research associate at Columbia University Medical Center, measuring music's potential to improve patients' experience in the emergency department.



Born and raised in China, **Yi (Luke) Hao** developed an interest in medical sciences at a very young age. Because his interest in tissue engineering had not yet made its way to China, where

he earned a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering in 2011 from Fuzhou University, he moved to the United States to pursue his master's degree from Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey. While at Stevens Institute of Technology, he designed a perfusion device for 3D tissues and tumor models. He went on to be published in medical journals, was inducted into the National Academy of Inventors student chapter, and in 2014, he earned his master's in chemical engineering. Luke then went on to earn his second master's in biomedical engineering from Columbia University in 2015, where he worked closely with Professor Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic to continue his research in tissue engineering and regenerative medicine. Luke was accepted via linkage to Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons, where he matriculated in fall 2018.



Before enrolling in the Postbac Premed Program, **Kristyn Stolze** was the Associate Managing Director of Strategic Operations at GMHC, the world's first and leading provider of

HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and advocacy. In her role at the nonprofit, she helped create effective software solutions that tracked project outcomes. A graduate of Portland State University and a licensed massage therapist for more than a decade, Kristyn has been involved in healthcare and wellness throughout her adult life. Before joining GMHC, she worked at Harlem United, a nonprofit organization that provides care to people living with HIV/AIDS who are homeless and/or suffer from mental illness, substance use, or social stigma related to their sexuality, gender, or HIV status.

Welcome  
to the  
**Alumni  
Community**

## Like Daughters, Like Mother: Rozanne Gooding Silverwood '17

For Rozanne Gooding Silverwood, Columbia University has been a family affair that began with her daughters. In 2015, one graduated from Columbia College, and in 2016 another graduated from the Columbia oral history master's program. Last spring, Rozanne took her turn when she earned her bachelor's degree from Columbia University School of General Studies.

Rozanne's personal journey includes having been an aspiring rock musician and a teacher at ashrams in New York and San Diego. She was a natural writer, and while raising three children, she developed acclaimed writing curriculums for elementary schools. After her daughters graduated high school, Rozanne started taking classes at Northern Virginia Community College. She eventually transferred to GS in search of a more diverse intellectual environment.

Throughout her various journeys, Rozanne retained an interest in her family's history. At Columbia, she rediscovered a passion

for storytelling and narrative. Studying cultural anthropology, Rozanne formed plans to write a senior thesis that explored her Native American Chickasaw heritage through her family's archive that included old photographs, letters, and newspaper clippings her mother had maintained throughout the years.

The assignment was not easy—Rozanne had stopped writing completely in the time before enrolling at GS because, due to many family struggles, she began to feel that words no longer held meaning. However, her coursework at Columbia provided relief from the problems overwhelming her personal life, and she considered her assignments “sacred medicine.” While feelings of self-doubt reemerged when it came time to write her thesis, an encounter with nature reminded her of the mastery she had gained throughout her years. Rozanne began writing with a “fearless intensity,” she said, and she has since presented her work to various audiences both within the Chickasaw Nation and at academic conferences.

At GS, Rozanne served as secretary on the Columbia University Interschool Governing Board and was inducted into the GS Honor Society and Phi Beta Kappa. She graduated *summa cum laude* with a degree in cultural anthropology with a focus on Native American studies. And, following in her daughter's footsteps, last fall, Rozanne matriculated in the Columbia oral history master's program.



# From Prison to the Ivy League, Leyla Martinez '18 Eliminates Barriers

Born and raised in the South Bronx, Leyla Martinez '18 became pregnant at a young age. When she and her infant son became homeless, out of desperation, she committed fraud to provide for them. Her crime led to a two-year prison sentence. Once released from prison, because of her criminal record, Leyla struggled to gain access to higher education opportunities, yet her determination to set a positive example for her son Derek, who three years ago could not imagine going to college, drove her to apply to Columbia. Now, due in large part to Columbia's Justice-in-Education Initiative, the first-generation college student has graduated with a bachelor's degree in human rights.

"I made the wrong decision to commit fraud in order to try and get my son and myself out

of a bad situation," Martinez said. "As hard as it is to talk about my past, we all make mistakes, and we should all be allowed the opportunity to rebuild our lives."

While at GS, Martinez persevered. She successfully completed the Justice in Education Fellowship, was selected to be a Women's Forum Education Fund fellow, served with Welfare Rights Initiative, and worked as the program coordinator for the Beyond the Bars Fellowship.

Martinez also founded and served as president of the Beyond the Box Initiative, a student organization that seeks to eliminate structural barriers to higher education, housing, employment, and civic participation for formally incarcerated individuals. She has become a criminal justice reform advocate and a founding member of the

National Council of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls. As a member of the National Council, she has traveled to several different states to speak to law school students about the effects of incarceration on women, children, and communities.

"I have found such an amazing support system at the School of General Studies—not only among our incredible student body, but also with our administrators," Martinez said. "It's given me the strength to openly share who I am and hopefully inspire others."

Her impact is clear. From seeing his mother's example, her now 19-year-old son Derek is matriculated at Borough of Manhattan Community College. "She inspired me," Derek said. "I'm so proud of her."



GENERAL INTEREST

# Alumni News





# Save The Dates

## Homecoming Football and Carnival

**Saturday, October 20**  
**BBQ, Games, Music, Family Fun**  
*Baker Athletic Complex in Northern Manhattan*

## Reunion 2019

**Thursday, May 30 –**  
**Saturday, June 1**  
**New and Old Connections,**  
**Lectures, Receptions**  
*Columbia Campus, NYC*

# Introducing Director of Alumni Relations Aviva Zablocki



Aviva Zablocki comes to Columbia University School of General Studies after spending two years as the Senior Associate Director of Alumni Relations for Columbia College.

While at Columbia College, Zablocki helped ensure the successful management and execution of alumni programs such as Reunion and Homecoming, while also directing all activities of the executive board of Columbia College Women.

With expertise in volunteer management, strategic marketing, public speaking, and special events, one of Zablocki's most rewarding projects included the design and launch of the Odyssey Mentoring Program, an initiative that connected 1,400 alumni and students through an online platform and in-person events.

Prior to joining Columbia, Zablocki managed special events and communications for the alumni association of Birthright Israel, the 10-day educational program offered to Jewish young adults from throughout the world. Zablocki is a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) and lives on the Upper West Side with her children Evan and Lia, and her husband, Yitzi Zablocki '03.

## Meet Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations Jill Galas Hickey

In November 2017, Columbia School of General Studies introduced Jill Galas Hickey as its new Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations. Galas Hickey has extensive experience in higher education, with prior roles in residential life, career education, and alumni relations. Her most recent work has been focused on alumni relations and development, serving as the Director of Annual Giving at Columbia School of Engineering and Applied Science. Prior to that position, she was the Senior Director of Alumni Relations in Columbia's Office of Alumni and Development, where she was an essential part of the GS alumni team.

"Jill's appointment represents the first step in a significant reorganization of our alumni relations and development functions designed to drive better and more productive collaboration and engagement. We are thrilled that she has taken the lead role in stewarding the next evolution of our alumni organization," Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers said.

In her role at GS as Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations, Galas Hickey will work to develop new and creative ways to sustain and expand the significant success GS has achieved building strong relationships with our alumni and helping them to engage with the school, its students, and the wider University alumni community.



## GSAA Officers

GSAA Co-chairs:

Jesse Dean '08, Kirsty Jardine '15

Awards Committee Co-chairs:

C. Damienne Harfouche '14, Gabriella Santoro '01

Outreach and Communications Committee Chair:

Katharine Celentano '16

Programming Committee Co-chairs:

Aspasia Burnworth '15, Elizabeth Beerman '98

Development Committee Co-chairs:

Bernadette Murphy '15, Kate Marber '16

**Thanks to outgoing GSAA volunteers for their service!**

**Stacia Kargman '80**

**Wendy Darby '84**

**Nicholas Sinchak '13**

**Contribute to Our Vibrant Alumni Community!**

**Contact** Columbia GS Alumni Relations

622 West 113th Street, MC 4525

New York, NY 10025

Phone: 212-851-7432

email: gsalumni@columbia.edu

gs.columbia.edu/alumni

## GENERAL INTEREST



# Stacia Kargman '80

**Former Co-Chair, Development Committee  
of the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA)**

*What had you hoped to accomplish as the Co-Chair of the GSAA Development Committee?*

The cost of an education has risen dramatically over the years, making it challenging for many qualified students to attend university. A stretch goal for me has been to raise sufficient money to provide full scholarships for a few students every year.

*What drives you to contribute to the GS alumni community?*

I am very proud of GS. Its diverse student body is unique among Ivy League universities and this contributes to an unparalleled learning environment. The students with whom I have interacted have been very impressive. Although there was little camaraderie when I attended GS, there is a real sense of community and cordiality among students now.

*What are you currently doing career-wise?*

I am a molecular pharmacologist/cell biologist. I worked at Merck in Montreal for 25 years and was transferred to a Merck facility New Jersey in 2011, where I took on the role of external lead for In Vitro Pharmacology. I managed scientists in Asia and Europe that supported the early screening of potential new chemical entities. This is one of the first steps in drug discovery/development. I travelled to China 21 times in 6 and a half years and to Europe several times. I was able to extend a few of my business trips and visit Myanmar, Cambodia, Japan, and the Himalayas, where I met new people and experienced new cultures.

I left Merck in June 2017 after almost 31 years, and I started new positions as director of biology at two biotechs in New York City: Tri Institutional Therapeutic Discovery Institute (Tri-I TDI) and Bridge Medicines. Tri-I is a non-profit institute working with clinician/researchers at Weill Cornell, Memorial Sloan Kettering, and Rockefeller University to bring novel ideas to medicines. We are working on very exciting, novel targets in the hopes of developing new treatments for Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, opioid addiction, pediatric brain tumors, leukemia, basal cell carcinoma, neurotoxicity, tuberculosis, malaria, and more. My work is fast, exciting, stimulating, and sometimes frustrating, but ever so rewarding.

*What do you do for enjoyment?*

I have two beautiful sons. My 28-year old was married last year! My younger son, 25, started his PhD in climate/environmental studies at Columbia last fall. I volunteer on the fitness committee at my condo. I also volunteer for various veterans' projects and the New Jersey Supreme Court Fee Arbitration Committee. I am an avid reader and enjoy working out almost daily. I love to cook and enjoy a good bottle of wine. I enjoy traveling and have been fortunate to do it often. I did a fabulously once-in-a-lifetime fun road trip with my sisters last summer. We explored Utah's canyons, Arizona, California, and Oregon, before I started my new job. I cherish very close and long-lasting relationships with my 90-year-old mom and family and friends in several countries. I feel blessed.

**On December 12, 2017, the GS alumni community welcomed a set of new graduates, now alumni, during the February Graduation Reception at Faculty House.**



# Mid-Winter Mixer

1. Claire Lee Frey '19, Erin Giventer '17, and Benjamin Metsch '89
2. More than 100 alumni gathered for the annual mid-winter mixer photo.
3. Simone Long '04 and GSAA Co-chair Jesse Dean '08

**The annual Mid-Winter Mixer, held at Upper Story by Charlie Palmer on February 22, officially introduced Dean Lisa Rosen-Mensch to alumni.**

1. Staff Sergeant Jonathan Borders and Lori Sal-Long
2. Members of the FDNY Color Guard
3. Dean Lisa Rosen Metsch '90 with Military Service Award winner Lieutenant General Joseph Anderson.
4. Sergeant Rachel Bartlett and Sergeant Steven Ballew



**Produced by the Military Ball Host Committee, Columbia MilVets, Columbia Veterans, CVTI, and the School of General Studies and sponsored by a number of contributors, the March 24 Military Ball was an elegant event featuring awards of recognition, dinner, and dancing at Capitale in downtown Manhattan.**

# More Than 400 Exuberant Alumni Celebrate DEAN AWN'S 20 YEARS and GS's 70th Anniversary at 2017 All-Class Reunion

By Allison Scola with Jane Haseman

More than 400 alumni of the School of General Studies returned to campus from June 1 to 4, 2017 to participate in the All-Year Reunion that celebrated the School's 70th anniversary and honored outgoing dean, Peter J. Awn, who, after 20 years of leadership stepped down.

At the GS Reunion Kickoff Reception held on Friday evening, more than 100 alumni enjoyed a spirited cocktail reception at Bernheim & Schwartz, the former home of The West End, showcasing a student-led blues band, appropriately called the Night Owls. Featuring current GS students Anna Troy and Sondra Woodruff, both playing guitars and singing, Tony Senatore '17, playing electric bass, and GS Director of Educational Financing Skip Bailey on drums, the quartet filled the room with original songs and well-known standards. After remarks by Reunion Co-chairs Aspasia Burnworth '15 and Jessica Garza '09, attendees mingled amidst displays illustrating GS's history and a photo booth complete with costume-like props. A highlight of the evening was when alumnus Rory Hayden '67 won the raffle prize, a lunch with Dean Awn—an event Hayden was able to fit in before returning to California, his home for the last 50 years. Hayden and his wife came to New York for the first time since his graduation to attend Reunion.

Saturday, the weekend's hub of activity, featured everything from intellectually-minded events such as the keynote presented by Nobel Prize winning molecular biologist Dr. Richard Axel '67CC and mini-core classes and lectures to socially driven luncheons, wine-tastings, and the annual Starlight Reception dance party on Low Plaza.

The Dean's Luncheon, held in the Skyline Room of the Faculty House featured several speakers including Senior Executive Director for Alumni Relations at the Columbia Alumni Association Michael DiSarno and a panel of current GS students led by Kirsty Jardine '15GS, '16PH. The student panel, which included Estrella Verence Castillo, Raisa Flor, Steven Ballew, and Justice Betty, was a heartwarming discussion that gave alumni a glimpse into the

lives of current General Studies students—from the definitive nontraditional student to the newer nontraditional student, those in dual-degree programs.

Important to note was that during the luncheon, Reunion Co-chair Burnworth recognized alumni in attendance who were celebrating more than 50 years since graduation: Grace Krumwiede '52, Ralph Cox '54, Joyce Hurley '58, and Howard Copland '67.

At an early evening affinity reception for veterans, Major Michael Abrams, U.S. Marine Corps reservist and the new Executive Director for the Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration, spoke about crisis response following terrorist attacks. In a captivating presentation, Abrams called upon his personal experience having been the Commanding Officer of the Marine Corps Reserve unit in Chattanooga, Tenn., when on July 16, 2015, four of its troops were killed by a deranged, active shooter.

The weekend's events reached a fever pitch at 6:30 p.m., when more than 400 alumni, guests, and friends of GS gathered for the elegant 70th Anniversary Dinner: A Final Tribute to Dean Awn, which featured presentations, video montages, laser light displays, and outstanding cocktails and cuisine.

"Much is written, spoken and taught about leadership these days," said Larry Lawrence '69, '71BUS, one of the evening's featured speakers, "But Peter exemplifies a particular kind of leadership which is not

easily taught—a tradition of leadership as service, not in pursuit of individual or even institutional glory, but in the passionate and energetic pursuit of creating the best of possible experiences for others."

In recognition of exceptional leadership and service, Philip Ehrlich '88, President Emeritus of the GS Alumni Association, and Anita Christy '88 and Co-chair of the GS Alumni Association Awards Committee, presented Dean Awn with the recently re-instated Owl Award, given to individuals whose lives and accomplishments are distinguished by eminence in public service and a sustained commitment to creating and building community, supporting and enriching school programs, and enhancing student life.

One of the highlights of the evening was when the 27th and current Borough President of the New York City Borough of Manhattan Gale Brewer '97 along with Aries Dela Cruz '09 presented an official proclamation, declaring June 3, 2017 "Dr. Peter J. Awn Appreciation Day in the Borough of Manhattan," in recognition of Awn's commitment to improving New York City and vibrantly enriching the community.

During his remarks, which outlined the accomplishments of GS students and alumni over the 20 years of his leadership and highlighted the School's current prominence within the University, Awn said, "Frankly, you've given more to me, and transformed me, more than anything I have been able to do at GS. Thank you, thank you, thank you."



# 2018 Reunion Said

# Aloha

## to Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch

By Aviva Zablocki

This year's GS Reunion drew over 400 alumni and their guests to campus to celebrate, reconnect, and to meet the new dean, Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90. The celebration began on Friday, June 1, when alumni kicked off the weekend with a guided tour of the new Manhattanville campus, including the Lenfest Center for the Arts and the Jerome L. Greene Science Center.

Immediately following the tour, alumni gathered at the Harlem beer garden, Bierstrasse, for the "Aloha" Welcome Reception. Aspasia Burnworth '15 and Inna Sudakova '15 co-chaired the GSAA Reunion committee along with alumni volunteers, who planned everything from the décor to the menu. Guests were welcomed by GS Director of Alumni Relations Aviva Zablocki and Dean Rosen Metsch, who talked about the thriving alumni community.

On Saturday, June 2, after alumni enjoyed various Reunion lectures and tours on campus, the GS All-Class lunch in the Skyline Room at Faculty House featured a panel of current GS students talking about campus life today. Associate Dean of Development and Alumni Relations Jill Galas Hickey spoke about the school's growing alumni relations team and its dedication to the diverse population of GS alumni.

Following lunch in Faculty House, Dean Rosen-Metsch gave a lecture on her research titled, "Why AIDS Still Matters" for an audience of alumni, guests, and students.

Rounding out the day's events at Faculty House was the Veterans Reception, which

was hosted by GS and open to all guests across the university. Attendees heard from Dean Rosen-Metsch about Columbia's commitment to its veterans, as well as the important work being done by the Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration.

As the sun set on campus, 220 GS alumni and their guests descended on Low Library for an elegant GS Annual Reunion Dinner. A highlight of the evening was when last year's winner of the Owl Award, Peter J. Awn, approached the stage to welcome everyone and recognize alumnus Christopher Riano '07 as the winner of the 2018 Owl Award. Christopher, who was surprised by the announcement, was recognized for his tireless commitment to the GS community, including his role as a peer mentor, volunteer, and champion for the school. Artist Philip Ehrlich '88 created the hand-crafted Owl award.



As dinner resumed, guests enjoyed live music and a photo slide show that highlighted many of the moments Dean Rosen-Metsch has had since assuming the deanship. Addressing attendees, she spoke at length about her excitement for her new role as dean—the ninth of the school and the first ever alumna in the role.

At the conclusion of dinner, champagne, dessert, live music and dancing lit up the night, with over 1,000 guests enjoying the closing of Reunion under the stars and on the steps of Low at the annual Starlight Reception.



*Christopher Riano '07 was taken aback when he learned he was the winner of the 2018 Owl Award.*



Dr. Hua (Eleanor) Yu '83, '88GSAS

# From Inspired to Inspirational

By Gilda Fasullo

When I called the Beckman Research Institute of City of Hope in California to schedule an appointment to interview Dr. Hua Yu '83, '88GSAS, I hardly expected a person of such extraordinary achievement to answer the telephone herself, yet she did! Despite her academic achievements and subsequent accomplishments as a research scientist, Dr. Yu remains down to earth, soft spoken, and approachable. Yu, an internationally recognized cancer researcher and immunologist, was born in Shanghai, China, into, as she explained, a physician family that modeled discipline and concern for others. Today, Yu's every action exhibits such altruism.

Growing up with Madame Currie as a role model, Yu holds several issued patents, and she is listed as a co-inventor on multiple patent applications on cell-penetrating antibody/protein technology. Her research focus includes the role of the molecule STAT3 in tumor angiogenesis and tumor immune evasion, cancer biology, identifying the connection between STAT3 and diabetes and tumor immunology.

Hua "Eleanor" Yu is the niece of Dr. Tsai-Fan Yu, who taught at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons until joining the faculty at Mount Sinai Medical Center in 1957. In 1973, Tsai-Fan Yu became the first woman to be appointed as a full professor at Mount Sinai Hospital. It was Dr. Tsai-Fan Yu's encouragement, recognizing her niece's academic ability and interest in science, that subsequently led her to sponsor Hua's studies in the United States. A young student when President Richard M. Nixon visited China and the Cultural Revolution was in full swing, Yu became inspired to pursue her academic goals in the United States. She studied English in Shanghai, and in January 1981,

she emigrated to enroll at the American Language Program at Columbia.

Once in New York, Yu's academic advisor counseled her to attend the university in earnest. She took four classes including, English composition, physics, and calculus, which she described as "hard," given the school's high standards, yet she managed to pull all A's. The advisor expressed confidence in her matriculating at the School of General Studies, which she successfully did. The next semester, Yu received a letter saying she had been awarded the Helena Rubinstein Foundation Scholarship, which covered two thirds of her tuition.

Yu was caught off guard by her good fortune, and she shed tears of joy when she realized she may yet achieve her deeply held dream of being able to help others.

Dr. Hua Yu earned her BA in biology from GS in 1983 and her PhD in molecular biology in 1988 from what is now the Columbia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Having been awarded a fellowship, she conducted postdoctoral research in molecular biology from 1989 to 1992 at the University of Michigan, where she went on to work as a research scientist. In 1995, she became associate professor in the immunology program at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida.

In 2005, Dr. Yu was appointed professor and associate chair in the department of cancer immunotherapeutics and tumor immunology at the prestigious City of Hope's Beckman Research Institute in California. She has collaborated with Dr. Thomas Blankenstein at the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in Germany and with Dr. Jie Liu at Fudan University in China.

A prolific writer with an extensive list of



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF HOPE

publications to her credit, since 2011, Dr. Yu has co-lead the cancer immunotherapeutics program at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at City of Hope, where her laboratory was the first to identify STAT3, a critical regulator of tumor cell survival and proliferation as a molecular target for cancer therapy in animal models. Her team also unveiled a critical role of STAT3 in tumor angiogenesis and tumor immune invasion.

In 2013, Yu became the inaugural Billy and Audrey L. Wilder Professor in Tumor Immunotherapy. In 2014, she received the Humboldt Research Award of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which is granted to academics whose fundamental discoveries, new theories, or insights have had a significant impact on their own discipline and who are expected to continue producing cutting edge achievements in the future. Currently, technologies developed at City of Hope under her and her collaborator, Dr. Andreas Herrmann's, supervision are being used to develop cell-penetrating antibody therapies.

The numerous honors and awards Dr. Yu has received are a testament to her passion and skills as a research scientist.

Marilyn J. Telen, MD '74 PBPM

# HEMATOLOGY & PHOTOGRAPHY:

A devotion to people?  
This hematologist  
gets the picture.

By Eric Butterman



Marilyn J. Telen, MD '74 PBPM, an expert in blood group antigens, was attracted to hematology by its challenge. But just becoming a doctor was a challenge of a different kind.

"When I was growing up, a woman being a doctor just wasn't something you saw very much of and so there weren't many places to find the inspiration to do it," she says. "I think the Vietnam era of medics brought it more into the forefront. You saw women get more opportunities there and you could start to more easily visualize it for yourself."

Finding a focus on sickle cell disease, which she says affects roughly 100,000 people in the U.S., had much to do with a fascination with red blood cells.

"They require a lot of microscope work which I like, a chance to look at the subtle changes of the blood cells and trying to translate that into what was clinically going on," she says. "From red cells, you can divine whether someone is deficient in B12, iron, or has sickle cell disease, and a number of other things before any tests. I was looking at blood group antigens, which sit on the outside of blood cells, and focused on proteins that were adhesion molecules. They served

the purpose of getting red cells to stick to something else. I asked, 'Do they have anything to do with the fact sickle red cells stick to other things?' It turned out to be the case, and I started walking down that road."

Director of the Duke University Sickle Cell Center for 17 years, Telen was the founding chief of the Division of Hematology at Duke University Medical Center, focusing on non-malignant hematology. She thankfully has seen important strides in sickle cell disease since she began in the roles, but particularly in the last several years.

"We've been picking apart what goes wrong in sickle cell disease for a couple of decades and I think what's happened in the last half a dozen years is we have gotten traction in what I'd call targeted therapies to those processes," says Telen, who received her MD at New York University in 1977, having completed her premed coursework through the Postbac Premed Program in 1970. "The first therapy for sickle cell disease that was FDA approved was Hydroxyurea, and that was a good start ... The field is finally making progress in the therapeutic area partly because drug companies have taken up the challenge as well. There is optimism."

### Picture This.

She has also found a talent beyond medicine—Telen is a gifted photographer, and, she says, not surprisingly, her favorite subject is people. "Aren't they what being a doctor is all about?" she offers. "And, with photography, I particularly like to focus on the elderly and children. The elderly have so many stories in their face, and kids just aren't self-conscious at all, just smiling and moving, so many of them having a terrific time."

Telen takes photos most often during her travels, which have spanned approximately



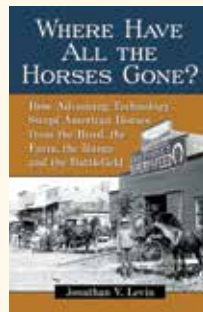
50 countries, including stops in India and Russia on multiple occasions. Last fall, Telen's photos were in a seven-week-long exhibit for the first time as a body of work at the Durham Art Guild.

"It started with my husband being a serious amateur photographer and then nine years ago, I joined in," she says. "It turns out that although a camera is good for making observations, it's also good for making connections. It's really about showing interest in people's lives."



## THE GENERAL DIRECTION

# Alumni Notes



### 1950s

*Where Have All the Horses Gone? How Advancing Technology Swept American Horses from the Road, the Farm, the Range and the Battlefield* by **Jonathan V. Levin '50** was recently published by McFarland Publishers. The book details 13 years of research about how, in just a few decades because of the rise of emerging technologies, horses went from being ubiquitous in American industry to primarily cultivated for leisure and recreational activities.

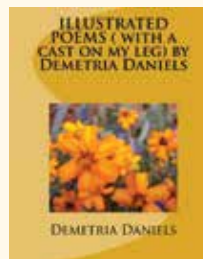


Singer, actor, composer, and speaker **Pat Boone '57** celebrated 60 years in show business last September with a concert in San Juan Capistrano, Calif. The event, "Music & Memories," commemorated Boone's milestone in movies, specifically his first two films, *Bernardine* and *April Love*.

### 1960s



Retired U.S. diplomat **John S. Wood '63, '64BUS** was awarded the 2017 American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) Award for Achievements and Contributions to the Association. The prestigious prize recognizes an active-duty or retired AFSA member of any of the foreign affairs agencies represented by AFSA who has made a significant (non-monetary) contribution to the association and its role as a professional association of practitioners of diplomacy. As president of The Foreign Service Group-Texas ([www.tfsg.org](http://www.tfsg.org)) in Austin, Wood has been a tireless advocate for the Foreign Service, promoting the important work of diplomats to Americans in his home region and beyond. As part of his recognition, he was featured in the September 2017 *Foreign Service Journal*.



**Demetria Daniels '67** recently published *Illustrated Poetry (With A Cast On My Leg)*, a collection of poetry, illustrations, paintings, and photographs inspired by her travels through Greece, Peru, and other destinations around the globe.

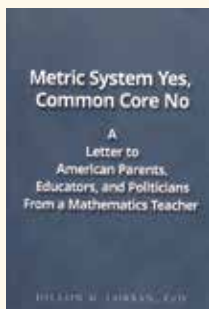
**Robert H. Dinkel '67** recently published his twenty-ninth book of poetry titled *Sparce*.

**Victor J. Schoenbach '68** is Associate Professor Emeritus in the Department of Epidemiology at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Gillings School of Global Public Health. In anticipation of the anniversary of the Columbia University student protests of 1968, Schoenbach was interviewed by Paul Cronin '13JRN, '14JRN for his documentary, *A Time to Stir: Columbia '68* (2018).

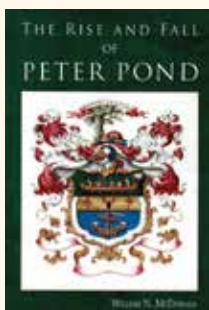




Educator, activist, and author **Jonathan Silin '68** draws on five decades of experience as an early childhood educator, teacher-educator, and researcher for his fourth book, *Early Childhood, Aging and the Life Cycle: Mapping Common Ground*. In the treatise, he explores the process of aging and the challenges that link young and old in a common world. Silin has spent a lifetime working in and outside of classrooms. He was a member of the faculty of Bank Street College of Education for 17 years and was at the forefront of the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights in the 1970s and the battle against AIDS in the 1980s.

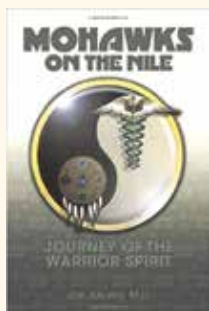


Mathematics educator **Dillon M. Lobban '69** recently published *Metric System Yes, Common Core No: A Letter to American Parents, Educators & Politicians from a Mathematics Teacher*. In the treatise, Lobban explains in analytic terms why the United States needs the metric system for K-12 mathematics and science and what is wrong with the Common Core State Standards. He delves into the problem of poor performance of American 15-year-old students on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests and what must be done to address this very serious problem.

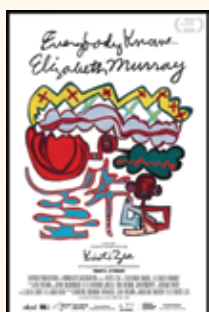


## 1970s

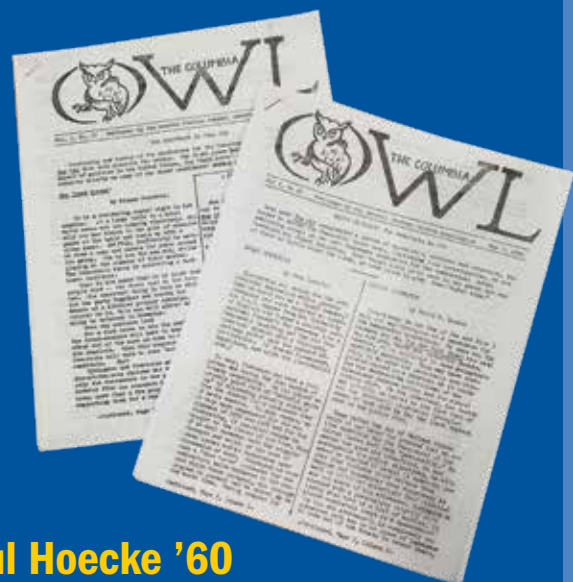
*The Rise and Fall of Peter Pond* is an historical novel by **William N. McDonald '72**. Chronicling the life of Connecticut Yankee, Peter Pond (1740-1807), the narrative follows the fur trader and explorer through his adventures paddling flimsy birchbark canoes alongside French Canadian voyageurs. Having had a goal to be the first white man to travel overland to the Pacific Ocean years before Lewis and Clark, Pond's expert use of the canoe influenced North American history. More about McDonald and Pond at [www.peterpondsociety.com](http://www.peterpondsociety.com).



**Joseph Jacobs '73** is a member of the Kahnawake Mohawk tribe in Canada and the Akwesasne Mohawk tribe in New York State. A medical doctor, Joe rediscovered his Mohawk inner voice in the stacks of the Yale University library, from where he earned his medical degree. Inspired by his heritage, Jacobs wrote *Mohawks on the Nile: Journey of the Warrior Spirit* about a Mohawk who traversed the divide between being Mohawk and white.



**Kristi Zea '74** produced and directed a documentary film, *Everybody Knows... Elizabeth Murray*, which was released in 2016. Bringing her talent and experience from costume and production design for directors Martin Sorsese and Jonathan Demme, among others, Zea captures the life and work of her friend, one of the preeminent painters of our time, Elizabeth Murray.



## H. Paul Hoecke '60 Recalls *The Owl's* Beginnings and Beyond

By Allison Scola

"We put the newsletter together in the basement of a brownstone on 114th Street," H. Paul Hoecke '60 said of the first iteration of *The Owl* (pictured). "There was a dirt floor and two bulbs hanging from the ceiling. Andy (Andrew Keggi '61), the art guy, cut and pasted the articles into the columns."

Hoecke, who was managing editor of the weekly, student-run publication, was in the final semester of his undergraduate degree program when he joined the staff of *The Owl*, the General Studies Student Association (GSSA) newsletter. "Although we tried to maintain a proper balance between news, commentary, and humor, the latter often tended to predominate," Hoecke explained.

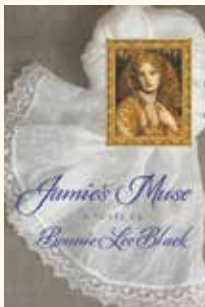
Hoecke majored in sociology while at Columbia. He arrived on campus—like many of his fellow students who were new Americans—with credits from far away, in his case, the American University at Beirut. "A receptacle for transfer students, GS was a good atmosphere for encountering people of different cultures," Hoecke recalled.

Born in Berlin, Germany in 1937, Hoecke experienced World War II up close, when his family was stranded in Potsdam in eastern Germany. In 1948, they managed to get to West Berlin, always with an eye to emigrating to the United States. The route to North America took Hoecke and his family through Jordan for seven years and eventually to Lebanon, from where, in 1958, just as the Lebanese civil war was starting, their U.S. immigration documents came through.

Upon completing his bachelor's degree in May 1960, Hoecke matriculated in graduate school and served in the U.S. National Guard in New York for six years. He applied his coursework in sociology, psychology, statistics, and mass communications to a career in market research, which eventually led him to work for The Liggett Group, the fourth largest tobacco company in the United States, ExxonMobil Chemical, a division of Mobil that produces agricultural products, and Bayer Crop Science. After a successful tenure working with family farms throughout the United States, Hoecke retired in 1999. He currently lives in Chapel Hill, N.C. with his wife, where, recalling his roots working for the early years of *The Owl*, he writes for a national magazine that covers car races and motor sports.



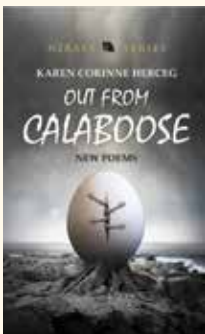
Irene Weinberger Books recently published **Ingrid Blaufarb Hughes '75's** memoir, *Losing Aaron*. The book describes the ways that schizophrenia altered Hughes' son Aaron, who in his teens was sensible, poised, and generous with family and friends, yet then, while in college, without his loved ones knowing it, his insidious illness began its attack, ultimately leading him to take his life. *Losing Aaron* details how Aaron's illness and death impacted his family.



Nighthawk Press published **Bonnie Lee Black '79's** fourth book and first novel, *Jamie's Muse*, inspired by the short life of Black's Scottish great-grandmother Helen, who in 1882, immigrated to Africa with her husband only to mysteriously pass on three years later—but not before giving birth to a son who became Black's grandfather.

### 1980s

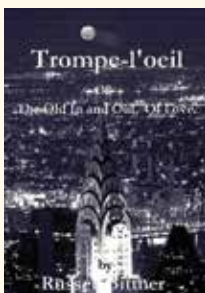
The National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE), the nation's leading organization focused on promoting entrepreneurship through community colleges, named **James Mabry '81**, President of Middlesex Community College in Bedford, Mass., to its board of directors.



**Karen Corinne Herceg (aka Baccio) '82** published a collection of poetry, *Out from Calaboose*, released by Nirala Publications in 2016. The poems explore personal healing as well as political, social, and ecological awareness. A "calaboose" is a small jail that Herceg uses to symbolize our personal imprisonment from unhealed wounds. Herceg publishes poetry, prose, and essays in magazines and literary journals. Currently she is working with Khalilah Ali, the former wife of Muhammad Ali, writing her memoir.



Artist and poet **Joy Leftow '83, '85SW** (aka @Violetwrites) recently won third prize in a contest held by Aquilrelle Publishing. Her award included having her winning collection of poems, *Tupelo Honey & Other Tales*, published. Joy, who worked as a social worker for 24 years after earning her master's in social work from Columbia, also holds a Master of Arts in creative writing from The City College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

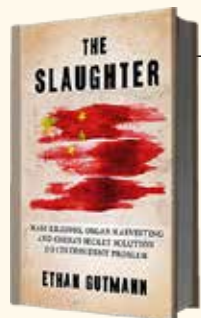


**(Richard) Russell Bittner '84** recently re-released his novel, *Trompe-l'oeil: Or, the Old In and Out*, described as "a tantalizingly brilliant story about the human condition." The first 65 pages (other than the erotic hook of chapter one) are devoted to setting and character development. From that point on, all hell breaks loose.



**Sumit K. Mandal '84, '85GSAS, '87GSAS, '94GSAS** published a book with Cambridge University Press, *Becoming Arab: Creole Histories and Modern Identities in the Malay World*. By considering Arabs in the Malay world under European rule, *Becoming Arab* explores how a long history of inter-Asian interaction was altered by nineteenth-century racial categorization and control. Mandal is a professor at University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus.

**Massimo "Max" Elser '85** was in Newport, R.I. in July 2017, acting as co-captain of the Italian team competing against the United States team in the NBC10 Newport International Polo Series.

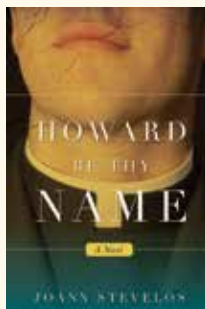


In 2017, author and investigative journalist **Ethan Gutmann '86, '95SIPA** was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his advocacy of a better China. Gutmann is one of the main investigators of the crime of live organ harvesting in China. In 2014, he published *The Slaughter: Mass Killings, Organ Harvesting, and China's Secret Solution to Its Dissident Problem*. In 2004, he published *Losing the New China*. Among other accomplishments, Gutmann is a former foreign-policy analyst at the Brookings Institution and has appeared on PBS, CNN, BBC, and CNBC.



### 1990s

**Mako Kamitsuna '92** edited the film *Mudbound*, a feature film that premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. After its showing, Netflix purchased the property, which stars Carey Mulligan, Jason Mitchell, and Mary J. Blige and was directed by Dee Rees, for \$12.5 million.



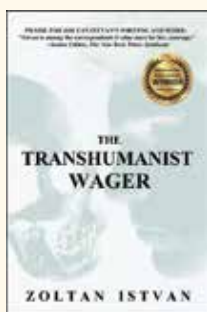
Having worked in senior positions for the Clinton Foundation and Michelle Obama's Let's Move program, **JoAnn Stevelos '94** is an expert on the topic of children's health and sexual abuse. She recently published a novel based on a true story, *Howard Be Thy Name*. Set in Albany in 1968, it follows Evie Edwards, a divorced mother of four children who falls in love with Howard Russo, a newly ordained Catholic priest. A story rooted in finding reasons for the complicated ways we fail our children despite our best intentions, the book serves as validation for silenced victims of the child sex abuse scandal that continues to plague the Catholic church.

**Gustavo A. Carrera '95** is the head of the upper school at Shore Country Day School in Beverly, Mass. During his successful tenure as the chair of the department of history at Buckingham Browne & Nichols School in Cambridge, Mass, in 2017, Carrera was awarded the Beveridge Family K12 Teaching Award from the

American Historical Association, and this past spring, he won the World History Association 2018 Teaching Prize. Carrera has two daughters Emilia and Camila.



In February 2017, **Craig Wilson '95** was awarded The Writers Guild of America Award for Outstanding Writing: Television News, Regularly Scheduled Broadcast or Breaking Report for his work the 48 Hours, CBS News spot *Muhammad Ali: Remembering a Legend*, which he co-wrote with Jerry Cipriano.



**Zoltan Istvan Gyurko '98**, a transhumanist, ran for President of the United States in 2016. In February 2017, he was featured in an article in *The New York Times Magazine*, "600 Miles in a Coffin-Shaped Bus, Campaigning Against Death Itself," by Mark O'Connell. A leader in his field, Istvan frequently speaks and consults on transhumanism, entrepreneurship, radical science, and technology. He published a philosophy and science fiction novel, *The Transhumanist Wager*.



Producer, film director, and writer **David Ariniello '99**, along with colleagues Jaime Sisley and Kelly Thomas, was recently awarded an SFFILM Westridge Grant to support the development of a new film, *Stay Awake*. The SFFILM Westridge Grant supports U.S.-based, independent narrative feature films in the screenwriting or development phase.

## 2000s

**Robert A. Beattey '00** published *The Ethical Practice of Forensic Psychology: A Casebook* for Oxford University Press along with Gianni Pirelli and Patricia A. Zapt.

In March, **Benson Hsu '01** was named a 2018 Bush Foundation fellow. A resident of Sioux Falls, S.D., Hsu, who is a medical doctor, was awarded funds to pursue advanced education, networking opportunities, leadership resources, workshops, and trainings. The highly competitive fellowship is awarded annually to adaptable leaders who are driven to improve their communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations.

## John Elting '66 Shares His Extraordinary Love For Nature With Others

By Adrienne Anifant

"I think it is important for a person to touch a plant or tree every day," John Elting '66 said. And for the past fifteen years, in a southeastern corner of the United States, he has devoted his life to helping others achieve just that.

Elting is an interpretive naturalist in Big Cypress and other south Florida wilderness areas where he works tirelessly on the region's environmental issues. He was a three term president of the Friends of Fakahatchee and a recipient of the Mel Finn Award. Recruited by Audubon Florida, Elting spent six years on the board of directors and four as its chairman. He is currently Chairman Emeritus of Audubon Florida, a member of its executive committee, and a member of the Operating Management Committee with National Audubon Society. In addition, Elting serves on the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Big Cypress Advisory Committee.

Among his many ventures and achievements, Elting developed a hands-on, educational environmental program for the state, popularly termed "Swamp Walks."

"I take people out for a day to wade through the swamps with the alligators and egrets. We discuss the flora and fauna; we talk about the orchids and alligators, the big snakes and the panther," said Elting. His groups comprise everyone from wildlife experts and graduate students to people who have never seen a swamp; however, Elting says his youngest swamp walkers are critical.



"It is extremely important for these educational programs to exist, particularly to encourage younger kids to be outside and get them away from buttons and screens that detract from their abilities to communicate with each other, one on one.

Structural competition is forced on children at such an early age and things are lost in that process. For one, leisure time in the natural world. Being in nature makes kids better people, more sympathetic to friends, classmates, significant others. I am doing what I can do to nurture that," said Elting.

Elting began his career on Wall Street with Goldman, Sachs & Co. while still attending Columbia University. In 1979, he founded Elting Enterprises, Inc., which provided corporate finance services to broadcasters, and he later built a group of broadcast properties.

Elting said his education at Columbia provided him with a deeper insight into himself, other people, and a broader perspective on the world. "My Columbia experience was terrific. I had great professors, outstanding classes—whatever your interests are, you can pursue them and it is all within reach there.

Also, Columbia has great diversity that gave me an awareness of other people on the planet who aren't like me, who are not like the people I grew up with; yet, we are all in this together."

Although Elting spent his early twenties exploring the Everglades himself, he traces his passion for nature and environmental conservation back to his childhood in rural Illinois. As a young boy he sought refuge in the woods. When he was sad, he would climb one particular tree and sit on one branch to find peace.

"Mystery is being lost, you have to have mystery. Some people go to church on Sunday. I go into the woods. Nature is my church, my chapel."



## Sara Kadowaki '85, Importer and Distributor of Fine Teas

By Adrienne Anifant

Throughout the world, there are over 500 different kinds of tea. The quality and taste of tea are contingent on the environment in which the tea plant is grown as well as the dedication of the farmers who cultivate it and the manufacturers who process it.

"There are many similarities between tea and wine but wine drinking is very similar in every culture. Tea has a different culture attached to it," said Sara Kadowaki, founder and owner of Sara's Tea Caddie, an importer and wholesale distributor of high quality Japanese teas. "People in every culture have a different way of enjoying their tea, China, Japan, India, England, Russia—they all use different kinds of tea ware, different rituals for pouring tea, and for drinking it."

Kadowaki travels to small, exclusive tea growers throughout Japan in search of the finest quality teas for her clients. She established her business in 2002 with the mission to introduce the highest quality teas to Americans.

"I travel around Japan and inspect facilities," Kadowaki said. "I can tell how they are run. I can sense their enthusiasm and their passion for their work. When I go to a really good tea manufacturer, it is infectious."

Kadowaki grew up appreciating fine tea, something she learned from her parents. "My parents always got tea from the source, from the farm," she said. "Since having lived in America, I missed good tea." The desire to share her knowledge and discerning palate for fine teas inspired her international enterprise.

Born in Tokyo, Kadowaki grew up with a global perspective; her aunt and uncle were diplomats and traveled around the world. When her uncle was the Japanese ambassador to Jordan, Kadowaki moved to Jordan. When her mother's cousin lived in Cairo, she accepted an invitation to join him and moved to Egypt from Jordan, where she continued to expand her international experience and education.

"I had a love for the Middle East. Since childhood, I would watch Lawrence of Arabia and I knew I wanted to live there. I wanted to learn Arabic to complete my education," Kadowaki said.

Settling in the United States, Kadowaki graduated from Columbia with a BA in Arabic and Middle Eastern studies. She worked in trust and investment banking for over 10 years before founding Sara's Tea Caddie, LLC.

"Columbia broadened my horizons. You meet people from all over the world, and develop a worldly knowledge," she said. "And it prepared me to work hard. Very hard."

Active in the U.S. tea industry, Kadowaki is a member of the advisory board for the Specialty Tea Institute, the educational division of the U.S. Tea Association, where she teaches the Japanese tea class which she developed in 2015. Her class is now open to the public.



Filmmaker and 2017 Class Day speaker **Julia Bacha '03** appeared in "The Future Is..." a CAA mini-series podcast about Columbia alumnae that is produced for *The Low Down*. Bacha has served 12 years as the creative director at Just Vision. She has given two TED talks about women and nonviolence in conflict and shown her work at the Sundance, Berlin, and Tribeca film festivals.

Former leading dancer of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Dance Theatre of Harlem **Alicia Graf Mack '03** was recently appointed the director of the Juilliard Dance Division, one of the most prestigious dance training programs in the world.

Crown has published the first book of **Christian Di Spigna '07**, *Founding Martyr: The Life and Death of Dr. Joseph Warren, the American Revolution's Lost Hero*. The book evolved from a senior thesis project completed while at Columbia under the guidance of Dr. Eric Foner.

During the 2017-18 academic year, writer and photographer **James McGirk '07, '11** SOA was a public fellow at the University of Tulsa's Oklahoma Center for the Humanities. He writes books and articles and creates micro-documentaries about emerging technology, finance, development, and globalization.

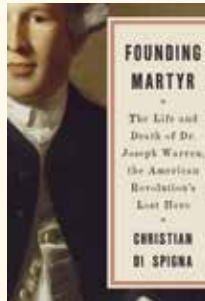
**Marey Jencks '08**, who writes under the pseudonym *Mara White*, recently published her ninth novel, *Touched*, about two Irish twins who survive a childhood of neglect and poverty by looking out for one another. Learn more at [MaraWhite.com](http://MaraWhite.com).

In February, **Jacqueline Wayans '08** was recognized by the Bronx Chamber of Commerce for her outstanding vision, dedication, and commitment to excellence as illustrated through her motivational speaking, books, and her weekly radio show, *Don't Give Up and Win*.

Chef **Melissa Muller '09, '12** JRN's book, *Sicily the Cookbook: Recipes Rooted in Traditions*, was published by Rizzoli in 2017. From wine grape varieties and cheese making techniques to the esoteric details of manna cultivation and ritual bread loaf shapes, she composed a treatise featuring the finer details of Sicilian cuisine.

## 2010s

**Tobias Fuchs '12** is pursuing a PhD in philosophy at Brown University. Last summer in Germany, he married Sara Hayat, a PhD candidate in architectural history at Brown. The newlyweds live in Providence, R.I.



## Michael Thatcher '89 Employs Technology to Contribute to the Greater Good

By Adrienne Anifant

Michael Thatcher '89, who graduated with a BS in music, says he has had an “eclectic, bizarre, and highly successful” career track that includes 15 years at Microsoft, being a technician for marine biologists, and working as a musician and composer. Since 2015, Thatcher has been the chief executive and president of Charity Navigator, an organization that evaluates the non-profit sector by providing ratings that guide donated money.

“If our ratings methodology is actually driving the right behaviors in the sector, then the positive impact can hit a wide variety of social engagements. If we get it right, then non-profits will be in a position to better execute their missions, and dollars that are given may lead to higher impact,” said Thatcher.

Although he loves his new position in northern New Jersey, Thatcher began his multifarious and circuitous career path as a guitarist and composer. He co-founded and co-directed an international dance company with his wife called Dance Music Light. As the son of a musician and oceanographic engineer, Thatcher embodies both of his parents’ passions. He grew up playing instruments and singing in the choir as a child, and at 15 he was writing software for his father.

At Columbia, classes in electronic music enabled Thatcher to harness his love of technology and integrate it with his studies in music. He began to write software to subsidize his musical projects, yet technology became his focus and the central point from where his career evolved.

Thatcher explained how the underlying theme throughout his career has possessed a technological element, but he has always applied his tech skills to enable his interests.

“I use my head to live in my heart,” said Thatcher.

After graduating from Columbia, Thatcher spent years at sea



conducting oceanographic research with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. He traveled around the world working as a technician supporting marine biologists who were collecting data from the ocean.

“I have a real love of the ocean, so this was some of the coolest work I have ever done,” he said.

Thatcher’s life at sea for eight months out of each year was not conducive to family life, so he and his family moved to Seattle where he began working for Microsoft as a technical contributor.

He later moved into his real love—technology policy work and the use of technology for social and economic improvement—becoming a chief technology officer within the public sector. He was based in Middle Eastern Africa for five years and in Asia for an additional five years.

“I was helping governments, non-technical people, and policy makers understand the implications that technology was bringing to their countries, the need for robust policies around protecting the identity of their citizens, and the need for low-cost or free connectivity,” said Thatcher.

He attributes his dynamic career to the independent thinking and creativity that was fostered at Columbia through his outstanding professors and classes.

“What was most meaningful about my experience at General Studies was that I created my own program, and I have gone and created my own life,” said Thatcher.

“It has been part of who I am and it has allowed me to evolve as a human being. It is a question of staying curious and allowing myself to evolve and to keep learning and challenging myself. In the end of the day, I want to be useful and helpful. I would like to leave this place better than I found it.”

Documentary filmmaker and photographer **Elegance Bratton '14** was recently featured in an article in the *New York Times*, “Category Is ... Filmmaker Realness,” that discussed his forthcoming documentary *Pier Kids*, current Viceland series, *My House*, 2015 book, *Bound by Night*, and other projects.

**Neal D. Curtis '14**, a doctoral student in English literature at University of Virginia, received a William R. Kenan Grant, an International Center for Jefferson Studies (ICJS) fellowship, and a research grant from the Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures (IHGC) at University of Virginia to perform research on Thomas Jefferson’s Rotunda library.

**Nathaniel Rahimzada '15GS/JTS** married Miriam Elyassian on May 27.

Based on his work as chief technology officer of Greenlight, **Brian Ricardo Patrick '16** is acting as a team mentor for IBM Watson’s Artificial Intelligence (AI) XPRIZE, a four-year, \$5 million competition, challenging teams globally to develop and demonstrate how humans can collaborate with powerful AI technologies to tackle the world’s grand challenges. InnoVie Health, one of his mentees, is one of 65 teams to advance to round two.

**Clayton Rains '16 and Belinda Seed '17SPS** were married on July 15, 2017 in Central Park in a private ceremony (as private as Central Park can get, at least!). The ceremony was led by Beth Lamont, the wife of the late philosopher Corliss Lamont.

**Hezi Ben Sasson '16GS/JTS** married Victoria **Wolf Lewis '13CC** in Israel in August 2017. Sasson currently works in finance in New York.





# In Memoriam

While at Columbia, **Karl Katz '52 (1929-2017)** became fascinated by art history. After graduation he worked briefly for the Met and then moved to Israel, where he was an archaeologist and curated the National Bezalel Museum, which became the Israel Museum. In 1969, he returned to New York to become director of the Jewish Museum. He went on to found and direct Muse Film and Television, helped conceptualize the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv, and was instrumental in the expansion of the International Center of Photography, to name a few institutions on which he had an impact. Katz was chairman for special projects at the Met from 1971 to 1980. While in this role, he founded the office of film and television, which he led until 1991. In 2016, he published his autobiography, *The Exhibitionist: Living Museums, Loving Museums*.

**Mary Yergan Hughes '55 (1930-2017)** was born in South Africa to parents who were missionaries. She attended Northfield Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts, where as one of a few black students, she served as president of the student council. Yergan Hughes was in the first cohort of African-American women to attend Wellesley College, yet due to illness, she left Wellesley after her junior year, and following a three-year rehabilitation, she finished her undergraduate degree at Columbia GS. After raising three daughters, she earned a master's degree in library science at Drexel University and shortly thereafter became a children's librarian at the Northwest Regional Library in Germantown, Penn. Yergan Hughes retired in 2003 from the library, where she was widely known for the after-school story hours she held for neighborhood children, instilling in them a love of books and reading. In addition, throughout her adult life, Yergan Hughes was active in several organizations for African American women.

Retired Judge **Arthur Lombard '61 (1942-2018)** of Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich. was born in New York City. He earned his JD from Harvard Law School, where he subsequently taught for a year. He moved to Michigan to teach at Wayne State University Law School in 1966, rising to the rank of professor, and serving as associate dean. At Wayne, he met Frederica Koller, another member of the Wayne Law faculty, who he married. It was a loving partnership that endured until her death in 2011. After

serving as dean of the Detroit College of Law, he was appointed as a Wayne County 3rd Circuit Court Judge in 1994, serving on the bench until his retirement in 2015. He had a love of classical chamber music and spent summers in Manchester, Vt., where he produced recordings of local artists.

After sending himself to boarding school at Blair Academy, **John Whitney Applegate '64 (1939-2017)** earned five academic degrees, including a master's degree in English literature and a master's degree in social work. He was married to Deborah Anne Neher (1941-2016). He was beloved by family, possessed hundreds of friends, and improved the lives of dozens of patients. His loved ones say that he was "loved by more than he would credit."

**Ingrid Bengis-Palei '70 (1944-2017)** was a writer, scholar, and fish monger. Her 1972 book, *Combat in the Erogenous Zone*, was nominated for a National Book Award. In 2003, Farrah, Strauss and Giroux published *Metro Stop Dostoevsky*, a memoir of her life in Russia during the collapse of the Soviet Union between 1990 and 1996. Bengis-Palei was a Fulbright Scholar in Russia for two and a half years, where she served as a distinguished professor in writing and comparative literature at St. Petersburg State University. Then, as a third act, she opened Ingrid Bengis Seafood in Deer Isle, Maine. Through the business, she became one of America's most famous fishmongers, providing seafood to top chefs in New York and California.

Journalist, researcher, and architectural historian **Christopher S. Grey '75 (1950-2017)** wrote "Streetscapes," a weekly column for the *New York Times* from 1987 to 2014. In addition, in 1975, he founded the Office for Metropolitan History, a research bureau for hire that provides information on New York City buildings. His award-winning writing was also featured in *House & Garden* magazine, among other publications.

After graduating from Columbia GS, **John D. Mara '82 (1958-2017)** earned his JD from Syracuse University in 1985. He had a long career working for the State of New York, first with the Human Rights Division and then for the Worker's Compensation Board, where he served as a law judge.



*By investing in Columbia students,  
I feel like I'm giving to the world."*

—MILAGRO RUIZ '84GS

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## **Honoring those who believed in you.**

Milagro Ruiz started taking classes at Columbia while working as a secretary at Low Library. She eventually earned a Newcombe Scholarship, allowing her to attend full time. Now she's paying that generosity forward with a gift to the Charlotte Newcombe Foundation Scholarship Fund at the School of General Studies, helping returning and nontraditional students earn their own Columbia education.

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*Along with Columbia University Executive Vice President and Dean of Faculty of Arts and Sciences David B. Madigan and School of General Studies Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch, University mascot, Roar-ee, welcomed Trinity College Dublin President Patrick Prendergast to campus on February 16. The event, held at Casa Italiana, recognized the signing of the agreement of the newly-launched Dual BA Program between Trinity College Dublin and Columbia University. See the full story on page 4.*



PHOTO: EILEEN BARROSO