

THE OWL

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES



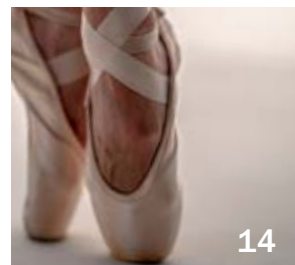
**Forecasting Success:
20 Years of Innovative
Admissions**

**After the Last
Curtain Call:
Dancers
In Transition**

**Remembering
Dean Emeritus
Peter J. Awn**

2019-2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS



IN THIS ISSUE

- Feature Story 14** **The Transitional Dance**
 Since childhood, most professional dancers sacrificed, showed discipline, and gave themselves over dreams that required laser focus on their goals. But what happens when their dream careers are closer to the end than the beginning?
- Cover Story 18** **Forecasting Success**
 For more than 20 years, GS Admissions has used a distinctive process to successfully evaluate prospective students' potential impact on the greater good at Columbia and beyond. The stories of four alumni who are now well established in their chosen careers illustrate the powerful results of this holistic, time-tested process.

- 4** **GS, Columbia, and COVID-19**
- 12** **Remembering School of General Studies Dean Emeritus Peter J. Awn**
 A beacon of healing and redemption for so many, GS Dean Emeritus Peter J. Awn was one of the most beloved and impactful people in the history of Columbia University School of General Studies.
- 42** **Kikka Hanazawa '00 Employs Her Smarts**
 Tokyo native Kikka Hanazawa uses her knowledge of the fashion industry and her passion for social change to make a difference for the world.

SECTIONS

- 4 In General: Campus News
- 17 Faculty Spotlight
- 24 The General View
- 26 Giving
- 28 Graduation: GS Class Day Gallery, Postbac Premed Class Day Gallery, and New Grad Notes
- 37 General Interest: Alumni News
- 44 GS Alumnus Spotlight
- 45 Postbac Alumna Spotlight
- 46 The General Direction: Alumni Notes
- 53 In Memoriam
- 56 Last Look

THE OWL

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF
 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90
 Dean

Curtis Rodgers
 Vice Dean

Jill Galas Hickey
 Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations

Aviva Zablocki
 Director of Alumni Relations

Editor

Allison Scola
 Communications, Special Projects

Contributors

Adrienne Anifant
 Eileen Barroso
 Nancy J. Brandwein
 Hannah Brassord
 Eric Buttermann
 David Dini
 Skylar Failla
 Gilda Fasullo
 Sara Fox
 Alexander Gelfand
 Bruce Gilbert
 Christina Gray '15
 Kathrin Havrilla-Sanchez
 Ashley Kuitunen
 Noah Kutzy
 Kristen Lykins
 April Moorhouse
 Jennifer Pellerito
 Sirin Samman
 Allison Scola
 Aviva Zablocki

Published December 2020

Questions, Comments, and Change of Address

Office of Alumni and Development
 408 Lewisohn Hall, MC 4121
 2970 Broadway
 New York, NY 10027-9829
 gsowl@columbia.edu
 Tel 212-851-7432
 Fax 212-851-1957

The Owl is designed by
Di Vision Creative Group
 New York, NY

LETTER FROM THE DEAN



Dear GS Alumni and Friends,

As I reflect upon the heartbreak and challenges we have faced since the last printing of *The Owl*, I am struck by my feelings of pride in how our amazing and resilient GS community has risen to meet these moments. When I step back, our school motto, *Lux in Tenebris Lucet*—the light shines in the darkness—is taking on new meaning. From the tragic loss of our beloved Dean Emeritus Peter J. Awn in the winter of 2019 to the difficult circumstances of the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to express my deepest gratitude and admiration for the strength and tenacity of the Columbia University School of General Studies alumni, students, and staff.

As you read through the pages of this issue, I hope you will understand my sentiment. The articles, photos, and stories herein capture the vibrant spirit of who we are. From the March 2019 Military Ball's final roll call ceremony that recognized our fallen hero Dean Awn (described on page 39) to the remarkable contributions our alumni and students have made to the greater good—related to the global pandemic and beyond—your light shines.

In the face of COVID-19, GS saw a 20 percent increase in applications for fall 2020. We enrolled more than 800 new undergraduate and Postbac Premed Prehealth students and moved our support services online. Before the era of social distancing, alumni and current students were engaged more than ever—and now, finding opportunity instead of obstacles, they have shared hundreds of interactive conversations and events virtually, thanks to the creative contributions and tireless organization of the GS staff and so many generous graduates (learn more on pages 39 to 43).

Members of our community have contributed their talents and know-how to many COVID-19 causes. Faculty of Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia School of Social Work, and the School of General Studies collaborated to establish the new Justice and Pandemics Preparedness Academy (learn more on page 5). Military veteran students served patients and doctors at field hospitals in Manhattan. Andrew Satz '15 used data science to help develop effective treatments for COVID-19, and Kikka Hanazawa '00 used

her network in the fashion industry to produce and donate PPE to frontline medical workers, to name just two of our alumni who have made significant contributions.

Meanwhile, the accomplishments of members of our community extend across industries and causes. Poet Louise Glück, who attended GS in the 1960s, recently was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. The work of Eliza Factor '97 and Akiva Zablocki '07 is impacting families with children with special needs (see Alumni Notes).

The leading stories of this issue illustrate the legacy GS has established over recent decades and the outstanding professionals our graduates have become. "The Transitional Dance" recounts how a Columbia education has helped formulate the next moves of alumni who came from the world of professional dance, while "Forecasting Success" not only explains how our distinctive admissions process expertly identifies the potential of nontraditional prospective students, but it also details the achievements of four alumni who may not have been considered for admission by our traditionally-minded peer institutions.

I hope as you read *The Owl* you too will garner a sense of pride and embrace our motto, *Lux in Tenebris Lucet*, with new fervor. The sense of resilience, professionalism, and thoughtfulness that exists in our community is evident, and as a result, I am inspired every day to work on your behalf. I have so much admiration for each of you, and I send you my thanks and appreciation for your light. Keep shining!

All the best always,

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90
 Dean

IN GENERAL

GS, Columbia, and COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 11, all course instruction at Columbia moved online. On March 16, all GS administrative offices moved to remote operations. A pass/fail grade policy was implemented for the spring semester and students were offered emergency funding to transition out of Columbia housing. Over 400 GS students took advantage of a \$500 grant offered by the University.

256 dual degree students living and studying in France and Ireland were supported in moving to safe environments, and the GS Board of Visitors raised more than \$200,000 to create a COVID-19 emergency fund to assist GS students. Rent-abatement initiatives were put into place and educational financing was enhanced.

Courses for the 2020 summer session were conducted remotely and a normal grading policy was restored. The ability to study remotely attracted a record number of students. Enrollment for the summer sessions was up 57% over summer 2019.

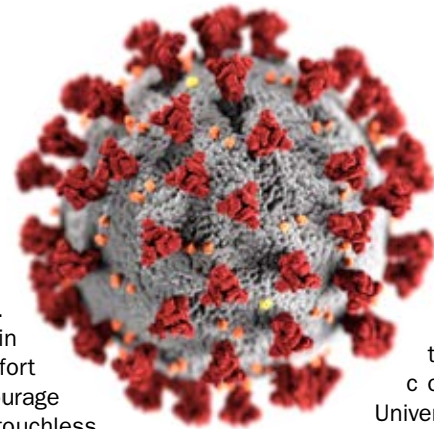
During June, July, and August, faculty reconceived their course instruction for fall 2020, redesigning teaching methodology for an online environment and integrating novel technologies to facilitate remote learning.

All undergraduate courses for the fall semester were administered online and will remain online or will be offered as a hybrid for the spring 2021 semester. Faculty members are employing synchronous and asynchronous teaching concepts. The academic calendar was modified to three shorter terms featuring an array of new seven-week immersive courses. There is an ongoing effort to create co-curricular and extra-curricular programming to support community building, even if at a distance.

About 1000 students who are living in Columbia residences and faculty and staff who are working on campus are required to participate in weekly testing for COVID-19. Anyone participating in campus activities must abide by the Columbia Compact, an agreement that represents a commitment by each person to contribute

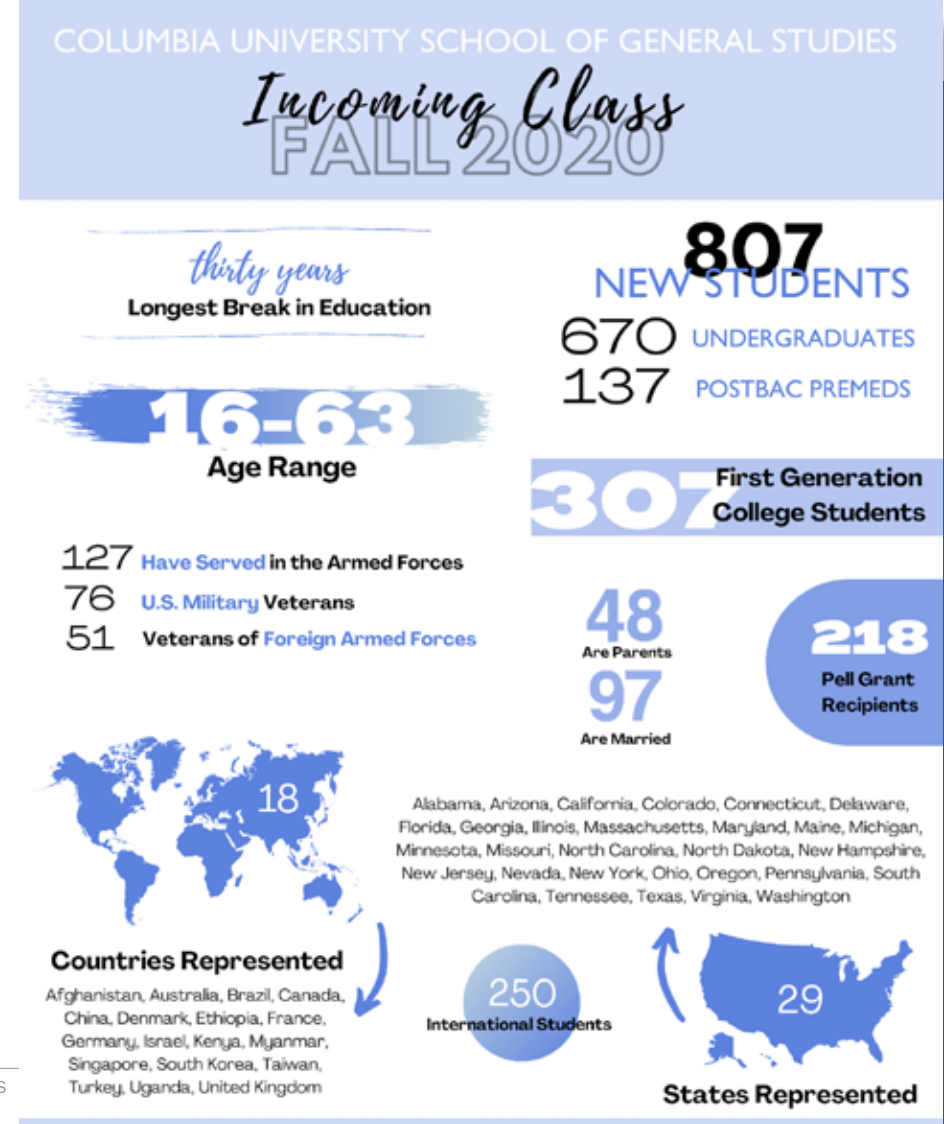
to the common cause of reducing the transmission of COVID-19 within and around the University community. The Compact works in concert with a significant effort by the University to encourage social distancing through touchless technology and reservation systems alongside with sanitizing enhancements throughout all facilities.

There are approximately 4,400 students living in and studying from off-campus Columbia residences, and approximately 15,400 students living and studying remotely, including those based in



more than 115 countries.

In a written address to the University community, University President Lee C. Bollinger said, "Thanks to the tireless work of many, I am fully confident we can provide a meaningful academic experience no matter where our students reside. And so today I welcome all Columbia students, faculty, and staff to this new era with a full heart and enormous appreciation for your patience, resilience, and determination."



GS LAUNCHES JUSTICE AND PANDEMICS PREPAREDNESS ACADEMY

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised urgent questions about the failure of the public health and political systems in the United States and throughout the globe to protect all people, especially those in vulnerable and marginalized groups. As a call to action, together with Mailman School of Public Health and the Columbia School of Social Work, the School of General Studies created the Justice and Pandemics Preparedness Academy, a co-curricular activity for undergraduates across the University.

The Academy is an interdisciplinary experience consisting of introductory lectures, a weekly journal club, and production of an individual or collaborative project. It offers an opportunity for undergraduates to collaborate with one another and faculty mentors on service and research projects while exploring the history of pandemics, scientific epidemiological and social justice concepts, and frameworks of effective public health and social justice research and practice.

With successful completion of the program, students will strengthen their skills in critical thinking and reflection, research, speaking, and writing and be able to analyze the relationship between illness and the ways social, cultural, economic and political factors shape health outcomes.

The Academy will be offered each of the three semesters in the 2020-2021 academic year and will seek to accept 20 undergraduates each semester. In Fall 2020, the Academy welcomed 24 students.

Rosen-Metsch Establishes GS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce

GS Dean Lisa Rosen Metsch appointed eight staff members, four current students, and four alumni to the new GS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce. The committee is meeting regularly to develop its overall goals, identify initial areas of work, and implement a plan and timeline to work towards an anti-racist, multicultural school that builds on GS's long-term commitment to educational access and equity for students of all backgrounds.



MOLLY OLA PINNEY '09 WAS AWARDED THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE FOR HER WORK AROUND THE WORLD WITH THE GLOBAL AUTISM PROJECT.

10 2020 marks the 10-year anniversary of the Dual BA Program with Sciences Po. There are currently over 300 students in the Program.

More than 2,500 students are currently enrolled across all of GS's programs. For entrance in Fall 2020, GS received 20% more undergraduate degree program applications than in 2019.

Louise Glück Awarded The Nobel Prize In Literature

In October, Louise Glück, who spent years in the 1960s studying at Columbia GS, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. On behalf of the University, President Bollinger extended his congratulations to Glück, writing, "At risk of appearing to celebrate—or even claim some credit for—the achievement of anyone with a Columbia tie (which I am, in fact, always happy to do), I want to extend the University's warmest congratulations to this year's Nobel laureate in Literature, poet Louise Glück. Ms. Glück took classes at Columbia's School of General Studies and our School of the Arts, and she later taught at SoA. In 1993, Columbia and the Pulitzer Board awarded her the Pulitzer Prize for *The Wild Iris*. Ms. Glück was a treasured traveler through our gates, and we delight in her extraordinary moment of richly deserved, international recognition."



While at GS, Glück was published in *Quarto*, the School of General Studies literary magazine that went on to become Columbia's official undergraduate literary magazine. She attended night classes with the poets Léonie Adams and Stanley Kunitz, teachers she credits with helping her find her own voice.

IN GENERAL

4

Online Arts & Sciences courses offered in Fall 2019

2,476

Online Arts & Sciences courses offered in Fall 2020

“I am thrilled to have joined the School of General Studies. I made a commitment when I began my career in higher education to join institutions that believe in transforming education with a profound interest in the overall student experience.”

– Marlyn Delva, EdD
Dean of Students at Columbia GS



On June 1, Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz was selected to be the eighth chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). Prior to serving as chancellor, Schwartz served as provost at JTS and dean of the Gershon Kekst Graduate School. For 25 years, she was dean of List College, GS’s undergraduate Joint Program partner.



24

THE NUMBER OF UNDERGRADUATES IN THE INAUGURAL PROGRAM OF THE JUSTICE AND PANDEMICS PREPAREDNESS ACADEMY.



In 2020, the Columbia Core Curriculum celebrated its centennial year. Today, all GS students take University Writing, Art Humanities, Music Humanities, and the Global Core. In Fall 2020, for the first time, GS students were able to enroll in Columbia College sections of Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization.



Before she graduated, Soo Lee '19, an advocate for people with disabilities, successfully petitioned CU Facilities to have the wheelchair lift in Lewisohn Hall upgraded. Lee is currently a student at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health.

Current student James Van Hess served as Vice President of External Operations of Columbia University Formula SAE in 2019-2020. As a part of the group, he helped design, fabricate, assemble, and pilot a formula-style open-wheel vehicle. During

summer 2020, he interned at Honda R&D as a simulation CAE engineer working with driver-in-the-loop simulations. In spring 2021, Van Hess will matriculate at SEAS for a master’s in mechanical engineering.

LEADING THE WAY

With nearly 500 veterans enrolled at GS, Columbia University boasts the highest undergraduate veteran student enrollment in the Ivy League—enrolling more than all other Ivy League schools combined—while maintaining a graduation rate above 90 percent and a record of job and graduate school placement that equals Columbia’s non-veteran graduates.

RECOGNITION

GS students were recently awarded prestigious scholarships and fellowships including:

- Belfer International and Global Affairs Fellowship at Harvard University**
- Kathryn Davis Fellows for Peace**
- Knight-Hennessy Scholars Program at Stanford University**
- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship**
- Pat Tillman Scholars Program**
- Schwarzman Scholars Program at Tsinghua University**



IN GENERAL



Sciences Po Dedicates Reims Campus Library to Late Dean Emeritus Peter J. Awn

In September 2019, Sciences Po President Frédéric Mion hosted a ceremony in Reims to dedicate the French university campus' main library in honor of late Dean Emeritus of the Columbia University School of General Studies Peter J. Awn. The newly-named Bibliothèque Peter Awn will hold the beloved dean's personal book collection and serve as an intellectual commons for students. Relatives of Awn and numerous students, staff, faculty, parents, and alumni of both institutions were present at the ceremony. Speakers included President Mion, GS Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, past Vice President for International Affairs at Sciences Po Francis Verrillaud, Vice Dean of the School of General Studies Curtis Rodgers, and Norman Laurila, a lifelong friend of Awn.

"Peter was never one to seek the spotlight, but somehow the spotlight always found him," Rodgers said. "While he was always the first to thank everyone else and give credit to everyone else and was a reluctant recipient of all the honors and accolades he received during his life, this honor—the naming of the library on this campus—would be the one he would embrace most."

The notable distinction preserves Awn's legacy of belief in the power of nontraditional, innovative education.

Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers Honored For His Service To Veterans

On March 29, 2019 at the 9th Annual Columbia University Military Ball, Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers was honored with the Peter J. Awn Lifetime Service Award by members of U.S. Military Veterans of Columbia University (MilVets). The award honors a lifetime of outstanding support for military veterans and service members.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for recognizing me for this work that I've been called to," Rodgers said. "But I have to ask one thing—be there with me as we go forward because there are so many great accomplishments ahead and there is so much more work to be done."

As vice dean, Rodgers is the senior administrative officer of GS. During his time at Columbia University, he has gained broad experience identifying a variety of top-performing adult, returning, veteran, nontraditional, and traditional students, as well as developed innovative enrollment and retention strategies for these distinct populations. Rodgers' impact on the workings of the School over the past two decades is profound.

"It was truly a heartwarming and an electrifying moment to see Curtis awarded the Peter J. Awn Lifetime Service Award," said Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, Dean of Columbia University School of General Studies. "It is because of all that Curtis has done over the past 20 years that GS is the destination for student veterans. He is the reason why Columbia is a national leader in veteran transition and integration.

"Curtis is an exceptional, incredibly talented, brilliant, and kind leader who has mentored countless students, alumni, and staff over his 20 years at GS," continued Rosen-Metsch. "When we announced his recognition, the room, in which Peter's family was present along with dozens of MilVets who Curtis had personally recruited to Columbia and supported over the years, exploded with joy and thunderous applause, for it was so meaningful for Curtis to receive this award just one month after the loss of our beloved Dean Awn.

"He truly deserves such recognition."



Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers (pictured left) with Mark Franklin '19 (right), former President of MilVets

PHOTO: SIRIN SAMMAN



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GS LAUNCHES DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM WITH TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

By Christina Gray

Last December, Columbia University School of General Studies (GS) announced a new dual degree program between Tel Aviv University and Columbia University.

The program, which welcomed its inaugural class in the fall of 2020, transcends traditional study abroad opportunities by providing the chance to pursue a rigorous undergraduate liberal arts education spanning two continents. Upon completion of the four-year program, graduates earn two bachelor's degrees, one from each institution.

"I am especially excited about our partnership with Tel Aviv University, which is consistently ranked among the best academic institutions worldwide. By giving students the opportunity to study full time at a top-tier university in the Middle East before bringing them to study in the Ivy League, they will not only benefit from being immersed in a wide range of cultures and experiences, but will also make an immense contribution to the Columbia undergraduate classroom," said Lisa Rosen-Metsch, Dean of the School of General Studies.

Students will spend years one and two at Tel Aviv University (TAU), Israel's largest and most comprehensive higher education institution, studying within one of eight academic programs, after which they matriculate at Columbia to complete a major and the University's Core Curriculum in years three and four.

"This is the first time that an Israeli university partners with a leading American university such as Columbia University in a joint undergraduate program of this kind," said Prof. Raanan Rein, Vice President of Tel Aviv University. "This program represents a milestone in Tel Aviv University's globalization strategy."

New Public Health Concentration Prepares a "Global Citizenry"

By Nancy J. Brandwein

It is easy for college students to feel helpless in the face of ever-mounting crises: gun violence, the opioid epidemic, climate change, mass incarceration, healthcare inequities. However, a new special concentration in public health gives Columbia and Barnard undergraduates the perspective and tools with which to address these and other pressing national and global problems.

The number of public health programs for undergraduates has more than doubled since 2007, according to a study by the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health, but almost all of these programs are pre-professional. Victoria Rosner, Dean of Academic Affairs for the School of General Studies, emphasizes that this expressly liberal arts concentration aligns perfectly with Columbia's Core Curriculum because, "Public health courses focus on meta level thinking. They focus on reasoning, analytical and critical thinking skills, and, most importantly ... using knowledge to help solve problems from multiple perspectives."

Dana March, Director of Undergraduate Studies at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, considers public health key to developing a "global citizenry," and after seeing undergraduate public health courses become ever more popular on campus, she proposed the concentration and teaches its foundation course: Introduction to Public Health: Population Health and Society. Other required courses are Fundamentals of Global Health, Social History of American Public Health, Your Longer Life: Biology, Person and Society, and Environmental Justice. Students must take five required courses and three electives to complete the concentration.

March notes that Columbia GS students, many of whom have witnessed the HIV and, now, coronavirus crises, and who come to school with more life experience, are "really well poised to take what they're learning in the classroom and do even more with it." One such student is Jeffrey Scott Bailey '17, who came to GS after a career in TV and film acting and three years as a surgical first assistant. March's course, Introduction to Public Health, was crucial to helping him choose his life's path. Bailey is currently completing an MS in nursing at Columbia Presbyterian, after which he will pursue a Doctor of Nursing Practice with a focus on women's health and oncology.

"The most important thing was having a snapshot of where you are currently," said Bailey. "It prepares you for the problems you're going to face not only with American populations but also globally. March [and the public health coursework] inspire you to meet those challenges."

JTS'S 21ST CENTURY CAMPUS PROJECT

By Nancy J. Brandwein

In 2015, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) embarked on an ambitious capital improvement plan not only to bring the campus into the 21st century but also to make it a global center for Jewish life and community for decades to come. This 21st Century Campus Project includes a modern residence hall located within the flagship quadrangle at 122nd Street and Broadway as well as a state-of-the-art library, performance space, and conference facility.

During the Fall 2019 semester the first List College students trundled wheelie bins of their belongings into the residence hall, which opens directly onto the JTS campus. Designed to encourage community among students and allow them to grow together with shared Jewish values, the residence features large common areas for cooking, studying, and sharing meals on each floor. The residence hall also features a large light-filled "moadon," Hebrew for gathering space, where students can meet, work, relax, and hold holiday celebrations and social events.

"All of our new spaces are designed to encourage not only shared Jewish living, but innovation, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas," said Marc Gary, Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer of JTS. This is especially true of both the new library and auditorium. The library's entire rare materials collection, including 11,000 manuscripts and 25,000 rare printed books, among thousands of other artifacts, will be stored on site at the new facility. However, in order to create larger collaborative spaces, JTS is moving many of its current books off campus and digitizing them. A dynamic exhibit area for displaying rare treasures will highlight one of the world's oldest surviving decorated *ketubbot* and a wedding poem in the world's oldest and most important manuscript of the "Machzor Vitry"—the earliest record of Ashkenazic Jewish practice. Rotating exhibits of rare materials will encourage

students and scholars alike to engage with JTS's unique, special collection.

According to Gary, "All of our new spaces are designed to encourage not only shared Jewish living, but innovation, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas." In keeping with JTS's long history of hosting enriching community events, the performance space's design will allow the school to present cutting-edge work by Jewish theatre, music, and performing artists, as well as discussions by leading thinkers, writers, and public figures on Judaism and significant issues of the day. The new 200-seat auditorium will feature a larger stage, excellent acoustics, and advanced streaming technology, enabling events to reach an increasingly global audience. Joining all the buildings—old and new—a light-filled atrium will welcome visitors, encourage relationships, and reflect the inclusive, open, dynamic spirit of JTS in the 21st Century.

"All of our spaces are designed to encourage not only shared Jewish living, but innovation, collaboration, and exchange of ideas."



IMAGES COURTESY OF JTS

By Nancy J. Brandwein

The Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po is such an exceptional undergraduate degree program that it is surprising when two members of the same family matriculate; yet, three sibling pairs have this Program in common.

Marie-Sophie '16 (Reims) and Julie-Anne Revault '18 (Menton) grew up in New York City as French citizens to French parents and attended high school at the Lycée Français. "I always enjoyed comparing and contrasting both cultures," said Marie-Sophie. Her sister Julie-Anne concurred that growing up as a Frenchwoman in New York played a significant role in her decision to apply to the Dual BA Program, for when Julie-Anne attended her sister's political science class at Sciences Po, the visit convinced her that the Program "was the place I needed to be."

Both share a keen interest in social sciences, a specialty of the French university. Marie-Sophie majored in economics at Sciences Po and Columbia, and she earned law degrees at Sciences Po and University of Pennsylvania. At Menton, Julie-Anne immersed herself in Mediterranean-Middle East Studies and double majored in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) and political science at Columbia. Enrolling after her older sister meant Julie-Anne met a lot of people who knew her sibling, and they consequently had common friends, especially at Columbia.

Sisters Julia '17 and Elisa '19 Sisto both studied at Reims. Born to an Italian father and American mother in Monaco, "a country smaller than Central Park with many international residents," the sisters attended a strict French lycée and explained that they "were bathed in two cultures at home and a third [at school] ... so we were really attracted to the Dual BA's international outlook."

Long hours at the lycée did not permit them

Dual Duos: Sibling Pairs Share Their International Dual Degree Experiences

time to pursue extracurricular interests, so Julia was drawn to Reims, where there were many ways to explore photography, art, and fashion. A student of psychology at Sciences Po and business management at Columbia, Julia put on the first fashion show at Reims and thinks this spurred Elisa to apply and participate in student life, too, albeit in a way that aligned with her studies in law at Reims and in human rights at Columbia.

While their enrollments never overlapped, Elisa "got the perks of having some great course, professor, and restaurant recommendations," along with common friendships from the Reims class of 2018. Furthermore, Elisa devilishly said, "I learnt some fun orientation stories about my sister's debut in Reims!" But she keenly remains mum about what those were.

With a Cuban father and an Irish mother, Ignacio '16 (Menton) and Monica '20 (Reims) Villalon spent their early years in Senegal, and returned for summers while living in Gainesville, Florida during the school year. As friends stayed in that college town after high school, the siblings gravitated to an international experience and similar studies. Ignacio studied Middle East and Mediterranean political science and history at Menton and MESAAS at Columbia, which Monica pursued as well, along with the Africa program in economics at Reims. Both siblings agree that Ignacio's expanded worldview influenced Monica's decision to apply. "His points of cultural, social, and intellectual reference grew exponentially ... and I wanted to understand those ... too."

For Ignacio, studying abroad had one unexpected effect. "Paradoxically it was through this program that I realized just how American I was ... My sister and I talk about this quite a bit." As with all "Dual Duos," conversation is enriched by their shared transatlantic experiences.



"We were bathed in two cultures at home and a third [at school] ... so we were really attracted to the Dual BA's international outlook."

- Julia '17 and Elisa '19 Sisto



Remembering School of General Studies Dean Emeritus Peter J. Awn

A beacon
of healing and
redemption
for so many

Peter J. Awn (1944 – 2019) was one of the most beloved and, as Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger eloquently stated, impactful people in the history of Columbia University School of General Studies. No one cared more for our entire school community—students, staff, alumni, friends, and family—than Dean Awn.

Peter served as Dean of the School of General Studies from 1997 to 2017. When he passed on February 17, 2019 from injuries sustained when he was struck by a car weeks before, the loss to our community was overwhelming. “Peter personified the School’s character, its values, and its mission,” wrote President Bollinger in a letter to the community. “In every way that mattered, he and the School were one. This unmatched legacy, in addition to his remarkable scholarship and teaching as Professor of Islamic and Comparative Religion, made Peter, without question, one of the essential leaders of Columbia University’s modern era.”

Bollinger went on to say, “The rare gift [Peter] was able to bestow upon generations of General Studies students was his unconditional belief that Columbia was better for their presence and his insistence that they believe this as fervently as he did. Peter recognized that General Studies represented the “cutting edge of undergraduate education,” as he put it, and under his stewardship the School has been able to fulfill its promise. For him, that meant a student body heavily comprising student veterans, first-generation students, and international students, whose age and life experiences would further diversify and enrich our undergraduate classrooms.”

Peter was a rare and special person who leaves many legacies. President Bollinger said during the May 14, 2019 celebration of Peter’s life, “He was a mix of personal qualities and life experiences: an ex-Jesuit priest, a scholar of Islamic studies—his life, like his socks, was always a surprise. He was the very embodiment of a humanist in the true sense of that word, as a person who relished the realities of the diversity of humanity.”

Larry J. Lawrence ’69, ’71BUS described Peter’s personality as effervescent and slightly mischievous, saying there was “a twinkle almost always present in his

eyes,” yet behind “the soft, deep chuckle which signaled his delight at the turn of the conversation,” was, as John H. Coatsworth, then- Columbia University Provost, described him, a maverick—a strong manager with razor sharp logic and a clear vision of what would best benefit Columbia students.

Peter was motivated to serve others, Lawrence explained. He possessed “a selfless devotion ... first as a priest, then as a scholar and teacher, then as the leader of a block of nontraditional students, a role in which he exemplified the concept of leadership as service rather than as a quest for any form of individual glory or recognition.”

Frédéric Mion, President of Sciences Po, the French university with which GS has a cutting-edge dual degree program, said in tribute, Peter’s “mentorship, charismatic presence, and genuine kindness were an inspiration to students and staff alike.”

“Dean Awn took on the bold issues from fighting for the rights of transgender students to supporting the opening of a food pantry in Lerner Hall,” said Dean of the School of General Studies Lisa Rosen-Metsch ’90. “It is only Dean Awn who could have the gravitas, the elegance, and the courage to be the person who was a loud voice in both bringing ROTC back to campus and being the faculty member to cut the ribbon for the Donaldson Lounge for LGBTQ students in Schapiro Hall.”

A generous educator, Peter was known to be completely invested in his students. Najam Haider, Associate Professor in the Department of Religion, explained that Peter, who taught Introduction to Islam for decades, was famous for grading and commenting on every single paper himself. “He had a thoroughly unique presence and an amazing knack for presenting information without losing the interest of an audience,” Haider said.

Over the years “Dean Awn gave us so many gifts and tied so many bows for thousands of us at Columbia,” waxed poetic Rosen-Metsch. “There are few people in this world that I can say have had such a tremendous impact through his personal relationships, teaching, scholarship, service, and to our social structure here at Columbia. As we reflect on Peter’s legacy and heal from our loss, I encourage all of us to honor his memory by embracing the opportunities to reevaluate our beliefs and to celebrate the amazing possibilities that occur when we open our minds and our classrooms.”



DEAN
PETER
AWN

1944–2019

THE TRANSITIONAL DANCE

Since starting to dance, most professional dancers sacrificed, showed discipline, and gave themselves over to an immense dream.

By Eric Butterman

They required laser focus on their ultimate goal. But what happens when their dream career is closer to the end than the beginning? Or what if the music stops all together? They rely on the foundation of their Columbia education to help formulate their next moves.

Life is a dance. And for those who live to move, the tempo of life may change, but their desire for motion keeps beating long after the stage lights dim.

Stepping Into A Spot On A Different Big Stage

The northwest suburbs of Chicago are a hub of passion for sports—Da Bears, Da Bulls ... you get Da picture. So, when a local athlete arrives at the big time in one of these sports, it is often a question of whether they can handle “the big stage.”

Michael Novak '09, who tried many popular sports in those northwest Chicago suburbs yet failed to find his ballplayer footing, would ultimately succeed as an athlete on an actual stage. “When I found dancing, I found a part of myself,” Novak says. And after a failed audition with the famed Paul Taylor Company in 2008, Novak found he had only just begun to compete for a spot. “The first time, I at least made it to the final group—I looked at that as encouragement, not an exit.”

Then, the next time, in 2010, Paul Taylor himself *would* choose Novak—but not for the last time.

In 2018, at age 87, Taylor thought he should find a successor to lead his modern dance company. After years of dancing for him, Novak, much to his own surprise, was selected to become the second artistic director since Paul Taylor Company's founding in 1954.

“I didn't expect it, and I knew I just had so much to learn,” Novak says.

Yet he remembered, he had more than his experience as a dancer to reference, he also had his Columbia education, which he immediately called upon. “Different skills in communications were widely

emphasized,” he says, explaining that partly because of his liberal arts degree, “I have the confidence I can do this job. Now it's so much more about what I can help others to do.”

Novak knows that one day the curtain will fall for the last time for him as a performing dancer, and he feels fortunate about having this second act in his career. “I see the opportunity but also the trust that [Paul] put in me when he chose me,” Novak says. “There's a terrific history here, and I want to honor it.”

Finding Her Voice

Alicia Graf Mack '03 has a resume that flies through the air and causes all to take notice. Both having been a principal dancer at the Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, she now calls The Juilliard School her home. As director of its dance division since July of last year, she inherently knows the hunger to succeed that student dancers face—because for her too, that fervor came from within, when she could barely walk.

“All my life, dancing is what I wanted,” she says. “Now, I want it for my students.”

Though Graf Mack still occasionally performs, mostly that life is left behind, and now she must inspire. “I'm just trying to forward the ideals of being innovative, pushing boundaries, and finding talented students and helping them to get the education they need to then generate what it is to become the future of our profession,” she says.

With where she now stands, it may be hard to believe that Graf Mack once had trouble finding her own voice.

“It was a hard decision to move on, but I hadn't been home in eight years, and I knew I wanted to come back to the United States. I felt returning to college was part of doing the first step right.”

—Larissa Higgins '10

“I actually thought I would flunk out of Columbia because you're required in classes to contribute to the discussions,” she says. “I was so afraid to talk and share. But then I actually ended up taking a public speaking course which made the difference—so much that I took it twice.”

Graf Mack singled out economics, accounting, and finance classes as particular standout courses. Not exactly unrelated when you consider fundraising is a key part of her current job description. Of course, the most important part of her position is working with students. “Getting to know the dancers has been very special, and, with their performances, my heart bursts with pride when I see how much work they've put in,” she says.

As Graf Mack's performing career gets closer to its final steps, she sees gratitude. “I wanted to be a ballerina since I was a toddler, and it was unimaginable that it would happen,” she says, still with a sense of surprise. “I toured so many places, performed in major theatres, and had a chance to inspire young people who wanted to have a similar career.” And now, from her position at Juilliard, she continues that work, yet from the other side of the curtain.

Higgins' Place in the World

Larissa Higgins '10 traveled the world since she was a teen, dancing for the Hartford Ballet, Hamburg Ballet, and Dresden Semperoper Ballet, but always knowing that eventually, her world of dance would stop spinning. Despite her career success, she made the decision to walk away in 2006.

She has not danced professionally since.

“It was a hard decision to move on, but I basically hadn't been home in eight years, and I knew I wanted to come back to the United States,” she says. “I felt returning to college was part of doing that first step right.”

While at Columbia, Higgins found a way to still be involved in her old life—a move that not only helped quench her thirst to share her enthusiasm for dance, but also inspired her career aspirations. A founder of Columbia Dance Collaborative in 2007, together with fellow students, she brought professional and amateur dancers from the University community together to share the joy of this age-old art. “But, again, I made the decision not to dance,” she says. “I needed to be done with it, so I instead focused on the business side, such as public relations.

Helping get Columbia Dance Collaborative off the ground showed me I loved being a part of launching new things.”

She has continued to do just that.

Over the last few years through her roles



PHOTO: GREGORY COSTANZO

at ZX Adventures, owned by Anheuser-Busch, and now her own business, Deadly Clean, she has exploited both her professional dance experience and her Columbia education. “Ballet made me used to being in another country and having to maneuver,” she says. “You’d get used to your bearings and need to get down to the job at hand.”



Higgins credits Columbia GS as the perfect partner for a life-altering change in her routine. “I just don’t know a better school for helping with this transition,” she says. “The classes in psychology assisted me in understanding what people respond to, and the school is what it says it is—it understands the non-traditional student and shows them a path to graduating and thriving.”

A New Start

Eleena Melamed ’06, like Higgins, also decided to make a clean break from dance. Joining the famed American Ballet Theatre at the age of 17, she loved the challenges her career presented, but through much of her successful tenure, she dealt with the personal battle of having an eating disorder.

Melamed wanted to use her struggles to help others, and so she appeared in a NOVA documentary on eating disorders in the ballet world and became a spokesperson on the subject, helping countless others with her outspoken advocacy. After 5 years with ABT, she took a break from ballet to see what a change might bring. She felt so much healthier physically and spiritually, she opted to move on.

“Thinking about having a career which didn’t have anything to do with my appearance was liberating ...” she says. “I saw the door slightly opened in



terms of seeing what was out there beyond ballet. A world where no one could tell me what I had to look like physically and my career didn’t depend on it, and I leapt at that opportunity.”

That meant finding an answer to the question of who she was separate from ballet. Columbia School of General Studies, she says, helped reveal that. With every stimulating class, with every success, she would find a new clue to answering her personal question.

She thought she would be a journalist. An internship at a media company gave her one of her biggest clues—the business side of that company interested her more.

In 2006, Melamed graduated as valedictorian with a bachelor’s in political science.

After Columbia, she was recruited by Lehman Brothers and embarked on a career as an investment banker. She worked with Lehman Brothers Private Equity, where she helped them through bankruptcy during the financial crisis. Eventually she became vice president at Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and an associate client advisor for Bridgewater Associates, one of the most well-known hedge funds in the country. She recently started as a principal at KKR, working with the firm’s strategic partners in the Customized Portfolio Solutions Group.

“I love working on deals, structuring investments, and helping my clients achieve their goals,” she says. “You can see all your hard work get results and it’s very gratifying.”

Melamed eventually realized that she did not succeed because she got away

from ballet—quite the opposite. “I started to understand that ballet never really left me,” she says. “[In ballet], you had to give everything you had to succeed, and that’s what I’ve done since.”

“People ask me what investment banking can possibly have to do with ballet. The long hours, the strong focus, the discipline, the will and determination—that’s ballet.”

It Moves Them

Regardless of where their lives have taken them, all four GS grads have a belief in dance’s importance, which continues to this day.

“From my point of view, ballet is a unique art form because it is transcendent, both for the audience and for the dancers,” Higgins says. “There is a magic to ballet that still excites me to this day, and I love when others are moved by that magic.”



For Novak, who spoke to us from a past tour in Germany, he has seen how it can bring people together around the globe. “I’ve watched from shows in different countries that dance communicates in a way that breaks language barriers,” he says. “The visuals speak in their own way.”

Among other reasons, Graf Mack loves the response children have to the art. “You see how their faces light up,” she says. “It inspires like few things.”

And for Melamed? Well, it even brought her something *through* a child. When her daughter asked to go to the ballet, Melamed reluctantly agreed.

“She fell in love with it and—I never thought I’d say this—but we go very often now and she is following in my footsteps studying ballet herself!” Melamed shares. “It’s come back into my life in an extremely positive way through her. Through my daughter, I remembered why I loved it so much to begin with ... and, just as importantly, I remembered the joy it brings to others.”

Spotlight on James Colgrove ’01MSPH, ’04GSAS

Examining the relationship between individual rights and the collective well-being

By Allison Scola

In the midst of the spring 2020 semester, when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, faculty member and dean of the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program James Colgrove ’01MSPH, ’04GSAS was teaching The Social History of American Public Health and Coercion and Persuasion in Public Health: Ethical and Historical Perspectives. Having researched and published many works about epidemics, vaccinations, and the relationship between public health policies and social, political, and legal processes, what unfolded before him in real time was all too familiar.

“When I look around at what is happening, I see very little that’s new. These themes of ... the relationship between individuals and the state, about what are the appropriate limits of public health to control the pandemic... these have always been the questions related to disease control,” Colgrove explained.

Indeed, Colgrove has spent much of the better part of the past two decades writing about the history of public health, infectious disease, immunization, and ethics, and as a result, he sees history repeating itself, if even not exactly. “Mark Twain is attributed as saying, ‘History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes,’” Colgrove said. “That’s true with coronavirus.”

“There were anti-mask societies in 1918. [A century ago], there was much less of a scientific foundation saying that masks would work, but the underlying motivation of the anti-mask societies was, ‘I don’t want the government telling me what to do,’ and ‘I don’t trust elites and experts.’”

“There’s always some new feature of the context that gives things a different flavor, but you definitely see similar scenes recurring.”

Colgrove spent much of his early career working in the HIV field and examining the socio-political issues surrounding its outbreak. He has always been fascinated by controversies around contact tracing, issues

of privacy and confidentiality, and government measures to improve public health.

“Partly why I like to teach about these things is because it gives me an opportunity to spend a semester with a room full of smart people talking about challenging issues,” Colgrove said.

Even so, he did not set out to be a professor, nor a college administrator, yet in these roles, he has stepped into his element.

As an undergraduate at University of California, Davis, Colgrove studied Latin and English, and confesses, “I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do when I finished. It’s been a very circuitous route, which is one reason why the job that I now have as dean of the Postbac Premed Program speaks to me very much.”

In the 1980s and 1990s, while teaching English as a second language in San Francisco, Colgrove volunteered, conducting HIV prevention work. Volunteering led to a staff position in a community public health organization, which led to another staff position, and after about a dozen years, he decided to move to New York City to pursue a Master of Public Health. He then sought a PhD in sociomedical sciences.

Citing having worked with many talented people throughout his career and benefiting from the guidance of many mentors himself, advising students as he does now was a logical next step in his career trajectory.

“I love mentoring students,” he said. “Helping them realize the value of their prior preparation for what they are now doing is rewarding.”

Although Colgrove describes himself as painfully shy, when asked who he would choose if he could have dinner with anyone throughout history, he responded, “Could I have a dinner party?”

Particularly interested in early 20th century United States history, he named



his notable guests as sociologist, activist, and author W. E. B. du Bois, nurse, social worker, and public health official Lillian Wald, and workers-rights advocate and Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins. Such renowned diners would certainly offer stimulating conversation and place Colgrove in his ideal domain—a group of smart people talking about challenging issues that face humanity time and again.

JAMES COLGROVE

Professor of Sociomedical Sciences

Dean of the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program at the School of General Studies

Faculty Member Since: 2004

Dean of the Postbac Premed Program since: August 2019

Education:

PhD, 2004, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health

MPH, 2001, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health

MA, 1992, San Francisco State University

BA, 1984, University of California at Davis

Favorite Movies:

The Godfather Parts I & II

Fun Fact:

“I love baking desserts with fruits like apple cake and lemon cake. When I used to teach a seminar at Mailman, I baked something for my students every week.”

FORRECASTING SUCCESS



By Alexander Gelfand

For more than 20 years, GS Admissions has used a distinctive process to successfully evaluate prospective students' potential impact on the greater good at Columbia and beyond. The stories of four alumni who are now well-established in their chosen careers illustrate the powerful results of this holistic, time-tested process.

2002 was a good year for Pavan Surapaneni '06.

A one-time high-school dropout, Surapaneni had overcome his teenage struggles with substance abuse and was preparing to graduate from a therapeutic boarding school with stellar test scores and a brace of college classes at a leading liberal arts college under his belt.

There was only one problem: the traditional top-tier colleges and universities he had applied to were not interested in a 21-year-old with a troubled past.

"They felt like I was too big a risk," says Surapaneni, who is now a partner at a leading global law firm.

Risk was also on the minds of Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers, then Dean of Enrollment Management and Communications, and Peter Awn, then Dean of the School of General Studies. But for very different reasons.

Rodgers and Awn were not sure if Surapaneni was ready to jump into the academic pressure cooker of an Ivy League school. But as Rodgers recently explained from his office in Lewisohn Hall, the greater danger seemed to lie in passing over a nontraditional applicant "with all kinds of contributions to make."

"They ultimately took a risk on me—a huge risk, I think," Surapaneni says.

It paid off immediately.

Surapaneni served in student government and on the Ivy Council while double-majoring in political science and MEALAC (Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures). He taught conflict resolution to fifth graders in Washington Heights through a volunteer program sponsored by Community Impact, the University's largest student service organization. And he graduated as salutatorian before going on to Harvard Law School, where he landed a coveted summer associate position at his current firm following his first semester—with only one semester's worth of law school grades in hand.

"That opportunity came about almost entirely on the strength of what I'd done at GS," he says.

These days, Surapaneni spends his time helping clients navigate complex high-stakes transactions such as multibillion-dollar real estate deals and sales of major-league sports teams. Yet he continues to volunteer, serving on the School's Board of Visitors and on the board of SavingTeens, a nonprofit that helps troubled teens and their families cope with anxiety, depression, and addiction.

A 10-year-old high school or college transcript might reflect an applicant's academic history, but it is a poor guide to one's current ability.

One might argue that GS was willing to gamble on Surapaneni when its peer institutions were not. But if GS took a risk with Surapaneni—or indeed with any of the GS alumni profiled here, all of whom are now eight to 15 years into highly successful careers—it was a highly calculated one, the end result of a unique admissions process that is custom-tailored to gauge the potential of nontraditional students.

Evaluating nontraditional applicants poses a variety of challenges. On the one hand, the relevance of grades and test scores—the traditional measures of academic success used by most traditional undergraduate admissions offices—fades with time; a 10-year-old high school or college transcript might reflect an applicant's academic history, but it is a poor guide to one's current ability. SAT scores, for example, are less predictive of successful outcomes for GS students than they are for Columbia College enrollees—and less predictive still than the School's own in-house assessment tools.

On the other hand, conventional metrics completely ignore the rich backgrounds that nontraditional applicants bring with them. Weighing high school transcripts and standardized test scores, says Jessica Marinaccio, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid at Columbia College, is “entirely different than understanding someone's job or their life choices.” Consequently, while GS and Columbia College are essentially looking for the same thing—i.e., evidence that applicants can succeed at Columbia—GS admissions officers must dig deeper to find it.

Part of that involves an application process that is designed for students who have spent time away from school (See “The Life of a GS Application,

opposite page”). Among other things, GS requires candidates to submit a lengthy autobiographical essay explaining why they have chosen to enter such a rigorous academic environment at this point in their lives—and what in their past has prepared them to handle it.

But it also involves an admissions team that specializes in determining the motivation, the potential, and the overall fit of applicants who present very differently than high schoolers, and who may be very different people than they were as teenagers. It takes time to extrapolate a person's current academic potential from their experiences outside of the classroom, and the learning curve can be steep; according to Rodgers, it takes several admissions cycles to become adept at interpreting the files of GS applicants. But the climb is worth it.

That may be especially true of those applications where the team must peer more deeply into a person's history to identify what Rodgers calls “the moment of transformation.” Unlike the more obvious cases where applicants have demonstrated such extreme discipline and success in their lives that there is a clear connection to future success in the classroom—the principal ballet dancer, the Olympic athlete, the Navy SEAL—these candidates require more careful consideration.

“We look to understand how their time away from school has prepared them for the rigors of the undergraduate classroom at Columbia,” Rodgers says.

Consider David Drury '08, who currently teaches history and classical literature at Estancia Valley Classical Academy, a charter school near Albuquerque, New Mexico. After graduating from high school on Staten Island in the late 1970s, Drury went straight to work on the docks at Port Mobil, a petroleum storage facility in the southwest corner of the borough. At age 22, he joined the FDNY; and he spent the next 20 years as a firefighter before retiring in 2001 after working on the ruins of the World Trade Center.

Towards the end of his firefighting career, Drury worked as an instructor at the FDNY Academy, an experience that convinced him to pursue a second career in teaching.

Drury admits that coming to Columbia was intimidating—an ironic situation for a guy who once ran into burning buildings for a living, but an understandable one given that he had been out of school for nearly three decades.

“Rather than viewing their unconventional backgrounds as liabilities, the School sees these as assets: crucial elements in building a rich and varied student body.”

– School of General Studies Vice Dean, Curtis Rodgers

“I lacked the confidence that I could handle this level of academic expectation,” he says.

Drury may have lacked confidence, but GS did not. As Rodgers puts it, other schools tend to accept nontraditional candidates like Drury in spite of who they are, whereas GS admits them because of who they are. Rather than viewing their unconventional backgrounds as liabilities, the School sees these as assets: crucial elements in building a rich and varied student body.

“Our concept of diversity takes age and experience into account,” Rodgers says.

The admissions team considers those factors as it tries to determine what a candidate might contribute not only to GS but to the broader Columbia community—something that is even more important now that GS students are fully integrated into the University.

“For a 17- or 18-year-old to engage in class with someone like Dave Drury? That's incredible,” says Marinaccio.

Drury himself could not have been happier. By majoring in history and minoring in education, he was able to pick up real-world teaching experience at the Bronx School for Law and Finance while fulfilling the coursework he needed for his New York Social Studies Teaching Certification. “It was a really great trifecta,” he says.

After graduation, Drury earned a master's degree from St. John's College in Santa Fe, digesting a curriculum of Great Books in small seminar classes structured around the Socratic method—something he says he could not have managed without the education and work ethic he acquired at GS.

Drury now uses the same methods and materials to teach his students at Estancia Valley. “I am literally doing exactly what I planned to do,” he says.

THE LIFE OF A GS Application

The GS Admissions Committee comprises six admissions officers. Members of the Committee spend up to two hours evaluating each and every application—three, if an interview is required.

THE APPLICATION

To apply to Columbia University School of General Studies, undergraduate degree applicants must submit the following:

- 1 An online application form that seeks vital information about the applicant.
- 2 High school transcripts, secondary school records, or GED/TASC
- 3 Transcripts from all colleges or universities attended. Documents not in English must be accompanied by certified translations.
- 4 Test Score. If an applicant's native and predominant spoken language is English, or if the primary language of instruction in his/her high school or secondary education was English, the applicant must submit an official score report from a Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or American College Testing Program (ACT) score or the Online General Studies Admissions Exam (College Board). If an applicant's native or predominant spoken language is not English and the primary language of instruction in his or her high school or secondary education was not English, he/she must demonstrate proficiency in English by submitting official scores from TOEFL, IELTS, or Duolingo.
- 5 One typed, double-spaced autobiographical essay of approximately 1,500-2,000 words that describes in detail the applicant's educational history, work experience, present situation, and plans for the future. The applicant is invited to address why one considers him/her/themselves a nontraditional student. A successful essay explains why the applicant wishes to pursue one's education at Columbia University School of General Studies and identifies and describes specific elements of the program, academic or otherwise, that meet one's needs as a nontraditional student.
- 6 Two letters of recommendation from academic and/or professional sources, requested and submitted via the application portal.
- 7 A nonrefundable application fee.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Once an admissions file is complete, it is packaged for the admissions team to review. Typically, a decision is released 6 to 8 weeks later.

- 1 Two admissions officers evaluate and comment on each application package before sending it to the Admissions Committee.
- 2 At Committee, the admissions team may spend between 10 and 25 minutes discussing a candidate before voting upon admissibility.
- 3 The committee may vote to interview a candidate before a final decision is made. Once an interview has been conducted, the application is brought before the committee again for a final vote.



The Admissions Committee is adept at sussing out whether an applicant is poised to take full advantage of their time at Columbia; at seeing an applicant clearly for who they are and what they are capable of, even if others cannot.

The motivation and grit that helped Drury make his dream a reality are key to successful nontraditional student outcomes. Along with everything else, the GS admissions team therefore also looks for signs that applicants have what it takes to persevere not only in the classroom, but also in pursuit of their larger goals.

Fortunately, that kind of discipline often comes with time.

Hollywood producer Michelle Rejwan '08, for example, was not sure precisely what she wanted to get out of her first, abortive attempt at college. A native of Los Angeles, Rejwan headed first to UCLA to study theater, then transferred to USC, where she gravitated towards film. But college felt like something she had to do rather than something she wanted to do, and she could not quite find her focus.

"I was really lost," she says.

So, she left, landing a job as an assistant to a prominent casting director and working on productions such as *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *The Office*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Eventually Rejwan became the assistant to *Curb* costar and executive producer Jeff Garlin, who invited her to work on a film he was directing. In the process, she realized that she really wanted to be a producer, collaborating with artists, writers, and directors to move projects from inception to completion.

Despite that moment of clarity, however, Rejwan felt that she had what she calls "unfinished business with education."

Inspired by the diversity of the GS community, Rejwan came to New York a very different person than she had been on her first collegiate go-round: possessed of a work ethic forged by years in the film industry, determined to get everything she could out of her GS experience, and grateful for the opportunity to do so.

"I felt so lucky to be exposed to so many diverse lives and experiences," she says. "And it enriched my own."

After graduation, Rejwan moved back to Los Angeles and became assistant to filmmaker J.J. Abrams, who gave her the chance to coproduce *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* for Lucasfilm. She went on to produce Abrams' second *Star Wars* feature, *The Rise of Skywalker*, collaborating with him from beginning (developing the story, joining him on set during shoots) to end (choosing trailers, designing marketing campaigns).

Now senior vice president for live-action development and production at Lucasfilm, Rejwan finds herself drawing regularly on the skills she acquired at GS—in particular, the ones she developed under Guy Gallo, a former adjunct professor of screenwriting at the University who wrote several highly regarded Hollywood films. Studying with Gallo "really changed the way I approached reading scripts," says Rejwan. "To this day, it informs my instincts in terms of how I approach any kind of material."

Rejwan was primed and ready for that kind of transformative experience, and the admissions team knew it. But that is

only because they have become adept at sussing out whether an applicant is poised to take full advantage of their time at GS; at seeing them clearly for who they are and what they are capable of, even if others cannot.

When fashion-industry labor activist Sara Ziff '11 first considered applying to GS, for instance, she worried that her years as a fashion model might count against her.

Scouted on the street when she was just 14 years old, Ziff began earning money in high school doing magazine and catalog work. Knowing that modeling careers are short-lived, she figured that she would take a gap year and work full time, saving enough to help pay for college or a down payment on a home. But before she knew it, Ziff had become the face of Tommy Hilfiger and Gap and was walking the runway in Paris and Milan. The work was fun, the money was good, and one year turned into several. "I just kept working," she says.

At the same time, Ziff began keeping a video diary and giving cameras to other models so that they could do the same. She turned the years of footage she accumulated into *Picture Me*, an award-winning feature-length documentary released in 2009 that included frank talk about sexual harassment and abuse in the fashion industry.

By then, Ziff had begun to feel frustrated by a business that often treated her as little more than a clothes hanger. So, at the age of 24, she applied to GS, which offered the unique opportunity to attend an Ivy League institution while continuing to work part-time. Ziff worried, however, that she would not be taken seriously; that her modeling career would be dismissed as frivolous, and that she would be seen as someone who could not possibly enrich the GS community.

All the admissions team saw, however, was her potential.

Classes in labor history and feminist literature helped Ziff frame her own experiences in the fashion industry—the sexual harassment, the pressure to lose weight—as labor-rights issues; and she began to think about organizing her fellow

fashion models. In 2012, Ziff founded the nonprofit Model Alliance to fight for basic labor protections for models. But she soon broadened its mission to promote fair treatment, equal opportunity, and sustainable practices from the runway to the factory floor, taking up the cause of garment industry workers in Bangladesh and pushing for state and federal legislation to protect child models here in the United States.

While pursuing an MPH at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Ziff also collaborated with a public health researcher to produce the largest study to date of eating disorders among professional models—a study that tied those self-destructive behaviors to workplace pressures, and offered policy solutions such as better worker protections.

Following the rise of the #MeToo movement, Ziff turned her attention to combating human trafficking within the fashion industry. She also initiated the RESPECT Program, which urges brands, modeling agencies, photographers, and other fashion-industry players to accept a legally binding code of conduct aimed at stamping out sexual harassment and workplace abuse.

Ziff credits GS with giving her the confidence and the conceptual framework to do the work that she does today. And she emphasizes how important it is that the School gives nontraditional students from all walks of life both a world-class education and the means to apply it in meaningful ways.

"It's essential that people have access to an education that will allow them to go back to their communities with the tools they need to be advocates, and to bring about the change we need," she says.

Providing nontraditional students with the tools they require to achieve their goals and fulfill their potential is what GS is ultimately about. The admissions team is at the forefront of that effort, identifying applicants who have what it takes to thrive at the School and contribute to the Columbia community—and to society as a whole.

"How will they fit into a classroom with Columbia College students, and what will

they have to contribute to that classroom based on their past experience?" asks Rodgers. "What will a 32-year-old combat veteran who served in Afghanistan be able to contribute to a foreign policy class?" These are the kinds of questions that the admissions team asks, and that they have become expert at answering.

Of course the same qualities that predict success for Columbia College students—qualities that, according to Marinaccio, include independence, resilience, creativity, intellectual curiosity, and a desire to draw connections between ideas and to engage

"For a 17- or 18-year-old to engage in class with someone like Dave Drury? That's incredible."

**– Jessica Marinaccio,
Dean of Undergraduate
Admissions and Financial
Aid at Columbia College**

with the world—also predict success for GS students. But identifying those attributes in someone who has experienced a lengthy break in their education requires a finely tuned nontraditional admissions model and a staff that knows how to implement it.

Fortunately, Columbia University School of General Studies has both a uniquely thorough evaluation process and an admissions team that can expertly apply it. And the successful long-range outcomes of students who would traditionally have been viewed as high-risk (a former high school dropout, a 20-year veteran of the NYFD, a 10-year veteran of the modeling industry, a Hollywood insider whose first stab at college did not quite pan out) provide ample proof that the School's time-tested methods do indeed work.

Just as importantly, those outcomes prove that taking thoughtful risks can pay off for everyone concerned. ■

THE GENERAL VIEW

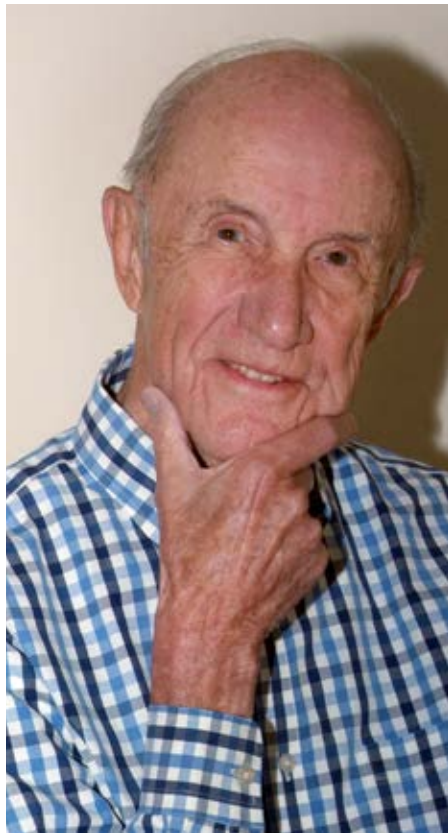


Recognizing that attending GS is not limited to the matriculant, as part of New Student Orientation each semester, parents and families of incoming GS students are invited to attend Family Orientation, an event that is aimed at introducing loved ones to the community and resources available at the University that will support “their student” during her time at Columbia. Pictured with Dean of Academic Affairs Victoria Rosner '90CC, '92GSAS, '99GSAS (center) from January's New Student Orientation are new undergraduates Rachel Adams (second from left) and Iynul Waseekah Rizwan (third from right). Rizwan, who described feeling “simply ecstatic!” that day, was accompanied by her husband Zainul Rizwan (first from left) and her two younger children Wais and Mareeha (first and second from right, respectively). Rizwan's two older children are both in high school and were not able to attend; however, she said having a caring family and supportive husband who participated in Family Orientation was, “frosting and a cherry on top of the cake” of matriculating at Columbia GS.

GIVING

GROWING UP TOGETHER

By Eric Butterman



“General Studies truly helped make me who I am, and I want to help it do the same for others.”

– Calvin Reynolds '52, '59BUS

Calvin Reynolds '52, '59BUS has truly had a global career. From Uniroyal Europe to working with the United Nations, he has experienced and contributed. But, when he looks back, he credits Columbia University School of General Studies as a vital contributor to what he accomplished and to who he became.

“I just wasn’t a very motivated student before General Studies,” he admits. “It made me more well-rounded ... Some may be surprised to know that the logic and astronomy classes made as big a difference as any in helping me expand my appreciation for learning.”

It was his classmates as well.

“I was one of the few students who wasn’t a veteran of World War II,” he says. “They were so focused after what they’d been through, and that also encouraged me by example to reach higher in academics.”

Reynolds contributed his own military service from 1952 to 1955, serving as a lieutenant and an air intelligence officer in the Naval Reserve. After being stationed in several posts throughout the world, he embarked on a career with a long international presence, even being called on by everyone from the Australian government to the United Nations to lend expertise on monetary-related issues.

Spending more than a decade with Uniroyal, he ultimately rose to director of operating services for Uniroyal Europe, serving in that capacity from 1964 to 1967. “Specializing in international finance at Columbia, my first job at Uniroyal was bringing together marketing, financial, and engineering information on foreign investments. I wrote recommendations for building a

factory in Cuba, and I also worked on one in Venezuela and other places,” he says. “When the change in Cuba occurred, I worked on one in Scotland. These were rich experiences that created a foundation.”

After Uniroyal, he served as vice president of the National Foreign Trade Council and then Organization Resources Counselors (ORC) as a senior vice president and later, a senior counselor. “With the National Foreign Trade Council, I helped make the human resource activity with international assignments a major force, and that led to eventually being recruited by ORC,” he says. “At ORC, one of the major things I was able to do was set up a subsidiary in Japan. I [also] did expert witnessing in different legal affairs, primarily for Japanese companies.”

Still Learning

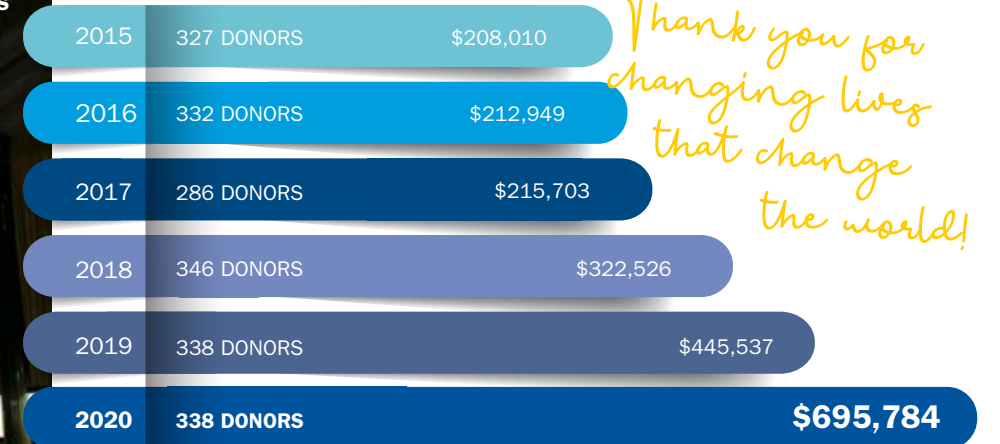
Now retired, Reynolds is still quite active, even ballroom dancing multiple times a week. “I was very involved in choir as a child and never lost the love of music,” he says. “This was just a new way to be a part of it. I actually took it up in my 80s. I like to have the attitude that it’s never too late to learn something new.”

Though Reynolds has contributed to many worthy causes, he admits donating to General Studies is his favorite. He sees, in a way, that they have grown up together—since General Studies was in its infancy when he enrolled. “There aren’t many of us still alive from those early days,” he says, even allowing a chuckle. “It’s been special to see what it’s become. General Studies truly helped make me who I am, and I want to help it do the same for others ... You don’t forget an experience like that.”

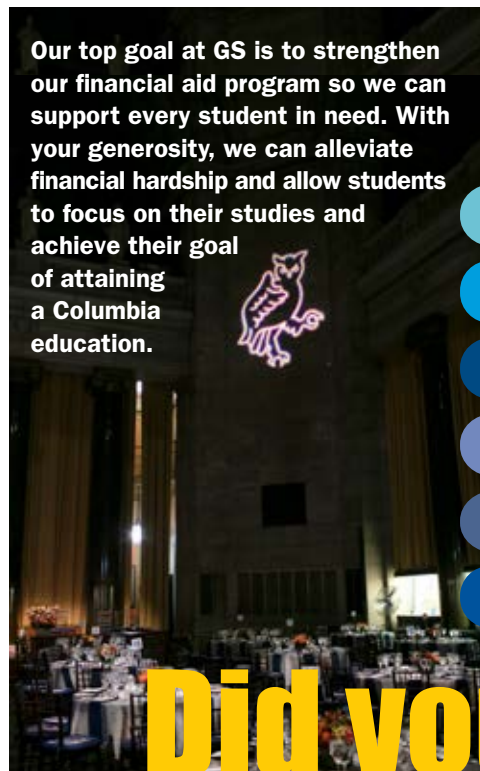
Support GS at gs.givenow.columbia.edu. Contact us at gsalumni@columbia.edu or (212) 853-2447.

Making Strides: Giving Day 2015 to 2020

Columbia Giving Day is a spirited world-wide fundraising event produced to engage alumni, students, parents, and friends to donate to schools, initiatives, and departments across the university.



Thank you for changing lives that change the world!



Our top goal at GS is to strengthen our financial aid program so we can support every student in need. With your generosity, we can alleviate financial hardship and allow students to focus on their studies and achieve their goal of attaining a Columbia education.

Did you know?

The Columbia Commitment Campaign is a university-wide initiative to address world issues from climate change to social justice. The Columbia Commitment builds partnerships with donors and volunteers sharing an urgent sense of what Columbians can do for our students and the world. At GS, we are focused on providing a world-class education in pursuit of social justice. GS is set to surpass our goal of raising \$35 million to support our students.

\$35,000,000

7 **\$30 MILLION** \$30 million dollars a year is given to General Studies students in financial aid. Ideally, to support our students’ needs, GS would offer \$45 million dollars a year for financial aid.

Seven new GS scholarships were established in 2020

\$200,000 The Board of Visitors raised over for a student-centric COVID-19 emergency fund.

The Center for Veteran Transition and Integration raised \$2.6 million in the last two years, including two major grants from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The Center is gaining national recognition for its work with veterans.



The Campaign for the Peter J. Awn Lounge

In June of 2019, Dean Rosen-Metsch announced the naming of the GS Student Lounge the Dean Peter J. Awn GS Student Lounge after two generous alumni donated \$1 million to support the initiative. To date, \$3.5 million has been raised for naming the Lounge after Dean Emeritus Awn. Funds raised for the Lounge support student scholarships and grants.



GRADUATION

CLASS DAY 2019

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT

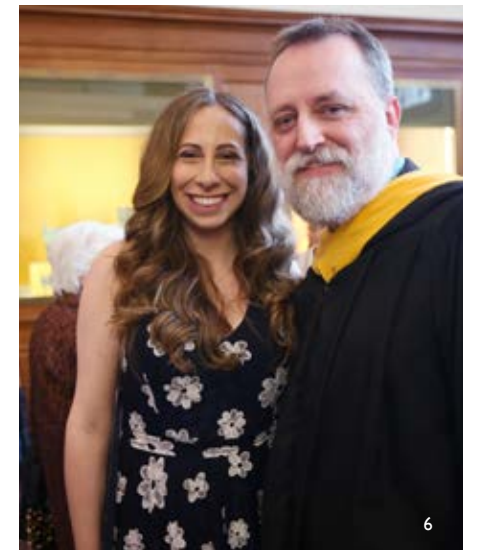


1. Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 rejoices with the Class of 2019.
2. Class Day Speaker Sara Ziff '11
3. Class of 2019 Valedictorian Brittany Summer
4. GS 2019 Campbell Award winner Raisa Flor, Dean Rosen-Metsch, and Alumni Key Award winner Yona Aryeb Kornsgold
5. Dean Rosen-Metsch addresses the graduates and their families.
6. The graduates cheer for their colleagues.
7. Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger
8. Eytan (Ethan) Penn, a graduate of the Joint Program with List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)
9. Acting Dean of Students Ivonne Rojas '12GSAS presents the graduates to family and friends.
10. Dean Rosen-Metsch congratulates graduates.



POSTBAC PREMED CLASS DAY 2019

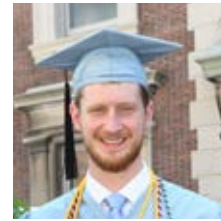
PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT



1. Andrew Sunshine '79CC, '83GSAS, '89GSAS, '91GSAS, Associate Dean of Students, addresses graduates.
2. The faculty and staff of the Postbac Premed Program recognize the graduates.
3. Graduate Catherine Jennings delivers the student address.
4. Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 recognizes the graduates.
5. Postbac graduates show off their new scrubs.
6. Rachel Monane with Mike Allen, Senior Assistant Dean of Students
7. Class Day keynote speaker, Dr. Olajide Williams, Chief of Staff of the Department of Neurology and an Associate Professor at Columbia University
8. Always attentive, the Postbac graduates listen to the wisdom imparted by the day's speakers.
9. Graduates celebrate their accomplishment.

NEW GRAD NOTES 2019

GS Bachelor of Arts Recipients



Class of 2019 salutatorian **Matthew Hess** is a Marine Corps veteran and first-generation college student. He grew up in Ogden, Utah where, because of family financial struggles, he started working at a young age. In 2009, he enlisted in the Marine Corps. After completing a tour in Okinawa, Japan, he volunteered for the Marine Security Guard (MSG) Program, eventually working at embassies in New Delhi, Beijing, and Cairo. Matthew excelled in the Corps and was recognized for his leadership. At GS, Matthew served on the Veteran Advisory Board and volunteered with the Veteran Mentor Program, where he was instrumental in developing the Program as a peer-to-peer support system that values inclusive community building. Matthew was awarded a Presidential Global Fellowship to study abroad in Amman, Jordan and a Gilman Scholarship that allowed him to intern with the Department of State at the U.S. Embassy in Muscat, Oman. Matthew received a Service Award from the School of General Studies, recognizing his dedication to service and leadership within GS and the Columbia University community. He graduated *summa cum laude* with a degree in Middle Eastern studies and plans to pursue a master's degree in international relations or a related field.



Yasmeen Ibrahim grew up in Cairo, Egypt before immigrating to the United States at age 10. As a teenager, she accepted a position at a department store beauty counter, where she fell in love with makeup artistry and styling, which led her to cultivate a career in the beauty and fashion industries. Yasmeen worked as a makeup artist, hair stylist, and wardrobe stylist for influential figures including Bill Gates, Nancy Pelosi, Deepak Chopra, and Tony Bennett. In 2012, Yasmeen played a key role in the presidential election. Along with a talented team of industry professionals, she won an Emmy Award for her work during

the election's televised coverage. Her time as an artist and stylist for such brilliant minds led her to discover and fulfill her own intellectual curiosity, and after a decade in the beauty industry, Yasmeen enrolled at Northern Virginia Community College, where she excelled academically. Transferring to Columbia GS, Yasmeen worked as a resident advisor with GS Student Life and a research assistant at Columbia Business School. She acted as chief of campus life with the GS Student Council. Her accomplishments and leadership at Columbia led to induction in the GS Honor Society and being awarded the Olga Knoepke Scholarship and two GS Leadership and Service Awards. Since graduation, Yasmeen has been a management consulting analyst with Accenture.

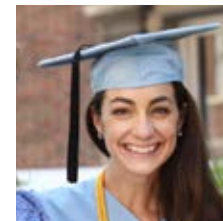


Eight years ago, **Randall (Blaine) Morris** left her BFA program in musical theater at Elon University when her summer job as a teen writing advisor on *MTV Skins* turned into a recurring acting role. She spent the next few years acting in indie films, television series, and national commercials. Blaine earned an associate degree from Hudson County Community College, and upon matriculating at GS, she joined Columbia University Sketch Show as a director and editor. As a member of the Ferris Reel Film Society, she helped curate and coordinate free screenings for the campus community. Blaine was also the production and interchapter chair for DKA Professional Cinematic Society, coordinating productions, evaluating pitches, and allocating monies for student films. During her time at GS, she directed, wrote, edited, and produced 16 films, and her interest in writing for television blossomed. She attended the MFA summer TV writing intensive where a pilot she wrote was chosen to be part of NBCUniversal and the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts - Pitch NY. In addition to receiving a scholarship as an emerging content creator to NALIP Media Summit, she also interned at Quebrada Entertainment and Assemble Media. Blaine majored in film and media studies at GS, and she is currently an MFA

candidate in film and TV production at University of Southern California, where she was awarded the George Lucas Scholarship, which seeks to support perspectives of artists from underrepresented communities.



Rubén Darío Ordoñez-Parra and his parents immigrated to the United States in 1998 from Colombia. Upon completing high school in Jersey City, N.J., he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. After graduation from bootcamp in 2014, Rubén attended Marine Combat Training at Camp Geiger, N.C. and Military Occupational Specialty School at both the Naval Air Station Pensacola and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. With an eye towards becoming a Marine Corps officer, he was awarded an NROTC scholarship to support his enrollment at Columbia. While a history major at GS, Rubén served for four semesters as a New Student Orientation leader, as events chair and multicultural and Greek life chair of the Student Organization of Latinxs, and as battalion logistics officer, administrative officer, and company commander of his NROTC unit. Upon earning his BA, Rubén was appointed second lieutenant in the Marine Corps and then proceeded to The Basic School at Marine Corps Base at Holly Ridge, N.C. with hopes to earn a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). Currently a battalion engineer officer, Rubén plans to pursue a PhD.



2019 valedictorian **Brittany Summer** grew up in Gastonia, N.C. At an early age, she fell in love with dancing. She attended high school at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, and after graduating, she joined the Boston Ballet as a member of the corps de ballet. During her more than nine years in Boston, Brittany had the opportunity to dance on stages in London, Spain, and Finland, and on acclaimed stages around

the United States including the Boston Opera House, the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and the David H. Koch Theatre in New York City. For Boston Ballet's 50th anniversary, she performed a leading role in front of 50,000 people at Boston Common. Off stage, Brittany worked with the Boston Ballet's Education and Community Initiatives division. Additionally, she studied at Northeastern University. Once matriculated at GS, Brittany studied psychology and served on the membership committee of Columbia Women in Business and volunteered for the GS Mentor Program. Outside of her activities at Columbia, she served as an intern at the private equity firm KKR and with Heidrick & Struggles, an executive search and leadership consulting firm. After graduation, Brittany joined Heidrick & Struggles as an associate in their artificial intelligence and data & analytics practice. Her main interest lies in organizational psychology and leadership, and she hopes to be able to make workplaces better environments for the individuals that inhabit them.



When **Annie Whitney** of Charlotte, N.C., discovered the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po, she knew it was the college experience for which she was looking. The daughter of a mother who was born in Cairo and a father who served with the U.S. Army in Iraq and Afghanistan, she enrolled at the Menton campus for its academic focus on the Middle East and Mediterranean. At Sciences Po, Annie served as student council treasurer, co-founded the campus yearbook, and received grants to conduct research in Istanbul, Paris, and Marseille. Off campus, she volunteered with the Red Cross at a local migrant camp to support the thousands of asylum seekers passing through Menton. The experience prompted her to develop an interest in immigration law, and she enrolled in Sciences Po's law specialization. Annie deferred her enrollment at Columbia to intern at the European Parliament in Brussels and with USAID in Washington. Also during her year away from school, she studied Arabic in Cairo and volunteered with refugee

Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Graduates



Before enrolling in the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program, **Catherine Jennings** taught middle school science in both public and private school settings for more than 10 years in Knox County, Tenn. and Brooklyn, N.Y. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Catherine also danced with a modern dance collective in Tennessee and worked in therapeutic horseback riding, teaching riding lessons for children and adults with mental, physical, and neurological disabilities. At Columbia, Jennings served as vice president of the Columbia University Premedical Association (PMA) and worked as a research associate in the Metropolitan Hospital Emergency Medicine department. While under the mentorship of Dr. Getaw Worku Hassen, she published her first clinical research in the *American Journal of Emergency Medicine*. She also served as a patient educator in Mount Sinai St. Luke's Department of Bariatric and Minimally Invasive Surgery, where she led patient support groups and education sessions to help patients prepare for bariatric procedures. Catherine is currently matriculated at the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons.

support organizations in Greece and Egypt. At Columbia, Annie studied human rights, worked as a tour guide for the School of General Studies, served as a GS student representative to the Joint Committee on Instruction, received the Department of Education's Foreign Language and Area Studies Scholarship for Arabic language study, and travelled to Tunisia as a Kraft Global Fellow. She graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa, and she is currently a JD candidate at Harvard Law School.



Currently a medical student at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, **Riva Letchinger** holds a Bachelor of Science degree in biological sciences, ecology, and evolution from The University of Chicago. As an undergraduate she studied wing patterns and performed behavioral mate-choice research on butterfly species. After college, she continued biological research at Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, Ill., studying monkeys and flamingos; at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Gamboa, Panama, investigating the potential effects of climate change on tick ecology; and at Rutgers University performing research on bee species. While volunteering at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia, she helped pediatric patients and their families negotiate longtime hospital stays. As a student in the Postbac Premed Program, Riva demonstrated outstanding leadership and a commitment to service to the premedical community. Upon completion of the Program, she was recognized with the Dean's Citation Award. She served as an orientation leader and vice president of social events for the Premedical Association all while working as a clinical research coordinator in the Department of Neurocritical Care at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, where she examined diagnostic tools used to treat neurological disorders.

Welcome
to the
Alumni
Community

Class Day 2020: An Online Occasion



On Monday, May 18, following best practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1,800 guests gathered for an online Class Day ceremony that recognized the accomplishments of the graduates of the Class of 2020. The presentation included remarks by Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger, School of General Studies Dean of Students Marlyn Delva, and keynote speaker Michael Novak '09, Artistic Director of the Paul Taylor Dance Foundation. Sungtae Yoon was the class valedictorian, and Alison (Ali) Block was the salutatorian. Rachel Ballew was recognized as the Campbell Award recipient, and Jessica Krejcie was granted the Alumni Key Award.

The Class of 2020 comprises 683 graduates from diverse backgrounds, representing 59 countries and 34 U.S. states. Ranging in age from 19 to 71 years old, it also includes 116 military veterans and 133 dual and joint degree program graduates. The new graduates join a global community of nearly 20,000 GS alumni.

NEW GRAD NOTES 2020

GS Bachelor of Arts Recipients



Rachel Ballew is a former staff sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps, where she served for 10 years as a female engagement team (FET) and civil affairs specialist.

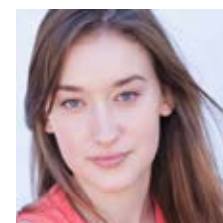
During her time in the military, she worked in the Middle East, studied Arabic and Farsi, volunteered with Engineers Without Borders, and built a water infrastructure system in Morocco. While studying political science at Columbia, Rachel served as a veteran mentor, was a Moody's Scholar, and received the 2019 Agent of Change Award for her impactful contributions to the women veterans community at Columbia. She also served as the director of women veteran initiatives for the U.S. Military Veterans of Columbia University (MilVets), and graduates as the first woman to serve as president of the organization. For her exceptional leadership and Columbia spirit, she was recognized with the prestigious 2020 Campbell Award, named for the late Bill Campbell '62CC, '64TC, Chair Emeritus, University Trustee, and CAA co-founder. In spring 2020, Rachel, acting as an operations team leader, was part of a team of student veterans who worked at NewYork-Presbyterian Ryan Larkin Field Hospital at Columbia's Baker Athletics Complex at 218th Street in northern Manhattan that was opened to treat patients with COVID-19.



Class of 2020 salutatorian **Alison (Ali) Block** is a professional ballet dancer. She began her ballet training at the Cleveland School of Dance, and she pursued more

advanced training at North Carolina School of the Arts, with summers dedicated to completing intensives at Canada's National Ballet School, Chautauqua Institution, Jacob's Pillow, and BalletX. After graduating simultaneously from both high school and conservatory in 2008, Ali spent an additional year training at Miami City Ballet School before she was contracted by the Texas Ballet Theater in Dallas/Fort Worth. She spent the next six years dancing professionally for companies across the United States. Highlights included performing as Clara in The Radio City Christmas Spectacular and in Balanchine's Serenade at the Hollywood Bowl Opening Night Gala. In 2014, Ali relocated to New York City to pursue her bachelor's degree at Columbia. While studying psychology, she was an active member and leader in the Columbia Ballet Collaborative, and she served as both the public relations director and a mentor for the GS Mentorship Program. Meanwhile, Ali continued to work professionally as a dancer. As a company member with Eglevsky Ballet, she created the title role in *Maurice Brandon Curry's Cinderella*. She also performed with Barry Kerollis's Movement Headquarters Ballet Company, Thomas/Ortiz Dance, Lydia Johnson Dance, and others. Ali completed four semesters of

honors courses while developing her honors thesis, which examines the role of cultural norms in the workplace on women's use of voice and reporting of sexual harassment in the world of professional ballet. In addition to her own work, she was a research assistant for the Laboratory of Intergroup Relations and the Social Mind. Awarded a GS Service Award, Ali graduated *summa cum laude*. She is continuing her career dancing and teaching while also staying active in the research community. She plans to eventually pursue graduate studies in clinical psychology.



Growing up in Nixa, Mo. **Logan Everett** dreamed of becoming an actor. At age 17, she moved to Los Angeles and signed with an agency. Hollywood, however,

was not so glamorous. While she loved the craft of acting, she did not love the entertainment business. She valued the nuances of human connections and wanted to inspire an audience to connect with a story, which led her from acting to advocacy. After attending Santa Monica College, Logan enrolled at Columbia GS, where she studied political science and government. She interned in the office of U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat and the office of U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler, and she currently works at Dare2B, a non-profit that supports homeless children in New York City. Also, while a student, she launched her own non-profit, Do Well Be Well, Inc., that helps

transition young adults from homelessness to higher education. In fall 2020, Logan matriculated at Fordham University School of Law School, where she is pursuing a JD.



David Treatman is used to wearing many different hats. A graduate of the Joint Program with List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary, during his time at Columbia,

David was captain of the Columbia sailing club, overseeing operations and managing the organization's budget. Meanwhile, as a student, he produced or co-produced 14 plays in three years. In 2016, for Koolik & Treatman Theatricals, he co-produced the off-Broadway play *Puffs, or: Seven Increasingly Eventful Years at a Certain School of Magic and Magic* with Columbia Engineering alumnus Alan Koolik '19SEAS. The success of *Puffs* led David to many other projects, including being part of the production team for the 2018 Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and the 30th anniversary tour of *Fame*. While the pandemic has postponed many of his upcoming projects, David sees a silver lining, "While it's tough and disappointing that things will likely never return to normal, I am also excited to be on the ground floor, trying to reinvent the industry. I'm already working on new projects to pioneer the post-pandemic landscape."

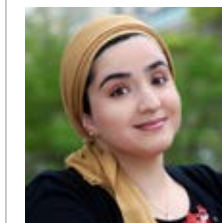


Following the Korean adage: take a detour to find the way, 2020 valedictorian **Sungtae Yoon** grew up in South Korea and pursued a nontraditional path well before coming

to GS. While studying biotechnology at Korea University, Sungtae felt it was important to gain additional life experience before continuing his education. He paused college to pursue missionary work and complete his military service for the Republic of Korea as an army sergeant. During his service, he received ministerial commendation by the Minister of National Defense. When Sungtae chose to return to college, he enrolled at Columbia. At GS, Sungtae worked as a research assistant in Dr. Xin Zhang's

lab at the Columbia University Department of Ophthalmology and participated in the selective Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship program. Under the guidance of his mentors, he worked on in vitro and bioinformatic research, investigating FGF-induced transcription factors in murine lens and lacrimal gland development, which led to a first-authored poster presentation and co-authorship for articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Outside of his research, Sungtae served as executive officer of the At Your Service volunteer program for the Terence Cardinal Cooke End-of-Life Care Hospital, as well as a student scholar for the Columbia Research Cluster for Science and Subjectivity. He was a student consultant for 180 Degrees Consulting, a worldwide non-profit consultancy, and he volunteered as a Korean language medical interpreter for Mount Sinai Hospitals. Sungtae graduated *summa cum laude* with a degree in biological sciences with departmental honors. He is currently conducting clinical research and applying to medical school.

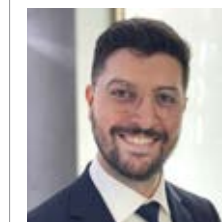
Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Graduates



Huda Algsasa earned her BA in linguistics and Japanese from University of Pittsburgh. With fluency in modern Arabic and five dialects, prior to enrolling in the

Postbac Premed Program, she worked as an Arabic language and culture interpreter at a refugee health clinic in Pittsburgh, Penn. The position was pivotal for Huda. Because her parents came to the United States as refugees, having escaped the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, she saw the opportunity as a way to give back to the community that raised her, yet in the process of giving, she received. Working with the healthcare professionals and their culturally diverse patients exposed her to the world of public and global health. Her desire to help others drove her to a new path: that of pursuing a premedical education. While a Columbia student, Huda helped establish the GS Mentorship Program and acted as its co-founder, co-chair, and the postbac mentor manager. She served as a resident advisor

for the GS student population and as a New Student Orientation leader. As vice president of premedical events for the Postbac Premed Student Council, she organized and helped establish an affordable MCAT preparation course for her fellow students, and she created the Break the Barrier Initiative, an affinity group for underrepresented students seeking a career in medicine. For her outstanding student leadership, Huda was awarded two GS Spirit Awards and the 2020 Dean's Citation Award.



Raised by two physician parents, before matriculating in the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program **Christopher DeVita** toured the United States as a professional ballet

dancer and choreographer. Chris holds a BA in theater studies from Emerson College and earned a competitive fellowship with Alonzo King LINES Ballet in San Francisco, Calif. He founded I Am A Boys Choir, a New York-based dance company that incorporates performance, video, music, and installation to inspire serious conversations about personal politics, gender, community, and otherness. After over a decade of success in the dance world, Chris decided to pursue a career in medicine to make a direct and positive impact on lives. In addition to the performing arts, Chris' interests include LGBTQ health and infectious diseases, and since June of 2018, he has been volunteering as a health educator with Project Stay at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, an organization that provides free sexual health education and healthcare to at-risk demographics. Chris also volunteered as a research assistant in the Department of Neurointensive Care at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, where he conducted hour-long phone interviews with subarachnoid hemorrhage patients and their families for a longitudinal study. During his time in the Postbac Premed Program, Chris served as an orientation leader and campus tour guide, the president of the Queer Health Alliance, the Postbac representative of GS Alliance, and the vice president of social events for the PMA. Chris successfully applied through linkage and is currently a medical student at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Donita Session '19: From Service to Serving

Upon separating from the U.S. Air Force and moving back to New York City, Donita Session found herself in need of housing and employment assistance. She attained assistance from Easterseals New York, which has a program that provides transitional programs to returning veterans. Once settled, recognizing her potential, the organization hired her as a case manager and outreach specialist. While in this position, she experienced firsthand that laws and policies can make it difficult to serve those who need help.

Determined to continue serving and supporting her community, Session matriculated at Hostos Community College to study public policy and administration. She graduated with honors and earned the Gold Award for Public Administration. Session was inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and the Veterans in Global Leadership Fellowship Program—all accomplished while working full time. With help from the Warrior-Scholar Project, she applied and was admitted to Columbia University School of General Studies.

At Columbia, Session participated in many clubs and organizations. She served as treasurer of the Students of Color Alliance, as a chairperson for the Columbia University Model Congress, and as a constituent of the Black Student Organization, and she found a new interest for theater as an actor in the Black Theater Ensemble. Her passion for improving the lives of veterans led her to major in political science.

"It is my belief that the veterans that return home and are capable have a duty to support their fellow veterans who are unable to support themselves," said Session.

Session is currently a job developer for homeless veterans in New York City and serves as an executive board member of Even Me, a non-profit organization that assists young people who are aging out of foster care and transitioning to independent adulthood. Committed to her life's work of serving others, Session plans to study law to strengthen her ability to assist her community fully.



PHOTO: BRUCE GILBERT

Qutaiba Idlbi '20 Driven by Justice

Qutaiba Idlbi survived detention, torture, and political exile in his home country of Syria before being granted asylum in the United States. Idlbi grew up in Damascus. His father, a community activist focused on nonviolent political reform, died when Idlbi was 15. That moment was a turning point for Idlbi, who, once he entered university for finance in 2008, began his own pro-democracy activities that led to multiple arrests and an eventual need to flee Syria to protect his life in 2012.

While attending a political meeting in Egypt where he had found refuge, Idlbi helped United States Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford diffuse a fight between two diplomats. They struck up a friendship that eventually led to Ford encouraging Idlbi to apply to be part of the Leadership Development Fellowship, a U.S. Department of State training initiative and partnership program for leaders from the Middle East and North Africa who are involved in civic engagement and social entrepreneurship. Idlbi successfully completed the intensive training and applied for and was granted U.S. asylum in 2013.

While working as a consultant and researcher for various think tanks in Washington, D.C., it became clear to Idlbi that if he wanted to fully contribute to building a better Syria, he would need to complete his education. The stars aligned, and in 2016, Columbia launched the Scholarship for Displaced Students (CUSDS), a full-



PHOTO: SETH WENIG/AP

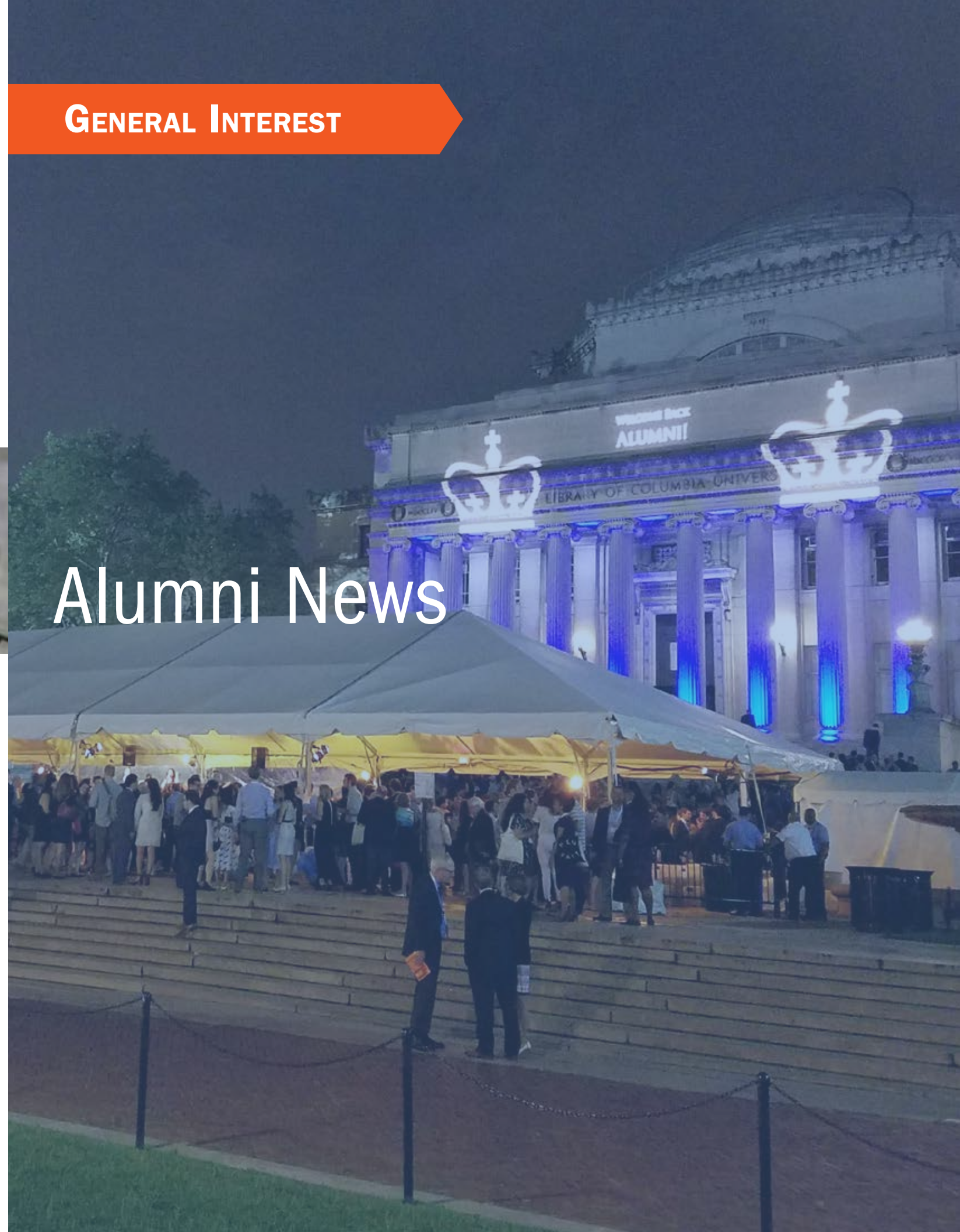
tuition and room and board scholarship program that supports displaced students from anywhere in the world who are unable to complete their higher education due to wars and natural calamities.

Idlbi applied and was accepted into the inaugural class of CUSDS, matriculating as a political science major at Columbia University School of General Studies in 2017. While a student, he continued to work full time as a researcher and analyst and in May 2020, Idlbi earned his bachelor's degree.

Now a representative to the United States at the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, Idlbi plans to continue his research fellowship with the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York City while applying to law school. When looking toward the future, he said, "In an ideal world, I imagine myself working internationally, making sure that people get the justice they deserve. My dream is someday to establish a small college in my home country where I can transfer my knowledge and experience to Syrians like me."

GENERAL INTEREST

Alumni News



GENERAL INTEREST



meet Elizabeth Beerman '98

Volunteer and Former Co-Chair, Programming Committee of the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA)

Tell us about the Programming Committee of the GSAA.

The Programming Committee develops programs and events reflecting the diversity of GS students and alumni and their respective interests and backgrounds. We want to ensure all alumni and students feel welcome and comfortable participating in our events, whether they be social gatherings, educational and arts events, or family-oriented programs.

What drives you to contribute to GS's alumni community?

GS affords its students opportunities that many think would be otherwise unattainable. Its diversity goes beyond the standard definition of traditional schools, and being able to interact directly with this cross section of students and alumni is so fulfilling. We are also fortunate to have many alumni actively involved with the School who want to make a difference. I hope the current students feel welcome to meet with us and will choose to get involved once they graduate.

What has been the most fun and rewarding GSAA project with which you've been involved?

Being on the Programming Committee. I would say all of our events are fun, and one can take away something from each gathering: whether it be intellectual, making connections, or just socializing. The opportunities for students to learn and practice their networking skills with a friendly, but demanding, group of alumni are excellent.

Tell us about your career. Where do you work?

My career is here at Columbia. I am the Director of Contracts and Compliance at Columbia Technology Ventures (CTV). In a nutshell, CTV's mission is to help bring the cutting-edge scientific innovations emerging from Columbia's research labs out of the lab and into the market via partnerships with industry and startups, in order to benefit society on a local, national, and global basis. Most people don't know that Columbia's research leads to over 400 new inventions, over 100 agreements with industry, and over 25 science-based startups each year! In addition to managing two teams, I oversee the Columbia Tech Ventures Fellows Program.

What do you do in your free time?

In addition to volunteering for the GSAA and being involved in the Columbia community, I stay active by participating in sports.

What is your favorite Columbia GS memory?

My favorite memory stems from the American Lit class I took. We were such a group of inquisitive and emotionally charged students! When asking us a question, the instructor had no idea where any of our conversations were going to lead but took it all in stride. Interacting with my class that summer in Fayerweather was so enlightening. Thirteen years later, I randomly encountered one of those classmates in Harlem. We connected as if no time had passed, which proved we learned so much more about who we were as individuals than just learning the material. Now this classmate and I sit on the GSAA board together!

GSAA EVENTS

A robust alumni community continues to grow and celebrate our Columbia GS connections. The photos included are just a glimpse into the engaging programming produced by the GSAA throughout the year.



PHOTOS: DAVID DINI

The 2019 Winter Cocktail Reception was held at Landmarc in New York City.

1. Member of the Board of Visitors Joseph Ebrlich '92 spoke to the attendees of the Winter Cocktail Reception in February 2019.
2. Sarah Walker '95, who majored in psychology at GS, talked with current student and political science major Andrew Benally.



2



3

Military Ball

March 29, 2019 at Capitale NYC



The March 29, 2019 Military Ball was held at Capitale in Little Italy. The Ball celebrates Columbia's distinguished veteran community, uniting them with the leaders and scholars of New York City and the world. Proceeds from the Military Ball help underwrite academic and career transition programming for all veterans and military family members nationwide, financial aid for veteran students at Columbia University, and veteran student and alumni programming.

Attendees of the 2019 Military Ball included current students, alumni, and members of the community.



PHOTOS: SIRIN SAMMAN



During Roll Call...

Following tradition of military balls, a Missing Man table, pictured, was set in the dining area. Its significance was described to the guests: The table is round to represent the everlasting concern survivors have for the missing. A white tablecloth illustrates the pure intentions of service members who responded to their country's call to arms. A single red rose in a vase reminds us of the blood that service members have shed. A slice of lemon on the bread plate signifies the bitter fate of the missing. Salt sprinkled on the plate suggests the tears shed by waiting loved ones. An inverted glass represents the fact that the missing and fallen cannot partake. A lit candle connotes the light of hope that lives in our hearts in order to illuminate the missing's way home. An empty chair exhibits the absence of the missing and fallen.

During the evening's roll call, the sergeant at arms called to the stage each of the current officers and past presidents of MilVets who all donned gaudy socks with their formal attire. Finally, the officer called out the name of Peter Awn with no response. A moment of silence ensued. "Peter J. Awn," he called again. Still no response. A third time, the sergeant called, "Dean Peter J. Awn." A final moment of silence gave way to the sound of "Taps," and in recognition of Dean Awn's lifetime of support of the education, transition, and integration of United States service members and veterans, a U.S. flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol was solemnly and proudly presented to his family and friends.



Throughout 2019 the GSAA hosted panels on film and media, finance, and tech, happy hours celebrating St. Patrick's Day and students' return to campus, dinners and discussions about career transitions and entrepreneurship, a dance performance and backstage tour at Lincoln Center, and many more engaging happenings.

Graduating seniors were invited to a Senior and Alumni Reception at Faculty House on May 8, 2019, where Senior Class President Raisa Flor '19 (pictured right with GSAA board member Damienne Harfouche '14, left) addressed attendees.

PHOTO: DAVID DINI

On September 7, 2019 over 50 Columbia alumni met Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 for a reception at Reid Hall in Paris, one of Columbia's Global Centers. Laetitia Butler '16 (left), Dean Rosen-Metsch (center), and Justice Betty '18 (right) all spoke at the event, which highlighted the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po, the program from which both Butler and Betty graduated.



PHOTO: AVIVA ZABLOCKI

On October 19, 2019, alumni, students, families, and staff gathered at Homecoming and cheered on Columbia Football as they defeated Penn!



PHOTO: DAVID DINI



PHOTO: DIANE BONDAREFF

She Opened the Door convened women from all 18 undergraduate, graduate, and affiliate schools at Columbia for an historic conference in New York City. February 9th's event celebrated 100 years since the ratification of the 19th Amendment that granted women the right to vote in the United States and featured a powerful lineup of inspiring speakers including two GS alumnae, Sara Ziff '11 and Carla Zaroni '05, '06JRN.



PHOTOS: DAVID DINI

On February 25, over 100 GS alumni, students, and guests enjoyed the Annual Winter Cocktail Reception at Ascent Lounge in New York.

Right: Hilary Katzman '16 talks with fellow alumni at the 2020 Winter Cocktail Reception.



Alumni Online: "GS Alumni In Conversation" and More

Columbia shifted many of its operations to an online format in spring 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving students and alumni an opportunity to engage with one another in a safe and meaningful way via the internet.

"If there is one silver lining in our current work environment," said Aviva Zablocki, Director of Alumni Relations, "It has been the ability to connect members of our community far and wide, without the obstacle of geographic boundaries."



How Performing Artists Are Adapting During the Covid-19 Crisis
 The Fashion Industry's Response to Covid-19
 Columbia Abroad
 Artificial Intelligence
 Financial Wellness in Uncertain Times
 Veterans in Tech
 Life in Politics and Public Service
 Sara Ziff '11 and the Model Alliance
 Education Advocacy
 Witches Tea Party Social Hour
 From Dance to Finance

Alumni Gathered Virtually for Reunion 2020

This year's first ever virtual reunion weekend drew more than 300 GS alumni and guests from all corners of the globe. On Friday evening, June 5, Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 hosted alumni and guests for A Celebration of the Performing Arts at GS, a multifaceted online presentation. Dancers from the Columbia Repertory Ballet and the Columbia Ballet Collaborative presented pre-recorded excerpts from *Love Letters* and *Sonatas, for Lee*. Musician Sumar Frejat '21 performed an Iraqi folksong on the oud, while songwriters Sondra Woodruff '19 and Anna Troy '19 both played original compositions.

The presentations were followed by a discussion between actress Rachel Ticotin '19 and Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, which explored the path of being an artist in the Columbia community and beyond. Originally from the Bronx, Ticotin began her career as a child in theater. She was one of the founding members of Ballet Hispánico of New York dance company before she began appearing in films such as *Man on Fire* and *Something's Gotta Give*. Ticotin has also appeared on Broadway and television, most recently in *The Act*.

Saturday's programming began with 50 guests attending GS Update: Innovations and Growth of the School, during which Dean Rosen-Metsch reported on recent innovations and developments at the School, discussing its unique international dual degree programs and thriving military community.

Following Dean Rosen-Metsch's presentation, nearly 100 alumni from throughout the University tuned in to a faculty lecture from Dean of the Postbac Premed Program James Colgrove '01MSPH, '04GSAS. *Pandemics and People: Contagion in the U.S.* from Smallpox to Coronavirus prompted high levels of participation and engagement. Dean Colgrove placed the current health crisis in historical context, examining the enduring scientific, ethical, and political challenges of such emergencies.

The online reunion concluded with an engaging conversation between Christopher Riano '07, coauthor of *Marriage Equality: From Outlaws to In-Laws*, and Dean Rosen-Metsch. Riano discussed his research and writing process for the work, which is a definitive history of same-sex marriage equality in the United States. Riano explained that the theme, "treat people how you want to be treated," propelled the discussion to a positive place, resulting in a move towards marriage equality.



Close to 100 alumni and guests attended Saturday's reunion lunch held in the elegant Skyline Dining Room at Faculty House. After mingling and being greeted by welcoming remarks from Jill Galas Hickey, Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations, guests were treated to conversation and a Q&A featuring a panel of four current GS students, moderated by Aviva Zablocki, Director of Alumni Relations. Pictured are student panelists Chris DeVita and Jonathan Criswell.



Reunion weekend concluded with the annual GS alumni dinner, held in Roone Arledge Auditorium in Lerner Hall. Nearly 300 guests attended, including (above, pictured from left) Theresa Patterson, Cristin Darmstadt (née McConnell) '14, Dru Munsell '13, and Diana Armand '12.

Christopher Riano '07 acknowledged Paul Yates '05 as the recipient of the 2019 Owl Award, in recognition of his commitment to military veterans within both the GS and wider University communities. Yates co-founded the U.S. Military Veterans of Columbia University student group in 2011.

The GS Owl Award is given annually to graduates, benefactors, and faculty members whose life and accomplishments have been distinguished by eminence in public service, including achievement in a profession or organization, so as to bring credit to Columbia University and the School of General Studies. Originally created in 1959 by Barbara Levy '48 and Marshall Page '35, it has been given out each year, excluding its hiatus from 2003 until 2016.



Hundreds of Alumni Reunite at Reunion Weekend 2019

It all began on Thursday, May 30, when alumni, alongside Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, kicked off the weekend with dinner and drinks on the Hudson River at the 79th Street Boat Basin. Nearly 100 guests enjoyed reminiscing and meeting new friends at the popular waterfront restaurant on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Pictured are GSAA board member Trevor Lawson '01, April Carter '02, and GSAA board member Avinoam Paul Sharon '78.



Saturday morning's programming began with 50 guests attending the first-ever welcome breakfast hosted by Dean Rosen-Metsch and featuring remarks by Molly Ola Pinney '09, 2019 recipient of the Columbia's University Medal for Excellence.



Friday night featured A Celebration of Dance at Columbia, a performance in Lerner Hall's Roone Arledge Auditorium featuring Michael Novak '09, Artistic Director of the Paul Taylor Dance Company, and Alicia Graf Mack '03, Director of the Dance Division at The Juilliard School. These two world-class artists reunited on campus to perform alongside students from the Columbia Ballet Collaborative (CBC). After the performances, Dean Rosen-Metsch hosted a talkback on stage with Novak and Graf Mack.



Hope Arber '65 and GSAA board member Joshua Kraus '93



During Saturday's dinner, Dean Rosen-Metsch spoke about the late Dean Emeritus Peter J. Awn. She recognized two alumni, including Marcella Stapor '59 (pictured), who donated a combined gift of \$1 million to the School to name the GS Lounge in Lewisohn Hall in Awn's honor.

Current Career: CEO of VPL; founder of Fashion Girls for Humanity

GS Degree: BA in Art History/ Architecture Theory

Other Education: MBA, Harvard Business School, 2002

Fun Fact: Her mother, Ikue Hanazawa, owned her own fashion business in Japan; her aunt, Tomiyo Hanazawa, designed the modern kimono.



By Kathrin Havrilla-Sanchez

KIKKA HANAZAWA '00 EMPLOYS HER SMARTS

Fashion is in Kikka Hanazawa's DNA. Her mother and aunt were both professional women highly involved in the fashion business—quite rare for 1930s and '40s Japan—but despite these deep roots, Hanazawa had no designs on starting her own career in the industry.

Born and raised in Tokyo, Hanazawa first came to the United States and the School of General Studies in 1989 to study English in the American Language Program. She was blown away by the resources at Columbia and in New York, and she knew that this was the place she needed to be. She enrolled at GS the following year.

"I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life at the time—I kind of thought I could do whatever I wanted," Hanazawa remembers. "GS was perfect because it enabled me to study any subject with amazing faculty in each discipline. I decided that no matter how long it took, I was going to figure out what I was interested in at Columbia."

In order to pay for her education, Hanazawa began her degree part time while also working at Itochu, a major Japanese trading company, bringing American brands like J. Crew to Japan. She took her time at GS, taking courses in anthropology, literature, philosophy—anything that interested her.

After graduating in 2000, Hanazawa went directly to Harvard Business School to earn her MBA. Her goal at the time was to get out of fashion and into finance, interning at Accenture in Tokyo and at a private equity firm.

"Working in finance, I felt the glass ceiling in a way that I didn't in fashion," Hanazawa says. "I gained a more positive outlook on the fashion industry in that I saw that women could do more."

Post-MBA, she headed solidly back into fashion, working as director of strategic planning for Theory before investing in VPL, a women's wear company selling leisure and active wear, eventually becoming CEO in 2007.

Then, on March 11, 2011, a massive earthquake and subsequent tsunami devastated northeastern Japan. Hanazawa rallied her peers in the industry and organized designer clothing sales in New York, Japan, and London, raising \$600,000 to benefit the victims. This act of generosity and support would become the seed for founding Hanazawa's nonprofit, Fashion Girls for Humanity.

"We all wanted to help, but we knew that individuals can only do so much and that we would have a greater impact together," says Hanazawa. "Typically, fashion can be an industry with a lot of egos and not

Coupling fashion with passion for social change, this executive makes a positive impact.

much collaboration, but Fashion Girls for Humanity has been a great success."

Today, Fashion Girls for Humanity is 100 percent volunteer based with minimal operating expenses, relying largely on excess inventories and holding sales online. The organization has benefited victims from 2012's Hurricane Sandy and 2015's earthquake in Nepal, and most recently, it set up a fund to support COVID-19 frontline medical workers.

Looking forward to the future, Hanazawa wants to use her knowledge of the fashion industry and her passion for social change to try to make a difference for the world.

"Every day, I think about how all of the excess fashion merchandise out there affects our environment," says Hanazawa. "We need to think about sustainability and question if what we've been doing for a long time is helping humanity advance. Innovation is more important than making more of the same old thing."

Barbara A. O'Neil, MD '76PBPM

A WINDING ROAD TO CLEAR SUCCESS

By Gilda Fasullo

For much of her career, Barbara A. O'Neil, MD '76PBPM was clinical instructor of medicine and supervisor of second-year medical students at Harvard Medical School. Because of her contributions to the future of medicine, Dr. O'Neil garnered a certificate of appreciation from the School. Furthermore, she was eventually charged with the supervision of the outpatient clinical medicine program, and she was appointed preceptor of primary care residents at Mt. Auburn Hospital and Cambridge Hospital. Still, even with such clear success that is indicative of a self-assured and personable doctor, the road leading to O'Neil's choice to practice internal medicine was like many who attended the Postbac Premed Program—winding.

Having had a close relationship with her father while growing up, O'Neil valued his opinion. Her father, who served in the U.S. Navy as a surgeon during World War II, consistently encouraged her interest in medicine and praised her academic achievements and mental toughness. Nevertheless, when it came time to make the decision of a major area of study during college, O'Neil found her own voice and chose English literature.

After earning her Bachelor of Arts at Manhattanville College in 1967, she became employed at New England Merchants National Bank in Boston, entering their management training program and progressing to branch administration. Eventually, in 1973, she earned the title of assistant branch manager. Despite her success, Dr. O'Neil recalls thinking, "this was not a full life," knowing she "could do more." Meanwhile, doctors she knew in Boston and her roommates at the time encouraged her interest in medicine. So, to "put her toes in the water," as O'Neil describes it, she enrolled at Boston University to study biology at night.

After a trip to New York City, during which she had a very positive visit with Ms. Sylvia

Bassoff, a premed advisor at Columbia University School of General Studies, she decided to leave her banking position, and moved to the Upper East Side of New York City. Her studies at Columbia coupled with a research project at the Eastern Women's Center, and all that was available in New York, made it an intense period of personal growth to which Dr. O'Neil attributes her success.

Dr. O'Neil earned her MD in 1980 from Hahnemann Medical College, now part of Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pa. During her medical training, Dr. O'Neil traveled to various countries including Thailand, where, from November 1982 to January of 1983, she assisted Cambodian refugees while working with doctors of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Dr. O'Neil had always been interested in the applications of cross-cultural medicine, and experiences with the ICRC only nurtured them. She did her internship and residency in internal medicine at Rhode Island Hospital in Providence from 1980 to 1983. Following her residency, she became employed by Harvard Community Health Plan (today called Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates) and participated in the Harvard Medical School Teaching Program, where she subsequently earned the Robert Ebert Teacher of the Year Award (1983).

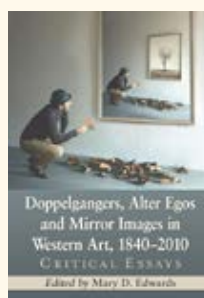
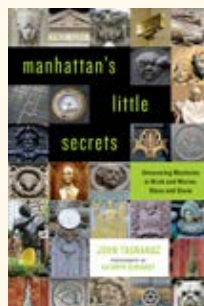
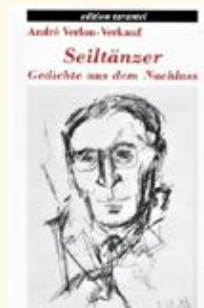
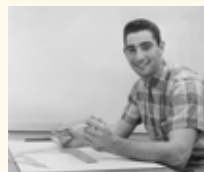
Dr. O'Neil loves to travel and continues an annual tradition of spending time in Grand Cayman, which she considers a second home. In the past, she made several trips to South Korea, where she made the life changing decision to adopt two children, Brendan and Meeya.

Making the decision to enroll in the Postbac Premed Program at Columbia was clearly a pivotal moment and had such an enduring impact on her professional trajectory that she contributes to the Program to this day and has included Columbia in her estate plans.



A personable doctor with international experience, Barbara A. O'Neil '76PBPM supervised hundreds of medical students and new doctors throughout her rewarding career in medicine.

Alumni Notes



1950s

“Wall Hanging: Entrance II” by Artist **Dolores Dembus Bittleman '52** was recently displayed as part of the *Taking A Thread For A Walk* textiles exhibition at the newly renovated MoMA. The 76 inches by 72 inches wool piece was created in 1964. Bittleman says that she is inspired by listening quietly to the threads. They “suggest what could be done with them.”

Fun Fact: Major League, left-handed pitcher **Sandy Koufax** briefly attended GS in winter 1955. While at Columbia, he studied architecture, graphics, and physics. Koufax went on to pitch 12 seasons with the Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972. The Dodgers won the 2020 World Series.

Austrian resident **Herbert Khuner '59** continues to be a prolific writer, translator, and thinker. He publishes a blog at www.vien-nanet.info. Khuner’s most recent publication is a collection of poetry by artist and poet Willy Verkauf-Verlon, *Seiltänzer/Tightrope Walker*. The poems reflect Verkauf-Verlon’s “Jewish odyssey,” an account depicting post-war Austria as viewed by an individualist and non-conformist.

1960s

New York City historian and mapmaker **John Tauranac '63** recently published *Manhattan's Little Secrets: Uncovering Mysteries in Brick and Mortar, Glass and Stone*, a guidebook that makes New York City’s social history come alive.

Mary Edwards '66 is a professor of art history at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y. and is a member of the Renaissance Seminar at Columbia University. Her articles have appeared in *Studies in Iconography*, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, and the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. Edwards recently published *Doppelgänger, Alter Egos and Mirror Images in Western Art, 1840-2010*, an edited collection of essays during which scholars focus on double portraits and other pairings, human and otherwise, that appear in a large variety of artistic media.

During summer 2019, **Gail Rodney '69** exhibited her watercolors, pastels, oils, and collages at Old Sculpin Gallery in Edgartown, Mass. After majoring in English at GS, Rodney started painting once she began spending time on Chappaquiddick Island, Martha’s Vineyard. Its scenery became a muse. She went on to study fine arts at the National Academy School of Fine Arts in New York.

Milton “Mickey” Meshirer '54 Stuck to His Curiosity

By Allison Scola

From the time he was a child growing up in Astoria, Queens, Milton “Mickey” Meshirer '54 was curious about how things worked. When he was five, he set his house on fire while seeking to learn what was flammable and what was not. His father had a successful business as a milliner, and Meshirer was tracked to inherit the family trade and discouraged from seeking other professions. But he loved chemistry, and despite his mother’s attempts to undermine his ambitions, he enrolled at Columbia to understand who he was. “I had the only Jewish mother who didn’t want her son to become a doctor,” Meshirer said.

A budding chemist, Mickey’s creativity and curiosity led him to create a new type of floor wax that he proceeded to sell to institutions such as The St. Regis hotel. His success, however, led him to postpone his university coursework, and inevitably, notice arrived from the U.S. military. It was the era of the draft and the Korean War, and Meshirer reported to Fort Dix and enlisted in the Army.

Fate would have it that because of an incident he witnessed, Meshirer’s troop shipped out to Asia, while he stayed behind. A desk job in the personnel department presented itself, and fortunately, it delayed his assignment to the front lines—yet he found himself on a different front line, one that revealed itself through patterns of personnel being sent to Korea. A colleague revealed to him that a sergeant was prioritizing soldiers with last names that appeared Jewish, and Meshirer could not ignore this unethical behavior. Along with two other colleagues, they collected evidence to prove what the sergeant had been scheming, and eventually their work led to the sergeant’s transfer. But it also led to Mickey’s transfer to Asia.

Meshirer became a machine gunner facing combat in Korea, where he served the remainder of his duty. “The Army makes you into a different person,” Meshirer explained. “You are tougher. You’re not afraid of anything.”

“When I came back from Korea, I wanted to win.”

He was driven to complete his degree at Columbia, and Mickey recalls going straight to the admissions office after his flight home. He enrolled to study chemistry and was determined to do well. “I was intolerant of professors. If I didn’t understand the lecture, I would insist that they helped me learn it.”

Meshirer worked for his father’s hat company during the day and studied at night. Meanwhile, the demand for hats was waning. He asked his father to give him a few months to consider other ideas for the business, and eventually it became clear that the glue—or an improved version of it—that they had been using for attaching the feathers, beads, pompoms, and other decorations on the hats was the future of the business, and Beacon Adhesives was born.

As the company’s chief chemist, Meshirer continued to invent new adhesives and other products, including in recent years, a sealant that waterproofs bullets. He sold the patent to the U.S. Army.

A great success, Beacon Adhesives products can be found in Walmart, Michaels, and Jo-Ann stores. In 2019, Mickey retired at 91 years old. Today, his son and grandchildren operate the business. “It was time for me to slow down,” he said.



Multigenerational GS: Shanna Polley '18 showered affection on her grandfather Milton “Mickey” Meshirer '54 during the 2018 Class Day celebration.



Arthur W. Bingham '84 Invests His Acumen

By Adrienne Anifant

Arthur W. Bingham '84 has worked in corporate and family finance for the past 30 years. Currently, he is a managing director at New York Private Finance, where he initiates and structures loans for private investors and entrepreneurs and oversees the credit compliance function. Bingham also brings his financial expertise and acumen to the General Studies Alumni Association and Annual Fund Committee of which he has been a member for several years.

Bingham's commitment to GS and to the Columbia community is grounded in the profound and exciting experiences he had while he attended Columbia. After completing a year at University of Pennsylvania followed by a year working in restaurants, Bingham returned to his hometown, New York City, to start a new chapter.

"It was the 1980s and a very happening time," Bingham said, explaining that students' political activism on campus was electric, echoing the social movements occurring in our country today. Groups were protesting the apartheid regime in South Africa, seeking to remove world support for apartheid laws.

"The world was coming together as it does from time-to-time on a big issue. On campus, there was a growing movement for divestment of investments and other economic ties from South Africa. There were student demonstrations in front of a trustees' dinner, in front of Low Library, and the students chained the doors of Hamilton closed forming a barricade," said Bingham.

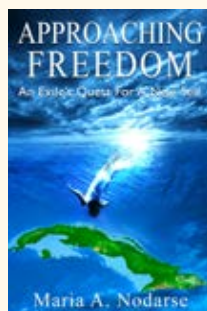
Bingham is inspired by such activity by students, both then and now—his reason for staying involved with GS. For example, he has been a member of the Annual Fund Committee for more than five years, and he is proud of GS's reaffirmed commitment to its students, citing an increase in the number of advising deans, academic support services, combined alumni and student events, and workshops and networking events.

"A lot of alumni like me are putting real effort into this community and into making this school as strong as possible. I'm very proud of that," said Bingham.



1970s

Chef, author, and television host **Jacques Pepin '70** was awarded a lifetime achievement award at the 46th Annual Daytime Creative Arts Emmy Awards. He is the first culinary professional to have been recognized in this fashion.



Maria Nodarse '73, '74JRN published *Approaching Freedom: An Exile's Quest for a New Self*. A memoir, the account starts when she arrives in the United States as a political refugee from Cuba at 15 years old. A writer, editor, and translator, in 1979, Nodarse made a three-week, life-changing trip to Cuba with a group of young, left-wing exiles. Inspired by the experience, she wrote an extensive article that was picked up by two major American newspapers. Now retired, Nodarse devotes her time to writing. *Approaching Freedom* is the result of her quest to interpret her life's journey.

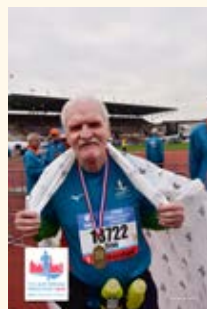


PowerHouse/Simon & Schuster recently published *The Boys*, a photobook and memoir by **Rick Schatzberg '78**, in which images interact with text. Schatzberg collected old snapshots that tell the story of a group of men who have been close friends since early childhood. Pairing vintage photos with contemporary portraits, he connects the boys to the men, interspersing images with poetic text about friendship, aging, memory, and loss.



1980s

Deerbrook Editions released *The New Plantation: Lessons from Rikers Island*, a memoir by novelist **Jason Trask '81**. *The New Plantation* chronicles Trask's experiences as an English teacher of incarcerated teens in a public high school on Rikers Island in New York City. During his three years on the island, over 200 students passed through his classroom, but only five were non-Hispanic whites. Trask also published a novel in 2011, *I'm Not Muhammad*, by Red Wheelbarrow Books.



Becoming Arab: Creole Histories and Modern Identity in the Malay World by **Sumit K. Manal '84, '85GSAS, '87GSAS, '94GSAS** was awarded the Harry J. Benda Book Prize in Southeast Asian studies for 2020.

Mystery writer **Stan Trybulski '86** competed in the 2018 Amsterdam Marathon. Before publishing books such as *One-Trick Pony* and *The Ides of June*, Trybulski was a felony trial prosecutor for the district attorney's office in Brooklyn and later a civil trial attorney for the New York City Department of Education.



1990s

Mark Robbins '91, '93GSAPP of MHR Development based in Norwalk, Conn. completed a comprehensive building and sustainability project at the School Sisters of Notre Dame's 38-acre campus in Wilton, Conn. The project included creating Wilton's first ground-mounted solar system, one component of a large-scale project aimed to reduce the environmental impact and operating expenses of the international educational institute and congregation.



Jay Amari '92, '95SOA was featured in *Backstage* magazine in December 2018. A professional actor and entertainment professional for more than 30 years, after graduating from GS, Amari was awarded a fellowship at Columbia University School of the Arts film division.



Mark Rotella '92 has been appointed director of the Joseph and Elda Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America at Montclair State University. He joins the Coccia Institute from Publisher's Weekly, where he was senior editor since 2006. Rotella is an internationally recognized writer on the Italian American experience. He has published two books, *Stolen Figs: And Other Adventures in Calabria* and *Amore: The Story of Italian American Song* and nearly four dozen articles in an array of outlets including the *New York Times*, *New York Times Book Review*, the *L.A. Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *Vanity Fair*, *Saveur Magazine*, and *NPR.org* to name a few.

Advocacy-based storyteller **JoAnn Stevelos '94** holds an MS in bioethics from Albany Medical College and an MPH from State University of New York. As a public health professional, Stevelos works with community organizations, policymakers, schools, government officials, and more to create healthier and happier environments for children. A writer and author, since publishing her novel *Howard Be Thy Name*, she continues to write for *Psychology Today* and recently published *Uncovering the Hope*, a five-step guide aimed to help people in crisis.



Michael Ehrenreich '95PBPM, '96GSAS is a practicing dermatologist living in South Orange, N.J. He invented Zigo Leader Carrier Bike and designed the board games StartUp and Election. He composed the music and wrote the book for *Medicine the Musical* that premiered at Here Arts Center in New York City in fall 2018. *Medicine the Musical* follows a group of first-year medical students as they grapple with their lives, loves, and the rigors of a medical education.



Writer **Stephen Page '97** won first place in poetry for the 2019 *Bravura Literary Journal*, the journal of Palomar College, for his piece "In the Room of the Dead." Also this past year, Page's poem "Parrot Plague" was published by the *Noctua Review*, a literary journal produced by Southern Connecticut State University. Finishing Line Press recently published Page's tale in verse, *The Salty River Bleeds*, about the world of a large Argentinian ranch.



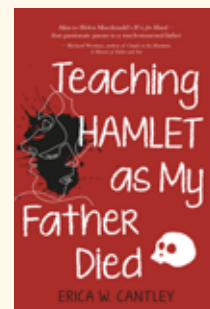
Linda Trischitta '97, '98JRN is a member of the *South Florida Sun Sentinel* team that was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news. The reporters covered the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. Trischitta, along with her colleagues, was also awarded the National Headlines Awards first prize of spot news.



2000s

Daniela Petrova '01 published "Her Daughter's Mother," a psychological suspense novel that was named one of five thrillers to read during summer 2019 by *Time* magazine and one of the best summer books by *O Magazine*, the *New York Post*, *PopSugar*, and *InStyle*.

Filmmaker **Julia Bacha '03** recently received a grant from the Enterprise Documentary Fund by the International Documentary Association for her latest project.



Erica Cantley '02 published *Teaching HAMLET as My Father Died*, a memoir about the timeless bond between parent and child. Organized by act and scene, just like the play, Cantley's book offers the insights of a passionate and skilled educator, the humor and sweetness of young people confronting epic themes on being human, and the complex never-ending love between a daughter and her father.



In July 2020, **Keren Yarhi-Milo '03** was named director of the Saltzman Institute for War and Peace at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. Yarhi-Milo joined Columbia as professor of political science and international affairs in fall 2019. Prior to this appointment, she was an associate professor with tenure of politics and international affairs at Princeton University Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs. In 2018, her book *Who Fights for Reputation? The Psychology of Leaders in International Conflict* was published, also by Princeton University Press. Yarhi-Milo's research and teaching focus on international relations and foreign policy, with a specialization in international security, including foreign policy decision-making, interstate communication and crisis bargaining, intelligence, and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Eliza Factor '97 Brings Together Families Possessing Strange Beauty

By Adrienne Anifant

Eliza Factor '97 (née Miller) is a novelist and founder of Extreme Kids and Crew, a community center for children who have disabilities. In addition, she is the author of novels *The Mercury Fountain* and *Love Maps* and the memoir, *Strange Beauty*, in which she discusses her journey of mothering her son Felix and how that precipitated a transformation within herself.

The eldest child of three, Felix was born in 2003 with multiple disabilities including autism. Factor put her writing career on hold for a few years to take care of Felix as well as her two younger children.

"Felix has a very powerful and charismatic, funny and furious personality. He is wonderful, but the world of hospitals and doctors' offices was becoming very isolating," said Factor. "I didn't have other parents with whom I could compare notes."

Factor became inspired by the idea of creating a communal space that would be accessible to families with children who have disabilities. In 2011, she opened the first location of Extreme Kids and Crew in Bedford-Stuyvesant with the intention to create a place that felt like "a warm embrace" for families to meet and enjoy their children.

Partnering with the Department of Education, Extreme Kids and Crew now has two fully outfitted play stations and sensory gymnasiums in Title One elementary schools in Brooklyn and Queens, and one underway in the Bronx. All are free. The gyms are located in elementary schools so students with disabilities can use them during the week for therapy.

"On the weekend the space is an art/play space for families, including siblings, and it is packed. We hold art classes and concerts to bring people together. We also have parent education programs, where parents socialize, learn from one another and bolster their advocacy skills." Since its founding, New York City's families with kids who have disabilities have made about 30,000 visits to its play-spaces and special programs.

In her book *Strange Beauty*, Factor writes about the multifarious ways she changed when Felix was born and all that she learned from spearheading Extreme Kids and Crew. She speaks candidly about the beauty and the violence inherent in parenting Felix, about incarceration of adults with disabilities, and the interrelationship between the creative process and disability.

"People come up and hug me, saying, 'Thank you,' and start weeping. They feel they have found a home. Their lungs expand. They get strength from each other. It is a very deep feeling—that immediate sense of belonging," Factor said.

"At times, I prefer the disability world so much more than the other one. It can be such a joyful, open place without a lot of pretense. Sure, there is pain and frustration, but also humor and a deep understanding of interdependence."

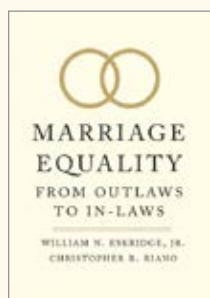


Veronika Gueci (née Gan) '04 is executive director of the Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience at Arizona State University (ASU). In fall 2018, she graduated with an EdD in leadership from Mary Fulton Teachers' College at Arizona State University. Gueci was recognized as an outstanding graduate. Her dissertation research focused on creating programs for students in recovery from substance use and misuse. Her goal in her position as director of the Center for Mindfulness, Compassion and Resilience at ASU is to create a culture that is inclusive of all students.

Early this year, **Carla Zanoni '05, '06JRN** was appointed as the first director of Audience Development by TED, the nonprofit organization devoted to ideas worth spreading. Before joining TED, Zanoni worked as masthead editor of audience and analytics at the *Wall Street Journal* and director of social media and engagement at DNAinfo.com.



Lia Mayer-Sommer '06 produced the music video for "Sunflower," a song by Vampire Weekend. The video was directed by Jonah Hill.



Christopher R. Riano '07 has published *Marriage Equality: From Outlaws to In-Laws* for Yale University Press. Coauthored by William N. Eskridge, Jr., the work is a thoughtful history of how the nation wrestled with an important question of moral and legal equality while never losing sight of the personal stories of the people involved. Riano is the executive director of the Center for Civic Education and a lecturer in constitutional law and government at Columbia University.



Benjamin Waldman '08JTS and **Bracha Waldman '11CC, '15TC** are pleased to announce the birth of their second son, Theodore Max. Mom, dad, baby, and big brother Samson are all doing well.

Keith J.D. Hightower '09 is director for corporate and public partnership at Teach for America in Las Vegas, Nev. His appointment comes after having served for more than a year as a leader in legislative and intergovernmental affairs for the governor of Nevada, Steve Sisolak. Hightower holds a JD from William S. Boyd School of Law at University of Nevada-Las Vegas.



2010s
Former model and Miss Ethiopia **Atti Worku '14** works to create progressive education and community development centers within urban communities in Africa. Founder of Seeds of Africa, a nonprofit organization

Akiva Zablocki '07 Extraordinary Circumstances Led to Founding a Global Community

By Adrienne Anifant

Akiva Zablocki '07, '09PH, and wife Amanda Zablocki '07BC were enjoying life in 2012. The couple had married after meeting at Columbia, were enjoying their careers, and, above all, they were in love with their eight-month old baby, Idan. Then they were struck by the worst news parents could hear: their son was sick. Idan had a rare immune deficiency disorder called Hyper IgM Syndrome that affects one person in a million. People with the disease do not have functional immune systems and are more susceptible to developing infections and unable to fight off infections that do occur. Idan could not produce antibodies, and he had a 50% chance of making it to adulthood. The only known cure for their son was a highly risky bone marrow transplant.

"We had never heard of Hyper IgM. There was no real [support] community, and most of the information that was available was outdated. We felt very alone," said Zablocki. The couple started a campaign to cover the costs of their son's bone marrow transplant that subsequently drew extensive coverage from the media. Families around the world who saw Idan's story on the news reached out to Akiva and Amanda expressing that they also had a child diagnosed with Hyper IgM and never believed they would meet another patient with the same disease.

When Idan was diagnosed, Akiva and Amanda did everything they could to become educated about Hyper IgM. A bone marrow transplant was the only known cure. In 2015, frustrated with the lack of information available and armed with the knowledge that they could use the information they compiled and exploit the experts they met along the way, Akiva and Amanda established the Hyper IgM Foundation. "We had the skill sets to approach my son's medical situation," said Zablocki. "I used to work as a healthcare consultant for corporations and Amanda is a healthcare attorney. We wanted to help people around the world who had this disease but did not have the resources we did."

dedicated to educating underprivileged children and young adults in Ethiopia, she recently contributed a chapter to the book *Why Women Will Save the Planet* from The University of Chicago Press Books on why educating girls is essential for a sustainable future.



In November 2018, **Kenneth Bogner '13** was elected state senator of District 19 for the State of Montana.



Jeffrey Omar Patrick '13 is pursuing his MPH in health policy and management at New York Medical College. This past year, he co-authored an article for the *Journal of Health and Human Experiences* titled "Healing through Self-Expression: The Role of Art Therapy in Medicine," with Mill Etienne, MD, MPH, FAAN, Adam Karp, and Nathan Carberry, MD. In March, Patrick was appointed to New York Medical College's Strategic Planning Subcommittee on Community Engagement.



In 2016, Idan received a second bone marrow transplant that was a success, and today, he is thriving with his own immune system. Meanwhile, the Hyper IgM Foundation continues its efforts "to help improve the treatment, quality of life, and long-term outcomes for children and adults living with Hyper IgM."

In the last five years, the Foundation has established a global community consisting of hundreds of families. It has connected patients from around the world with treatments, doctors, and the most current information available about the disorder. Raising over \$200,000 for research and working closely with families from diagnosis through treatment, the Foundation provides advocacy on behalf of its patient community, empowering them to make informed medical decisions.

The Foundation's international scientific advisory committee includes some of the world's most renowned immunologists. In addition, it works to drive research on Hyper IgM by raising money every year for grants that support scientific research of a possible cure of gene editing that could fix the disorder on a genetic level.

Idan currently attends elementary school, loves building with Legos, playing with friends, and solving multiplication problems.

"He lives a normal life without ever thinking about Hyper IgM. [Meanwhile], I'm staying in this world because it is my mission to help other families," said Zablocki. "Many times people don't have a donor or the resources, or a child may not be healthy enough to have an already risky bone marrow transplant. We need to find a better cure."



Elegance Bratton '14 graduated from NYU Tisch School of the Arts with an MFA in film. His long-awaited documentary *Pier Kids* about queer, black homeless young people in New York City is currently on the festival circuit. While editing more than 400 hours of footage for *Pier Kids*, Bratton directed and produced the documentary series *My House* that aired on Viceland TV network, published a photo book on the queer subculture ballroom scene called *Bound by Night*, and started producing on *The Inspection*, a semi-autobiographical feature film about a gay teen who joins the Marines.

Chef **Chad Brauze '14** is director of culinary and menu development at Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc. and was recently featured in a commercial for the international restaurant chain. A classically trained chef, Brauze acted as the R&D chef and recipe writer for *Daniel: My French Cuisine* by Daniel Boulud and Sylvie Bigar which was released in 2013. He has



Maria Markina '17 Outstanding Entrepreneurship. Period.

By Adrienne Anifant

Entrepreneur Maria Markina '17 founded her company Athena Club in 2017. Athena Club offers women an affordable subscription plan for high quality, menstrual products that are free from harmful chemicals. Recently named to Forbes' 30 under 30 list, she foresaw a need in the market for these products while working as a consultant at McKinsey and Company.

"Everyone knows your period can catch you by surprise, and it is inconvenient to run to the pharmacy. Then, furthermore, you don't know what is in the products or anything about the manufacturing," said Markina.

With an Athena Club subscription, women receive high-quality, responsibly manufactured menstrual products in their mailboxes for as little as \$6.50 a month. Women can customize their order depending on quantity, size, and absorbency. They choose between the Premium option made out of rayon and cotton or tampons made from 100 percent organic cotton. In addition to the quality and convenience, Athena Club is 35 percent more affordable than other menstrual product subscription companies.

Markina named her company after Athena, the Greek goddess of war and creative arts. Athena's companion, the owl, is symbolic of the moon and femininity and sits on her blind side, so Athena can see the entire truth.

"We named it after Athena because she strikes us as the modern



woman—the woman of many talents and passions," said Markina.

Markina hopes their company will reveal the whole truth about menstruation and menstrual products, working to improve women's relationship with their own menstrual cycles. Through their blog, Owl Periodical, they discuss topics and questions that women and girls may have about periods, menstrual cycles, and birth control.

"People are not always comfortable talking about periods, but we are trying to change that. It is the most natural experience for a woman and the human body," said Markina.

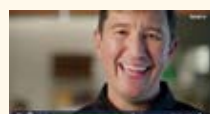
Markina raised 3.8 million dollars in seed money and became so comfortable discussing menstruation with investors that she described the experience as "fun."

"There's nothing to hide about your period and menstrual products. We should care how these products are made and what is in them."

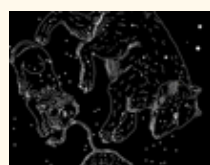
Also, Athena Club is committed to its social endeavors. The company has partnered with organizations and donated over 30,000 tampons to both local and international women and girls who are in need. From women in homeless shelters in NYC to women in other countries where there is not enough access to menstrual products.

In the coming months Athena Club will expand their line to include other period products such as pads and panty liners.

"I am most fulfilled when I receive feedback from customers saying how much our products have positively impacted their lives. People love our products and that makes me happiest," said Markina.



worked in the kitchens of world-famous chefs such as Daniel Boulud, Thomas Keller, Alex Lee, and Ferran Adria to name a few.



Neal D. Curtis '14 is a PhD candidate in English at University of Virginia. Along with two of his colleagues, he was awarded a \$30,000 grant to realize Thomas Jefferson's original vision for the centerpiece of UVA's campus, the Rotunda, as a planetarium. The installation was operational from fall 2019 for one year using an array of digital projectors to cast a high-resolution star map onto the Rotunda's domed interior.



Jesse Chase-Lubitz '18 was chosen by the Henry Luce Scholarship Foundation to join the 2019-2020 class of Luce Scholars. Aimed at the enhancement of the understanding of Asia among potential leaders in American society, the Luce Scholars Program places students in various host countries within Asia for an immersive living and working experience, along with supporting them through stipends, language training, and individualized professional placement.



William Falcon '18 is passionate about using artificial intelligence (AI) for social impact. Falcon was selected to receive a 2019 National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship. The Fellowship provides financial support for three years of graduate work. Falcon is earning a PhD in AI at the Computational Intelligence, Learning, Vision, and Robotics Lab at New York University. As a co-founder and chief technology officer of NextGenVest, he built and led the engineering team that helped thousands of low-income students access over \$39 million in financial aid.

Abigale Wyatt '14 and **Christopher Beierschmitt '17** were also awarded NSF Graduate Research Fellowships.

Share your news
with us at
gsowl@columbia.edu

In Memoriam Joseph Kissane

By Allison Scola



Joseph Kissane, former Director of Columbia's Summer Session, former School of General Studies Dean of Students, and a beloved preceptor of English and comparative literature, passed away from COVID-19 on April 19.

Described by many as an extraordinary person, Joseph was "smart, savvy, thoughtful, gracious, loyal, kind, and always good-humored," explained David Scott Kastan, George M. Bodman Professor of English at Yale University. The two shared a mutual interest in Shakespeare. "Even after I left Columbia," Kastan wrote in an email, "Joseph and I stayed in touch, usually after he had seen some Shakespeare production (and he seemed to see them all) and had noticed some rearrangement of the text, or an actor's interpretation of a speech, or a director's idea about how to make the play relevant to a modern audience."

Born in Pittsburgh, Pa. on December 4, 1930, Joseph Kissane graduated from Central Catholic High School and Duquesne University. After serving in Korea as a 2nd lieutenant in the Army during the mid-1950s, he enrolled at Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, where he earned an MA in 1956 and a PhD in 1968. His field of study, according to friend and Columbia Professor Emerita Joan Ferrante, was 18th century novel. His dissertation focused on Jane Austin and Samuel Richardson.

"He led a fascinating life," Ferrante said.

That life not only included travel, hearing concerts, and attending the theater, but also dinners with friends such as former co-worker Carl Burton. "Joe was probably the best company I've ever met," said Burton, who was a preceptor in English at Columbia upon earning his master's and PhD in English literature from GSAS

in 1963 and 1973 respectively. "He was wickedly funny. He was a wonderful boss—so supportive."

Thomas Kissane, Joseph's younger brother, recalled how his older sibling was thoughtful and kind and that he could talk to him about anything. He was an excellent mentor. "He would go out of his way to help you," said Thomas.

"I loved his wry and sometimes savage wit which, oddly, was combined with a charitable and kind disposition, an inclination to accept people as he found them, and to find in them what was of value. I learned a lot from him," Frank Wolf, Dean Emeritus of Columbia University School of Professional Studies, said of Joseph.

Joseph enjoyed teaching. Not only was he an instructor for GS, but he also taught English to veterans in Germany for University of Maryland and served on the faculties of Rutgers University and Hunter College.

Ferrante, who spent many an afternoon and evening with Joe after a day of work at Columbia recalled that her neighbor, who had had Joseph as a teacher, described him as, "The best professor I ever had." He was very dedicated to his students, both as a teacher and an administrator.

Kissane was GS dean of students in the late 1960s and 1970s, when many matriculants were veterans returning from Vietnam. Burton explained that Joseph, having been a veteran himself, helped students transition from the horrors of war into an academic life. "He was a good counselor to students," said Burton, whose late wife Carol was director of development and alumni affairs at GS from 1981 to 1994.

"He was very good and fair to students," Hugh Babinski, former Columbia faculty

member and close Kissane friend, concurred.

"He was extraordinary in many ways. Sympathetic to the students' points of view, and a very good administrator. He ran a tight ship, yet in a gentle way. It's a gift to be able to do that."

Babinski saw Kissane often. His fondest memories included 45 years of dinners shared and planned with Joan Ferrante. "We discovered that we all liked cooking and our birthdays were nine days apart, so we planned an annual dinner party—elaborate, 13-course dinner parties with menus in French and live chamber music preludes!"

The last one was in November 2019. "It's an incredible loss," Babinski said. "He was always there."

In Memoriam

Dr. Kurt L. Shell '48, '55GSAS (1920-2018) was a prolific writer who published dozens of works in three languages. He wrote about comparative politics, culture, and society of Austria, the United States, and West Germany. Forced to emigrate from Austria by the Nazi occupation during World War II, he worked in a London bakery before serving the U.S. Army on the Italian front. After the war, he earned his bachelor's and graduate degrees from Columbia. Shell was a professor of political science at Goethe University in Frankfurt Am Main, Germany from 1967 to his retirement in 1986.

Dr. Uriel Barzel '54, '58PS (1929-2019) was a professor emeritus at the Department of Medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He and his wife Aviva recently established the Professor Uriel S. Barzel, MD 1954 GS Achievement Fund which provides support to GS students enrolled in the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program. An internist, Dr. Barzel was motivated to create this fund to alleviate the financial burden of students pursuing a career in medicine.

Memoirist and essayist **Barbara Probst Solomon '60 (1929-2019)** was known for documenting life in Spain during and after the regime of General Francisco Franco. Her observations of 20th-century culture and politics were renowned. Probst Solomon's 1972 memoir, *Arriving Where We Started*, recounted her time as a young woman in post-war Paris when she teamed up with novelist Norman Mailer to "spring a few people from a Franco jail in Spain." Read our interview with Probst Solomon in the 2009 issue of *The Owl* at <https://gs.columbia.edu/content/owl-alumni-magazine>.

Robert W. Berger '64 (1933-2019) was a professor of fine arts. Holding a PhD from Harvard University, he taught at Brandeis University, Brown University, Penn State University, and University of Virginia. Berger published extensively on French art and architecture in the period of Louis XIV, including 12 books such as *In the Garden of the Sun King: Studies on the Park of Versailles under Louis XIV*, *Versailles: The Chateau of Louis XIV*, *A Royal Passion: Louis XIV as a Patron of Architecture*, and *Public Access to Art in Paris*.

Dorothy C. "Decie" Rosapepe-Bodwell '64 (1942-2019) maintained a varied career throughout her life all while cultivating her family and community and volunteer work. After graduating from GS, she worked as a photo researcher at the Associated Press, which included cataloging pictures of the Holocaust. Later, she moved to the AP sports department, where she wrote stories and edited copy. Rosapepe-Bodwell's husband, Douglas Faulkner Bodwell '64CC, was working for the president of Fisk University in 1967 when race riots erupted at the foot of campus. Rosapepe-Bodwell volunteered to manage press relations for the university during the crisis. In 1985, while a resident of Virginia, she worked as a legal secretary, and then served as legislative aide to Virginia delegate Warren G. Stambaugh.

A devoted husband, father and grandfather, **Joseph F. Studholme '64 (1936-2018)** wrote for *MD Magazine* and conducted analysis work for Standard & Poor's before beginning a successful banking career during which he held senior positions with both national and international institutions. He was a member of the Bank Credit Associates of New York, taught a variety of training and introductory courses on credit analysis, and worked on behalf of various NGOs overseas.

Richard Munger '67 (1928-2019) was grateful for his Columbia degree from GS which he earned while working as a full-time pilot for United Airlines.

William A. J. Bremer '68 (1944-2019) enjoyed a decades-long career as an actuary for private insurers and government agencies. A devoted husband and father, after marrying his wife Kathy Hochberg on the Columbia campus, they raised their family in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. Bremer was proudly in the middle of the student demonstrations that overtook Columbia's campus in the spring of 1968 and loved regaling family and friends with first-hand memories from that incredible time in American history.

Physician **Joyce Wallace '64PBPM (1940 - 2020)** established the Foundation for Research on Sexually Transmitted Diseases in 1982. A pioneer in women's health, she was given the Brooke Russell Astor Award that recognized her as an unsung hero who was "relentless" in improving the quality of life in New York City for her treatment of prostitutes during the height of the AIDS epidemic and beyond.

Sarah D. Madden '69 (1945-2018) was a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. "Sassy," as she was known to her loving grandchildren, was an active and respected member of the Greenwich, Conn. community for more than 40 years. She was chairman of the Friends of the Greenwich Library and a trustee of the Greenwich Library.

In 1981, **Edda Machlin '79 (1926-2019)** published a definitive cookbook on Italian Jewish food, *The Classic Cuisine of the Italian Jews*. Machlin, whose father was a rabbi in the Tuscan town of Pitigliano, survived Fascism in Italy during World War II when anti-Fascist partisans hid her, her siblings, and her parents in the countryside. After the war, the Jewish community in Italy was splintered, and in 1958, Machlin moved to New York. In 1999, she wrote *The Classic Dolci of the Italian Jews: A World of Jewish Desserts*, which detailed the Jewish influence on Italian cooking.

Robert S. Steel '93 (1961-2019) was an artist, photographer, and bartender before matriculating at GS. After he earned his BA in history, his Columbia mentor, historian Kenneth T. Jackson appointed him project editor for *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, to which he contributed 25 articles. Steel became a social studies teacher after earning his masters from Teachers College. From 1994 to 2015, he was a beloved teacher at Rye High School (N.Y.).

During his time at Columbia, **Kevin Clarke Johnson '14 (1962-2019)** was active with Columbia PRIDE, as an orientation leader, and shared relationships with fellow California expatriates. Upon graduation, he was recognized with the GS Service Award and for his contributions to multicultural affairs. After graduation, Johnson worked at City University of New York as a library assistant in technical services and was pursuing a graduate degree in library science. Johnson possessed a wide-ranging volunteer history in fundraising and committee work, which he notably cultivated at the Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco.

“Seeing what my gift means to the students has been one of the highlights of my life.”

—MARCELLA STAPOR '59GS,
1754 SOCIETY MEMBER

THE 1754 SOCIETY
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Scholarships for veterans. Reliable income for retirement.

The stock market was making Marcella nervous. So she shifted her savings into a life income gift at Columbia. Now she receives fixed payments for life at an attractive 7.5% annual rate (based on her age*) — and the balance will fund scholarships for veterans at the School of General Studies.

Are your assets providing the income you need while promoting the causes you value? Call the Office of Gift Planning at 800-338-3294 or email us at gift.planning@columbia.edu to discover ways to invest in Columbia students while securing an income stream for yourself and/or a loved one.

* Rates are based on the age of the annuitant(s) at the time of the gift. Columbia follows the rates recommended by the American Council on Gift Annuities, last amended July 1, 2018. Contact us to find out what your rate would be.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Office of Gift Planning

giving.columbia.edu/Stapor1754mag
800-338-3294 • gift.planning@columbia.edu

THE OWL

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, NY
Permit No. 3593

Alicia Graf Mack '03 performed for A Celebration of Dance at Columbia during Reunion 2019. Graf Mack is one of the alumni featured in "The Transitional Dance," this issue's feature article. "I wanted to be a ballerina since I was a toddler," Graf Mack said. "I toured so many places, performed in major theaters, and had a chance to inspire young people who wanted to have a similar career." And now, from her position as the director of the dance division at The Juilliard School, she continues that work, yet from the other side of the curtain. Read Graf Mack's full story along with those of three other alumni who are former professional dancers on page 14.



PHOTO: DAVID DINI