

THE OWL



THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

**The Power To
Effect Change:
A New Campaign
Seeks To
Transform Lives**

**Shaking Up
The Stories:
GS Alumni
In The Motion
Picture Industry**

**Dual Degree
Program Alumni
Forge New Paths**

2021

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

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Published October 2021

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The Owl is designed by
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LETTER FROM THE DEAN



Dear GS Alumni and Friends,

I speak for so many of us when I say we were so pleased to welcome students to campus this semester after 18 months of virtual learning and connecting. Like the beloved statue of *Alma Mater* that sits on the stairs to Low Library, our arms were open, ready to foster our students' pursuit of wisdom in a safe, healthful environment.

Since 1904, *Alma Mater*, shown on the cover of this issue, has greeted thousands of visitors to the Morningside Campus. She has served as an eyewitness to our university's good and bad times, expansions, and transformations. Conceived by Samuel Johnson, Columbia's first president, the concept of this nourishing "*Mater*," or mother of studies who conducts her pupils towards wisdom and virtue, is imprinted on the University seal. Architect Charles McKim, one of our campus' designers, took Johnson's vision a step further when he commissioned Daniel Chester French to produce a remarkable, welcoming sculpture. The two envisioned a woman who would recall the ancient Greek goddess Athena, protector of wisdom, classical learning, craft, and the arts of peace and war.

In 1934, artist Eugene Savage was prompted anew by this theme when he created *Videbimus Lumen*, the mural of Athena that greets visitors entering Butler Library (See our cover story, "The Power to Effect Change," on page 14). The goddess, employing her shield, wards off two figures symbolizing ignorance and greed. Her right hand encapsulates the intentions of Johnson's *Alma Mater*, enabling and nurturing those seeking knowledge and enlightenment.

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On Sunday, December 20, I had my recurrent call with Larry J. Lawrence '69. I came to the meeting thinking that we would catch up. I was already basking in joy and appreciation that he had agreed to chair our new financial aid campaign. Then, Larry shared his plan to give a \$5 million matching fund to launch the scholarship initiative.

My eyes welled up with tears.

This is the single largest gift that GS has received at one time, and I knew that it would electrify our GS community.

Following a momentous year when 1,400 generous alumni and friends gave nearly \$1 million to the GS Annual Fund, this news was thrilling because together, such generosity stands as a testament to how dedicated our supporters are of our undergraduates and of the power of the School of General Studies. Furthermore, during this past enormously challenging year, in 2020-2021, we disbursed more financial aid than any other year in the history of the School. Because of this generosity—and the concept of the new campaign discussed in this issue's cover story—a Columbia education is becoming more accessible to outstanding nontraditional students than ever before.

With such support, we are better able to reimagine the model of who has access to elite education and what can be achieved with it. But there is still more to do.

Upon reading these pages, I think you will understand how together, you—GS's alumni, friends, and students—are honoring traditional education while challenging how it might be employed. Like Athena, you are wielding its power to enlighten the worlds we touch, whether it is our filmmaking alumni as discussed in "Shaking Up the Stories" on page 22 or our Dual BA alumni featured in "The Rewards of Elasticity" on page 10. Whether it is new graduates like Aedan Macdonald, the founder of Justice Through Code (See page 32), or current students like Jarrell Daniels, who recently was awarded the Truman Scholarship (See page 6), and so many others mentioned throughout these pages and beyond, GSers are drawing upon their life experiences and their Columbia educations to enhance and enlighten all they encounter.

With this, I invite you too to open your arms, look out onto the world, and share your wisdom. Because with your Columbia education and your generous GS spirit, you have the power to effect change.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Rosen-Metsch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90
Dean

IN GENERAL

SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH ESTABLISH DUAL BA-MPH DEGREE PROGRAM

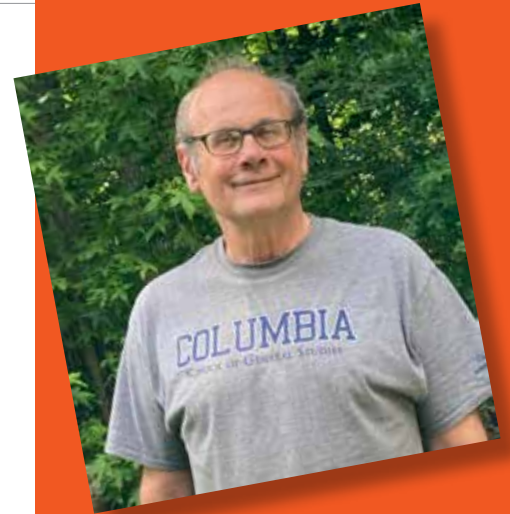
By Christina Gray

The School of General Studies at Columbia University (GS) and Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health have launched an educational partnership that will enable qualified students to complete in five years both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree. Starting in Fall 2021, this dual-degree—or ‘4+1’—program presents a unique opportunity for Columbia undergraduates to obtain an MPH, usually a two-year program, at an accelerated pace.

“We are delighted to announce this innovative collaboration with the Columbia School of General Studies, which is part of Columbia Mailman School’s continued commitment to educate leaders who will work to protect and improve the health of people everywhere,” said Linda P. Fried, MD, MPH, Dean of the Mailman School of Public Health. “We look forward to welcoming the School of General Studies’ exemplary students and enabling them to jump start their work in public health, a field more vital than ever as we enter the post-COVID world.”

Students in the Columbia University School of General Studies can apply to the “4+1” program in their junior year. Upon acceptance they will spend the fall semester of their senior year enrolled at Columbia Mailman, where they will participate in the challenging, multidisciplinary MPH Core Curriculum. Students will then return to Columbia GS for the spring semester of their senior year to complete their bachelor’s degree. After the student graduates from GS, they will matriculate at Columbia Mailman full time to complete a practicum and a year of course and thesis work to earn their MPH degree.

“As a public health professor and researcher, I am thrilled to offer this unique opportunity to our students, helping them apply their diverse experiences and unique perspectives in pursuit of better and more just public health outcomes for all,” said Lisa Rosen-Metsch, PhD, Dean of the Columbia University School of General Studies. “The Mailman School of Public Health was an ideal match for our School and this partnership is a timely continuation of our ongoing leadership in undergraduate, dual-degree education.”



Skip Bailey, former GS Director of Educational Financing, may be retired, but he has not slowed down. “I’m not bored at all,” he said during a recent phone call.

In between periodically advising the Office of Educational Financing team at GS, he was elected treasurer of his village in Delaware, where he relocated soon after transitioning from his full-time position at Columbia in the summer of 2019. “I’ve gotten to know our neighbors through our assembly meetings on Zoom,” he said, explaining that the village does not have a mayor, nor representatives, but is governed by the town assembly.

In addition to remodeling the home he shares with his wife Bev, a cellular and developmental biologist, Mr. Bailey has been cultivating a new career doing voiceover work. His projects have included recording five videos for the Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI) and about 15-20 voiceovers for a new CVTI project. Ultimately, he hopes to take his voiceover work to a professional level.



Announcing the 2020-2021 Moody's Veterans Program Scholars



Bonding Experience

Alex Contreras, Andrew Kenn, Darcy Diaz, Thomas Corcoran, and Victor Garnica were named Moody's Veterans Program Scholars. The program gives these current students and military veterans the opportunity to learn from industry professionals while they gain valuable experience in finance, technology, and economics.

Surapaneni '06 Named 2021 Columbia Alumni Medalist

GS alumnus Pavan C. Surapaneni was named as one of this year's Columbia Alumni Medalists in recognition of his commitment to cultivating Columbia's community. He graduated from GS as salutatorian of his class with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and Middle Eastern languages and cultures and went on to receive his Juris Doctor degree from Harvard University.

The Columbia Alumni Medal, the highest award bestowed by the Columbia Alumni Association, is presented to notable alumni who have provided distinguished service in building the Columbia community.

During his time at Columbia, Surapaneni led Community Impact's Peace by PEACE, competed on the ski team, and was named to the Goldman Sachs Global Leaders Program. Since graduating, he has served on Columbia's Alumni Trustee Nominating



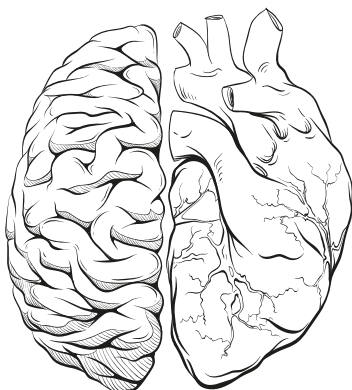
Committee and GS's Recent Alumni Leadership Committee. He has also been a part of GS's Reunion Committee and the CU250 Undergrad Student Committee.

Surapaneni currently serves as Vice Chair of the GS Board of Visitors and has been a member since 2011. He is a partner with Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, which has a unique multidisciplinary practice in the sports and real estate industries. He has been named a "Sports/Entertainment Trailblazer" by The National Law Journal, a "Rising Star in Sports" by Law360, and an "Emerging Leader" by The M&A Advisor. For his achievements and continuous involvement with the Columbia community, Surapaneni and nine other recipients were honored at University Commencement in May. He was also recognized at the Alumni Medalists Gala during Columbia Alumni Leaders Weekend.

Those Simple Moments

Isadora Muszkat planned on completing her undergraduate studies between just Tel Aviv and New York City as part of the Dual Degree Program between Tel Aviv University and Columbia University but instead, due to the pandemic, she spent her junior year at home in São Paulo, Brazil.

"I can't wait to discover New York in person, to meet new people, interact with my professors, and live the Columbia student life I've been dreaming of. Even if it's just grabbing a cup of coffee over a silly conversation—I will never again take for granted those simple moments that once seemed so ordinary."



GS students can now major in medical humanities, an interdisciplinary study offered through the University's Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. Combining anthropology, sociology, literature, and history, it goes beyond medical science to consider perspectives offered by the humanities and social sciences.



Filling His Cup

Current student Leopold Brandl won the 2021 City Island Cup in New York City in June. An avid sailor since childhood, Brandl has been competing in regattas around the world, starting his first campaign to be in the Olympics at age 16. "I always knew that I didn't want to be an athlete forever and that, someday, I wanted to pursue a 'serious' job in science. When looking at colleges, I wanted to get the best education possible while still being able to compete on the Olympic circuit. Columbia was no foreign name to me as Professor Brian Greene's books were what first got me interested in physics as a kid."



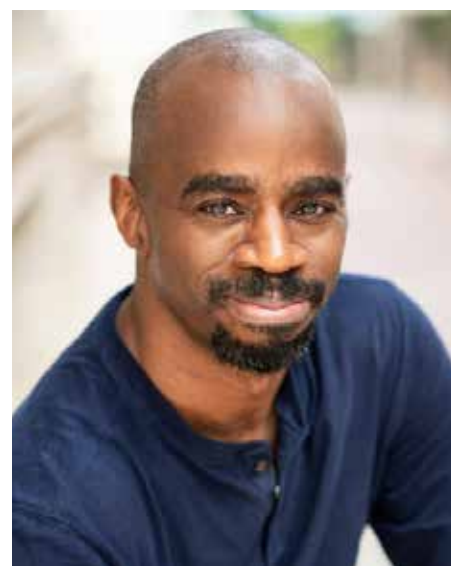
GS INDUCTED 51 MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2021 INTO THE HISTORIC PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY



71 STUDENTS WERE INDUCTED INTO THE GS HONOR SOCIETY ON FEBRUARY 23.

217

THIS FALL, GS WELCOMED A RECORD 217 STUDENTS TO ITS INTERNATIONAL DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS WITH PARTNER INSTITUTIONS SCIENCES PO, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, AND TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY.



GS student Michael Higgins co-founded The Food Pantry at Columbia to address food insecurity among his fellow students. What started in 2016 as a small project out of a closet in the GS student lounge has now become a multi-campus operation, serving all 20 Columbia University in the City of New York schools. In March 2020, Michael and the team adapted quickly to the rapidly-changing situation, reconfiguring how they distribute food to minimize risk for customers and volunteers and taking orders through their new website. Before the pandemic, they provided roughly 75-100 disbursements per month. In 2020 alone, they provided 2,700+ disbursements, nearly matching the total of all previous years since the Pantry's creation combined.

"My story is not unique; it is one that belongs to generations of black men in America. My only hope is to change the narrative about people like me. We are more than our worst mistakes. We are human. We deserve to live without the threat of death and we, too, want to contribute to making society more fair and just."

Jarrell Daniels '22



Daniels, an African-American studies major, is one of only 62 students nationwide selected to receive the Truman Scholarship. Originally founded in 1997, the Truman Scholarship is awarded to college juniors who demonstrate a love for public service and a desire to better the world around them.

50 School of General Studies students were recently awarded prestigious fellowships for the 2021-22 academic year. Their success underscores the unique strengths of the GS student body as a whole: intellectual maturity, depth of practical experience, dedication to social justice, and a commitment to overcoming obstacles on the way to achieving personal goals.

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

- Alessandra Vecino Gazabon '15, Archaeology
- Emily Rachel Simon '21, Astrophysics
- Emily Carrero Mustelier '21 Earth Sciences (Honorable Mention)

Tamer Social Enterprise Summer Fellowship, Columbia Business School, Summer 2021

- Garrett Peter Modeste '23

State Department Internship, Summer 2021

- Hailey Cherry '22, MESAAS (Saudi Arabia)

Foreign Language and Area Studies Award (FLAS)

- Hailey Cherry '22, MESAAS (Arabic, full-year, 2021-22)
- Lucy B. Davis '24 (Arabic, summer 2021)
- Caitlin Buckley '22, Comparative Literature and Society (Arabic, full-year, 2021-22)
- Helene Seynabou Mbaye '23, MESAAS (Arabic, summer 2021)
- Kayla Zhu '22, MESAAS (Turkish, full-year, 2021-22)
- Iam Borim '23, History (Arabic, full-year, 2021-22)
- Michael Ge '23, Comparative Literature and Society (Chinese, summer 2021)
- Kambi Gathesha '22, MESAAS (Arabic, summer 2021)

GS Summer Research Fellowship, Summer 2021

- Hualing Chen '22, English
- Arda Yurctu '23

CU Scholarship for Displaced Persons, 2020-2021

- Sumar Frejat '21, Neuroscience and Behavior

Ella Lyman Cabot Trust Award, 2021-22

- Joseph Raphael Nacio Aimard '24

Fondation de la Vocation, Prix de l'Esperance, 2021

- Alix Trebaol '21, Sustainable Development

Cold War Archives Research Fellowship 2021-22

- Carole-Louise Ashby '21, Political Science
- Rosa Geoghegan '23, French
- Hannah Kunze '22, English
- Rhe-Anne Tan '21, Political Science

John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellow, US Department of Defense

- Olurotimi Osha '20, History

Fulbright Study Award, 2021-22

- Sabrina Delafield '21, Political Science (England)
- Elle Swenson '21, Human Rights (Brazil)

Clarendon Scholarship at Oxford University, 2021-23

- Miyo Marlana
- Peck-Suzuki '20, Philosophy

Truman Scholarship

- Jarrell Daniels '22, African-American Studies

The Wizard Behind Columbia Commencement

By Allison Scola

Because of the pandemic, like all 2020 graduates, Rudy Rodriguez missed the opportunity to walk across the graduation stage. "I was more disappointed for my mom," he reflected. However, unlike his peers, Rodriguez would not only have walked across the stage, but he would also have been the mastermind behind the technological components of the main ceremony, the chief technical producer behind the week's live and virtual elements, and the lead media support for the event's websites and social media channels. In sum, as Associate Director, Technology for the Office of the President of Columbia University, Rodriguez oversees the technical production of University Commencement.

As one might expect, when the ceremony was forced online in 2020, the nature of Rodriguez' role significantly changed, but it changed even more dramatically for 2021 with his team moving from producing a live event attended by tens of thousands to a documentary-style film production meant to be broadcast globally. "I was the astronaut going to the moon," he explained, describing the team's set-up in Low Library like NASA's mission control. "But I wasn't by myself. It was a huge community effort of dozens of people behind the scenes."

With an aim to present thoughtful pieces that illustrated the story of this extraordinary academic year, planning and pre-production started in January. Beginning in mid-March,



the professional team filmed 12 hours a day for 16 days straight across Columbia's various campuses. Then they edited the footage and completed post-production. The video was finalized the day before the broadcast event, which was April 30. "The stakes were high," said Rodriguez.

A composer and musician from Arizona, Rodriguez studied theater arts as an undergraduate at GS. When he arrived in New York City in 2008 with two guitars and two duffle bags, he had not imagined he would be managing events at an Ivy League school of which he would also be a graduate. Now a student in the executive master's program in technology management at the School of Professional Studies, he looks forward to next year's Commencement that will undoubtedly be another example of how this technological Renaissance man makes it happen, and not only, considering that he will be graduating once again.

"My mom will finally have the opportunity to watch me cross the stage," he mused. "She deserves this as much as I do."

IN GENERAL



By Nancy J. Brandwein

GS PREHEALTH NETWORK PROGRAM OFFERS SUPPORT AND INSPIRATION

Students beginning the long hard road to medical school and doctoring face enormous challenges, but some students face additional hurdles; these are students who self-identify as underrepresented in medicine for reasons including but not limited to their ethnicity, religion, race, gender, and sexual orientation, and if they are first generation and/or low-income students. After arriving as an assistant dean of the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program in 2012, proud “Nuyoricán” Limary Carrasquillo recognized that these underrepresented students sought to draw support and inspiration from each other and externally from professional mentors.

In response, Carrasquillo created the initial proposal for what would become the GS Prehealth Network Program (GSPNP). With the full support of the Postbac Premed team, Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, and its Office of Diversity Affairs under Dr. Hilda Hutcherson, Associate Dean for

Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, the program took off in 2013. A series of bimonthly discussions and workshops led by public health experts, practitioners, and admissions representatives is the linchpin. Topics range from defeating imposter syndrome and managing work/life balance in medical school to handling macro/micro aggressions successfully. Carrasquillo hosts the sessions, and with her incredible enthusiasm it is easy to see why students call her “Oprah.” Never one to take the spotlight though, Carrasquillo emphasized that the Program would not be possible without co-facilitator Ashley Moody-Astwood and colleagues in the Postbac Premed and GS Student Life offices.

Carrasquillo and students are grateful for the practitioners and health professionals who share their struggles and achievements. She said that Columbia University cardiologist Dr. Marwa Abdalla, for example, has been so impressed with our students over the years that she went

to the head of cardiology to create a pilot cardiology mentorship program for GSPNP students. Launched over the summer of 2021, the Program will not only increase diversity for Columbia’s cardiology division, but it will open additional opportunities to students. Carrasquillo also proudly pointed out that Program graduate, newly-minted doctor Victoria Perez, came full circle, presenting to GSPNP in this last year of her pediatric dermatology residency at Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, as courses went online, the program did too, and participation in GSPNP doubled. Premed students are often juggling work, family, and school, so it can be hard to show up for campus events. This inclusivity, both for students and speakers from outside of New York, is something Carrasquillo ponders as the program evolves but stays true to its initial goals: “We at GS, in particular the Postbac Premed Program, have a deep appreciation for equity and access.”

NEW TWIST AT LIST: WHEN A VALUED TRADITION GOES VIRTUAL

By Nancy J. Brandwein

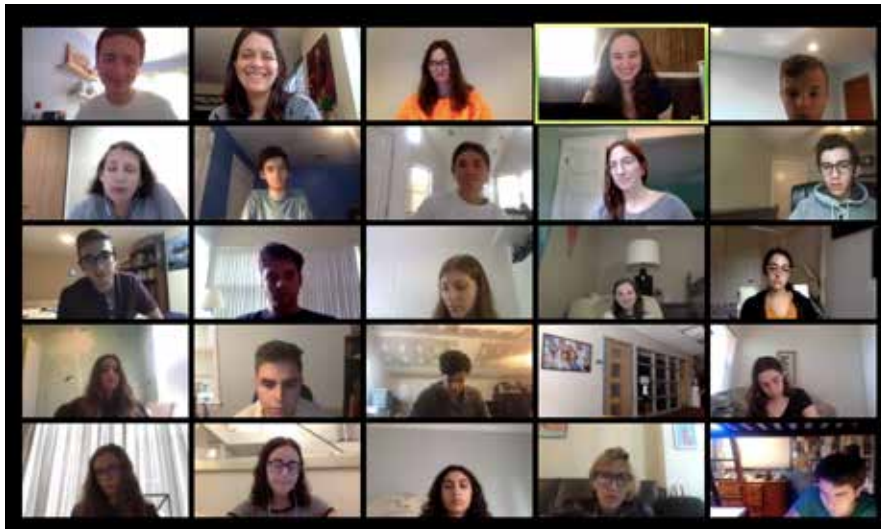
An incoming student in the GS/JTS Joint Program in 1998, Dr. Rebecca Perten looks back fondly at the first-year seminar program, List 101. She remembers the informal sessions of weekly kibbitzing over lunch as students became acquainted, lively panel discussions led by deans and upperclassmen, along with campus and neighborhood tours. Perten has now come full circle. An assistant dean at List College since February 2021, she facilitates List 101 as one of her many responsibilities. Yet, when the COVID-19 pandemic pushed classes online and kept them virtual through the 2020-2021 academic year, Perten had to ensure this beloved orientation seminar—a List College tradition since 1986—was still able to create a sense of community among geographically-dispersed students.

Fortunately, she had two adept interns, Eliana Seidel, a Barnard/JTS junior, and Jonah Pitowsky, a GS/JTS sophomore, at the ready. Their re-envisioned online-via-Zoom seminar had two immediate goals for community building: helping first-years form individual connections within their class and helping the class form a group culture. For the weekly 75-minute one-credit course, “Truly the best way we fostered engagement was creating space for natural conversation,” said Pitowsky. “We split students into pods and pairs to allow them to talk on their own, without the pressure or awkwardness of someone listening to them, and we found that to be successful.”

They also started every session with an icebreaker, which were sometimes a bit offbeat. However, what created that sense of group culture was the emphasis on reflection pieces, in which students wrote on themes of pandemic life and shared their moving, often humorous stories.

“One of the major themes that we discussed in class,” said Pitowsky, “... was the tension inherent in starting college while still at home. Most students were having this bizarre experience of moving on to a new chapter of their lives in the exact same place where the other one ended.” Pitowsky also noted their reflections revealed

how meaningful Zoom interactions had been or could be for these students. More challenging, though, was the community service component, formerly a crucial way to connect students with Morningside Heights and New York City. While students volunteered virtually to help homebound New Yorkers through the Jewish



nonprofit Repair the World, and phone banked for the 2020 election, it was hard for them to develop a significant connection with New York City. Through creative uses of the Zoom platform, though, they were not only able to present their hometowns, but also to provide intimate views of their homes. Dr. Perten feels certain that, having gone through List 101 together but apart, the 34 members of the Class of 2024 forged bonds that will carry over into the next school year on campus.

The Rewards of Elasticity: GS's International Dual Degree Programs Forge New Paths in Nontraditional Education

More than a decade ago, Columbia University and Sciences Po pioneered the first of many Dual Degree Programs with a uniquely immersive approach to international education. Today, alumni of these programs are leveraging the skills and experiences they acquired to make their way in the world—and change it for the better.

By Alexander Gelfand

Ask Jessica Sarles-Dinsick, Associate Dean for International Programs, to describe the archetypal student in one of the School's International Dual Degree Programs, and a profile quickly emerges.

"A student who is adventurous, curious, and independent," Sarles-Dinsick says. Other common characteristics include a willingness to make unusual choices; a propensity to learn both in and out of the classroom; and a desire to solve pressing issues in the world.

Sarles-Dinsick speaks from long experience. After helping to build the infrastructure for the Sciences Po Dual BA Program more than a decade ago, Sarles-Dinsick took on admissions and recruitment duties as well. As additional programs were added with City University of Hong Kong, Trinity College Dublin, and Tel Aviv University, she became responsible for managing the institutional relationships across all of them.

Thanks to its longstanding Joint Program with List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the School of General Studies was ideally positioned to spearhead the international dual BA initiative with

Sciences Po. But it was not a risk-free proposition: Unlike standard study abroad programs, the dual degree programs that GS offers with its partners are fully immersive, requiring all students to spend two years abroad before setting foot on the Upper West Side. A certain amount of culture shock is not unusual—even for the Americans.

But that is the point: Students who sign up for this nontraditional approach to international education willingly uproot themselves to acquire something unique.

"You force yourself to redefine what it means to be successful in a totally different academic context," Sarles-Dinsick says. And that makes participating students "more fluid and elastic in their thinking as they move out into the world after graduation."

Students who sign up for this nontraditional approach to international education willingly uproot themselves to acquire something unique.



Weronika Jurkiewicz '15

The Filmmaker

Growing up in Warsaw, documentary filmmaker Weronika Jurkiewicz '15 listened to American music, watched American films and television, and pretty much felt like she knew the place—until she actually came to New York City.

“I think that was the first time I experienced culture shock,” Jurkiewicz says.

Jurkiewicz was in boarding school in Hong Kong when she found out about the inaugural dual BA program between GS and Sciences Po. The fact that it was brand new did not put her off. In fact, it was part of the attraction.

“For me, it was just hyper-exciting,” she says.

Unfortunately, Jurkiewicz had already missed the application deadline. But GS gave her a week’s extension, and she completed her application as she rode a night train through Indonesia while celebrating Chinese New Year.

After two years studying social sciences at Sciences Po’s Le Havre campus in Normandy, Jurkiewicz came to the United States to pursue creative nonfiction writing with an eye towards a career in longform journalism—and discovered that it really was a foreign country after all.

“You think that you know America just because you’ve experienced its culture,” she says. “Then you arrive, and it’s so different.”

GS was a revelation as well. From a geographical perspective, Le Havre was wildly diverse; more than 65 percent of students come from outside of France. But the GS population, with its variety of lived experience, was something new again.

“You have veterans, you have ballerinas, you have people who have had a break from school,” Jurkiewicz says. “You experience different kinds of diversity, and that enriches you a lot.”

After graduation, Jurkiewicz landed a job at Future of Storytelling, an organization that explores storytelling in the digital age. She also picked up a master’s degree in documentary filmmaking through DocNomads, a joint program supported by the European Commission that shuttles students through universities in Portugal, Belgium, and Hungary.

While in Budapest, Jurkiewicz began work on a documentary about a sex toy factory

in a small Hungarian village. Released in 2019, *The Vibrant Village* takes a tongue-in-cheek look at traditional gender roles (the women of the village work at the factory while the men drink beer at the local bar) and the taboos surrounding sexuality and female pleasure.

As if to underscore that last point, the film became embroiled in a media firestorm this past March when Poland’s Minister of Culture shut down a documentary filmmaker showcase on a national video-on-demand platform due to scheduled screenings of *The Vibrant Village* and another film with feminist themes. (The incident became known as “Vibrator-gate.”)

Undeterred, Jurkiewicz is already working on her next film, *First Date*, which deals with managing one’s romantic life after an act of sexual harassment and assault. (The film has received funding from Rooftop Films, a nonprofit film organization based in Brooklyn that screened *The Vibrant Village* last year.) And she is finalizing a deal for a documentary television series about Polish startups in the ecosystem innovation space.

“This is where I want to be as an artist,” says Jurkiewicz, who credits Sciences Po and Columbia for providing her with the analytical and storytelling skills she uses to address pressing social themes through her work. “I want to interact with the world outside my window.”

The Exchange Artist

As someone who manages international student programs for a living, Hong Kong native Gigi Yan '17 has one overarching goal.

“I want other students to have the same experience that I did,” she says.

For Yan, enrolling in the Joint Bachelor’s Degree Program with City University of Hong Kong (CityU) “felt like a dream”—albeit one that almost did not come true.

Yan’s mother, a Tibetan Buddhist, sent her to a boarding school for Tibetan refugees in northern India in hopes that she would one day serve as a translator for the Tibetan community back in Hong Kong. That did not happen; but Yan did develop a taste for adapting to different environments and cultures.

After returning home to study psychology at CityU, Yan leapt at the chance to spend a semester at Purdue University in Indiana. She loved being an international student



Gigi Yan '17



Chanatip Tatiyakaroonwong '18

Thanks to its longstanding Joint Program with List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary, GS was ideally positioned to spearhead the international dual BA initiative.

so much that she lobbied to stay longer but was denied—only to discover that she could spend two years at GS.

“I thought it was destiny,” says Yan, who was entranced by the idea of going somewhere unfamiliar and studying at an institution “that would challenge me academically and give me new experiences.”

Unfortunately, finances were tight. To spare her needless anxiety, Yan did not even tell her mother that she had applied until after she received her acceptance letter.

“I have good news and bad news,” Yan told her mom. “The good news is, I got into Columbia. The bad news is, I don’t have the money to pay for it.”

But thanks to scholarships and a bursary from CityU and GS—along with the money she had saved for graduate school working as a tutor and research assistant—Yan ultimately made it to Morningside Heights.

The first semester was tough. Yan felt like an imposter, the only person struggling to succeed academically. And her natural shyness exacerbated the feeling that she was isolated and alone.

Yet volunteer work as a Chinese interpreter at Sanctuary for Families, a New York City nonprofit that helps survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking, brought her out of her shell—as did subsequent positions at Columbia as a peer advisor and orientation leader.

Returning to Hong Kong, Yan went to work at the Global Engagement Office at CityU, where she eventually ran the school’s joint undergraduate degree programs. In 2019, she moved to a similar position at the University of Chicago’s Yuen Campus, where she continues to help international students profit from the same opportunities for growth that she herself enjoyed. More than anything, she hopes they will share the experience of connecting with others and encountering different voices and viewpoints.

“The people I met really changed my perspective,” Yan says. “There are so many different views, and I appreciate that I was able to learn that through being at Columbia.”

The Witness

Human rights consultant Chanatip Tatiyakaroonwong ’18 was not sure he wanted to go to university abroad. But a coup d’état in his native Thailand made up his mind.

Tatiyakaroonwong attended high school in Bangkok during a period of intense political turmoil. He applied to two universities: Sciences Po and a Thai school where he hoped to study constitutional law. But before he even had the chance to choose, the Thai military seized control of the government and suspended the country’s constitution.

Suddenly, studying constitutional law in Thailand seemed a lot less appealing.

“I was like, ‘There’s nothing for me to study; the law doesn’t mean much here,’” says Tatiyakaroonwong, who opted for Sciences Po in hopes of better understanding the political factors that led to the coup.

After studying comparative politics and law at Le Havre, Tatiyakaroonwong came to GS to explore a broader range of courses, ultimately majoring in sociocultural anthropology. But GS expanded his horizons in more ways than one.

At Sciences Po, Tatiyakaroonwong was surrounded by people his own age. At GS, many of his fellow students were older, having pursued prior careers or followed entirely different paths before attending college.

“It really helped me learn a lot about people who have different backgrounds and perspectives,” Tatiyakaroonwong says.

A senior thesis on nationalism and homophobia in Thailand fueled Tatiyakaroonwong’s growing interest in human rights back home. After graduating, he returned to Bangkok and interned with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, where he

put the ethnographic skills he had honed at Columbia to use documenting human rights violations by the Thai state against Malay Muslims, an indigenous ethnic and religious group in the country’s Southern Border Provinces.

Tatiyakaroonwong’s experiences as an Asian studying in Europe and America helped him empathize with the way in which Malay Muslims were treated as racial and ethnic others in his own country. Once his internship ended, he continued researching abuses against Malay Muslims and other indigenous minority groups for a European Union-funded project at the Cross-Cultural Foundation, an NGO that works to protect and promote the rights of marginalized groups throughout Thailand.

Tatiyakaroonwong interviewed victims of abuse across the country, documenting instances of indigenous minorities undergoing everything from forced evictions to forced DNA collection. A member of Columbia Queer & Asian student group while at GS, Tatiyakaroonwong also researched human rights violations among the country’s LGBTQI community.

Tatiyakaroonwong eventually returned to the United Nations as a human rights consultant, managing the same European Union-funded project that he had previously worked on at the Cross-Cultural Foundation. He continues to research human rights abuses, using the evidence he collects to seek action from the United Nations’s human rights mechanisms.

Eventually, Tatiyakaroonwong hopes to establish his own NGO—perhaps one that will focus on the issues faced by indigenous minorities and the LGBTQI community in Thailand.

“I want to run an organization that focuses on strategy-building and ensuring that we make real human rights changes through policy advocacy,” he says.

Towards that end, Tatiyakaroonwong will soon travel to Cambridge University, where he plans to earn a master’s degree in politics and international relations.

“I chose the UK because I wanted to try out a different country,” he says with a laugh. “I guess it’s my taste for international exposure.”

Spotlight on

Keren Yarhi-Milo '03

Arnold A. Saltzman Professor of War and Peace Studies

Director of the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies

By Kathrin Havrilla-Sanchez

Born and raised in Holon, Israel, not far from Tel Aviv, Keren Yarhi-Milo '03 first fell in love with New York City—and Columbia University—in the 9th grade.

“My mother and I came to New York and we visited Columbia’s campus,” remembers Yarhi-Milo. “I went to the university admissions office, knocked on the door, and told them I wanted to come and study here one day.”

They handed her a copy of the current course catalog, which she thumbed through frequently back at home in Israel, highlighting the classes she would take when she attended.

Yarhi-Milo was always interested in political science, in part because of her upbringing during a time of upheaval, including the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995.

“Growing up, issues of security were all around us, whether it was terrorism or the peace process and hope for a ‘new’ Middle East,” Yarhi-Milo says. “I watched the news and read about international relations and diplomacy, including the diary of an Israeli ambassador in the United Nations and thought that’s maybe what I wanted to be one day.”

Yarhi-Milo was drafted into Israeli Intelligence because of her fluency in Arabic, working as an intelligence analyst. Having learned deeply about what happens behind the scenes of both counterterrorism and diplomacy, she counts this background as one of her best professional experiences to this day.

Later, when attending law school at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya in 2000, Yarhi-Milo had an opportunity to come to New York again for a short internship at the Mission of Israel to the United Nations—a dream come true. She told her professor the good news, saying she was just going to take one semester off and then she



would be back to finish her degree—but he could see in her eyes that something had changed.

“He said to me, ‘No, you’re not going to come back, but that’s okay,’” she says. “He told me that I was going to discover a whole new world—and he was right!”

While working at her internship, Yarhi-Milo met her future husband, Ariel, who was the spokesperson for the Mission of Israel at the time, as well as a GS student.

“I was already infatuated with Columbia, but I had never heard of GS before,” says Yarhi-Milo. “After I applied, I got a call from then-Dean Peter Awn inviting me for an interview, and we completely hit it off.”

After a deep conversation with Dean Awn about religion and politics, Yarhi-Milo was accepted and began part time at GS. A class she took with Professor Robert Jervis cemented her desire to be a political scientist. Jervis, the Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics in the Department of

KEREN YARHI-MILO

Faculty Member Since: 2012

Education:

PhD and MA, University of Pennsylvania

BA, summa cum laude, Political Science, Columbia University School of General Studies

GS Mentor:

Robert Jervis, Adlai E. Stevenson Professor and Professor of International and Public Affairs

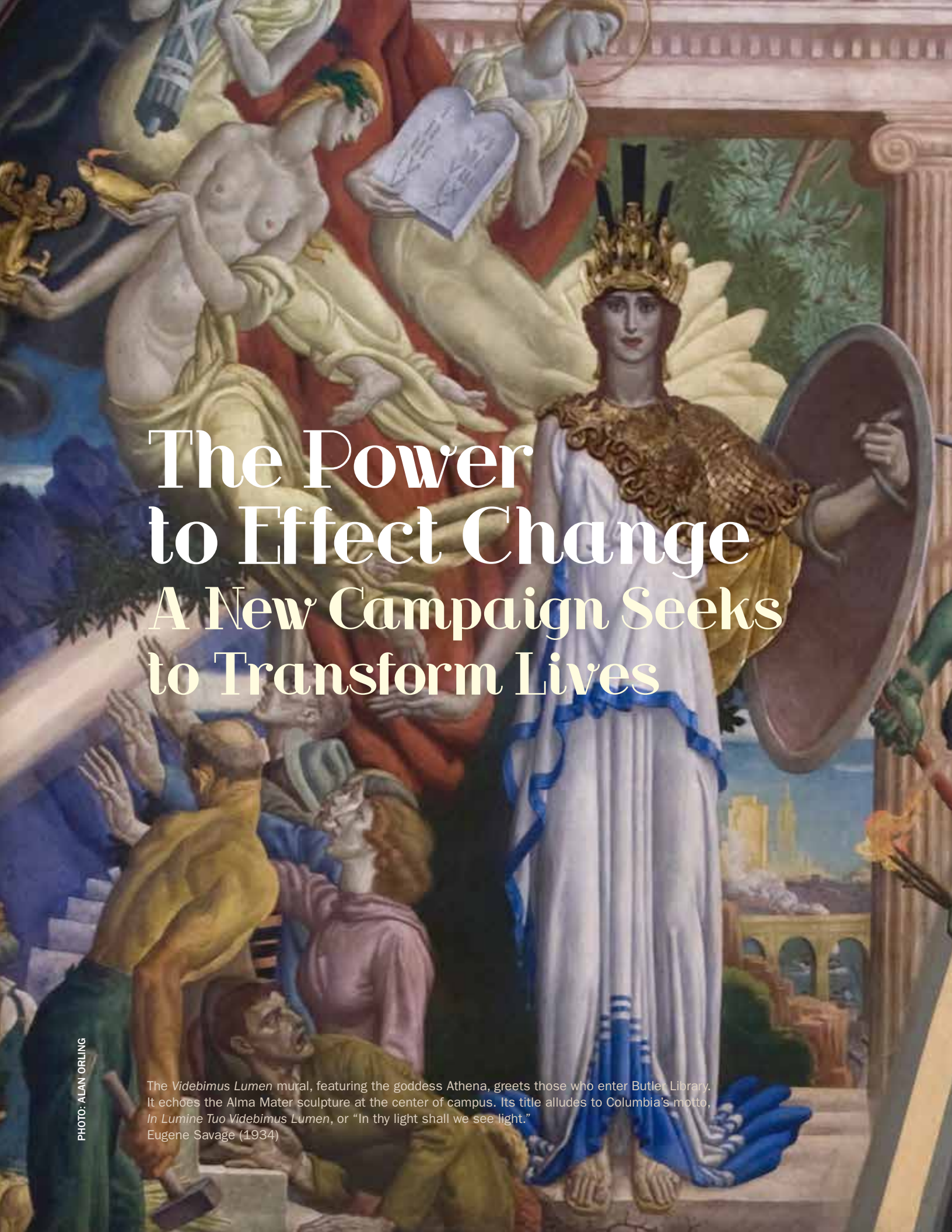
Fun Fact:

Just two weeks after the birth of her first child, she received the call at home to interview for Princeton University.

Political Science at Columbia, is now Yarhi-Milo’s colleague. A first-generation college student, she remains grateful to her parents, who spent a big chunk of their savings on supporting her until she began to receive merit scholarships and was able to attend full time.

Yarhi-Milo received her master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, as well as a pre- and post-doc from Harvard. Prior to coming back to Columbia as a professor, she spent a decade at Princeton, where she was a tenured associate professor of politics and international affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs.

Yarhi-Milo now serves as the director for Columbia’s Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, one of the nation’s foremost research centers on international relations. As part of her leadership, Yarhi-Milo seeks to help the Institute build a robust pipeline of diverse people, perspectives, and experiences in the field.



The Power to Effect Change A New Campaign Seeks to Transform Lives

The *Videbimus Lumen* mural, featuring the goddess Athena, greets those who enter Butler Library. It echoes the *Alma Mater* sculpture at the center of campus. Its title alludes to Columbia's motto, *In Lumine Tuo Videbimus Lumen*, or "In thy light shall we see light."
Eugene Savage (1934)

By Alexander Gelfand

By ensuring that talented students can attend Columbia University School of General Studies regardless of their financial circumstances, alumni like Larry J. Lawrence and Susan Feagin are helping the School transform individual lives—and higher education at large.

When Larry J. Lawrence '69, '71BUS—Chair Emeritus of the School of General Studies' Board of Visitors and chair of a new fundraising campaign focused on improving financial aid—describes GS as a gateway to the Ivy League for nontraditional students, it is with a deep sense of gratitude born of personal experience and family history.

Lawrence's father immigrated to the United States from Hungary when he was seven years old. Though he was a gifted student, Lawrence's grandfather denied him permission to attend college, insisting that he go directly to work after high school instead. In the end, a teacher adopted Lawrence's father so that he could pursue a college education. A scholarship to Princeton led to a graduate degree in economics and, ultimately, a career at a New York bank.

"I've always been immensely grateful that somebody gave him an opportunity like that," Lawrence says.

Decades later, Lawrence received a similar opportunity when GS gave him a second shot at an Ivy League education. And he is determined to ensure that the School will continue to provide unrivaled educational opportunities to nontraditional students far into the future by growing its endowment and extending financial aid to all who need it.

Lawrence began his college career at Yale, where his tendency to skip class led to what he calls "an offer I couldn't refuse to take some time off." After spending a year as a ski bum in Aspen, Colorado, Lawrence enrolled in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1963 and spent six months on active duty, stateside, during the Vietnam War. After service, he enrolled at GS, attending classes in Morningside Heights while commuting to New Haven for his Reserve meetings.

Correction: In the original article, published in October 2021, the author incorrectly described Mr. Lawrence's service history.

It was an interesting time for a military veteran with a buzz cut to be studying political science at Columbia. The student anti-war movement was in full swing, and Lawrence, who had friends across the political spectrum, remembers climbing through a window to visit some of them in student-occupied Fayerweather Hall just before the police began carrying activists out and arresting them.

"The campus really was in turmoil," he says.

Yet Lawrence felt the same shared commitment to learning that GS students encounter today—a commitment that helps make the GS experience what it is.

"The learning culture at GS was the best I've ever experienced," says Lawrence, who went on to a successful career in venture capital. "Everybody I was in the classroom with had made an affirmative decision to be there."

That is as true in 2021 as it was in 1969—or in 1947 for that matter, when the School, which had previously been known as University Extension, was restructured to meet the needs of GIs returning from World War II.

Nonetheless, much has changed in the intervening years. And as the School has continued to pursue its mission of attracting and educating those who have followed nontraditional paths, the need to bolster financial aid has only grown more urgent.

Thanks to the combined efforts of several generations of alumni and administrators, GS's curriculum is now fully integrated with the Columbia College undergraduate curriculum, student support services and housing have been expanded, and the student body is more varied than ever. The School now boasts a larger and more

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robust community of military veterans than any other institution in the Ivy League, while the introduction of the Dual Degree Programs has resulted in a rapidly growing contingent of its International Dual Degree students.

Yet much remains to be done. Under the leadership of Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, the School now strives to become even more broadly inclusive while continuing to serve as an engine of innovation for higher education.

Those two goals are inextricably intertwined.

Over the past several decades, GS has become an agent of change among highly selective colleges and universities by embracing both nontraditional students and nontraditional educational models.

Whether recruiting and supporting record numbers of military veterans, pioneering new models of international study, or simply establishing a dedicated home for nontraditional students at a top-tier university, the School has continuously challenged assumptions about what an elite college can look like and whom it can serve.

In that sense, it has come to embody the spirit of Athena as depicted in the mural *Videbimus Lumen* ("We shall see light") that guards the entrance to Butler Library. Just as Athena is the goddess of both wisdom and war, so too does GS uphold the highest standards of liberal education while upending traditional ideas about how such an education can be delivered—and who ought to have access to it.

In the process, it has built a uniquely diverse student body and enhanced the educational experience of all University undergraduates.

"If you are an 18-year-old in Lit-Hum reading the *Iliad* about going off to war and you're sitting next to people who have done exactly that, it enriches the experience," Lawrence says. "The liberal arts need that. They need real-life experience to flesh them out, so that they aren't just a sterile exercise."

Ensuring the continued presence of such lived experience on campus means guaranteeing that students with the broadest possible range of backgrounds will always have a home at the School. And that, in turn, requires making sure that students can attend GS regardless of their financial circumstances.

Yet despite the gains made in growing the endowment and increasing financial aid over the years, there is a gap between the amount of financial support GS can offer and what its peer institutions can provide. As a result, a GS education remains out of reach for many talented students.

Even military veterans, who receive substantial government support, often take on significant debt in pursuit of their degrees. And the fact that many GS students have families and are charting a new course in life after having already pursued previous careers means that they also carry financial obligations that their traditional counterparts do not.

"We have to close that gap and make GS more affordable," says Susan Feagin '74, a member of the Board of Visitors who worked in the School's development office after graduation and later served as executive vice president for development and alumni relations at Columbia.

Feagin and Lawrence helped double the School's endowment during the University's last major fundraising campaign. Now, they and their fellow board members want to make Rosen-Metsch's vision a reality by doubling it yet again.

For his part, Lawrence has pledged several million dollars to the effort—a commitment that brought both Feagin and Rosen-Metsch to tears when they first heard about it. ("Well, what's philanthropy for if it doesn't make people cry?" Lawrence quips.)

But Feagin, who established her first student scholarship in the 1990s, emphasizes that all alumni have a role to play, whether through outright contributions or planned giving. The latter, which allows individuals to include the School in their estate plans, can provide immediate tax benefits while supporting GS students well into the future.

"This is a multiyear effort," says Feagin, who adds that by raising the School's profile, a successful campaign will help attract students who had not previously heard of GS—along with potential donors who may not have been aware of the unique role the School plays in higher education.

The work to expand access and increase equity has already begun. So, too, has the process of planning even more ambitious and innovative initiatives to build upon the School's long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The School aims to meet the full cost of attendance—including not only tuition but also housing, food, and other basic needs—for its U.S. military veteran-students. It hopes to do the same for the approximately 20 matriculants who benefit each year from the Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS), which supports first-generation undergraduates who belong to historically underrepresented groups at Columbia.

On the international front, the School is seeking to create new scholarships for students in its International Dual Degree Programs and to bolster support for the Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students, which provides full-



need funding for students from around the world whose educations have been disrupted by war, violence, and civil unrest.

Closer to home, Rosen-Metsch is working to formalize a path to GS for the formerly incarcerated, a group that includes many talented individuals from communities of color who face significant obstacles to achieving their full academic and professional potential. For example, she has been speaking with the dean of Columbia Law School about the possibility of establishing a mentoring program for formerly incarcerated students who wish to attend law school—part of a broader effort by GS to further its mission by deepening its relationships with other institutions within the University.

Similarly, Rosen-Metsch is working to expand the School's long-held relationships with local community colleges.

The New York City Scholars Program, for instance, envisages a partnership with the CUNY system that reduces the cost of a Columbia degree by recruiting students from leading community colleges across the five boroughs. After completing a two-year associate degree, participants can earn a bachelor's degree at GS. The program will place particular emphasis on Harlem and

Despite the gains made in growing the endowment and increasing financial aid over the years, there is a gap between the amount of financial support GS can offer and what its peer institutions can provide. As a result, a GS education remains out of reach for many talented students.



The new fundraising campaign will support innovative initiatives that build upon the School's long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion by investing in the students who give GS its unique power to effect change.

other historically underrepresented local communities.

And Rosen-Metsch is working with colleagues at the Mailman School of Public Health, where she previously served as Chair and Stephen Smith Professor of Sociomedical Sciences, to establish a “two plus two plus two” program that would allow graduates of Hostos Community College in the Bronx to earn a bachelor's at GS before continuing on to a master's in public health at Mailman.

Together with the Department of African-American and African Diaspora Studies, the School is also preparing to launch the Distinguished Public Service Scholars program, which will give community leaders who lack college degrees the opportunity to earn one while sharing their experience and insights with faculty and students alike.

It is an ambitious list of goals, and it is only the beginning. But each one of these programs is designed to further the School's ongoing work of transforming individual lives and higher education at large—work that hinges on investing in the students who give GS its unique power to effect change.

“There is nothing like the Columbia School of General Studies—certainly not among highly selective institutions, and I would argue in the world,” says Rosen-Metsch. “And it is the students who go on to be our alumni—who bring their lived experience, their accomplishments, and the challenges they've overcome to reach the gates of Columbia—who make the place magical.”

THE GENERAL VIEW

Brilliant Things Will Happen Here

With a mission to support GS students in achieving academic excellence, the School of General Studies Academic Resource Center's (ARC) programs and services—including peer tutoring, reading and argument coaching, individual consultations, and more—are designed based on the latest research in metacognition and educational psychology. Now, rising to match its charge, the ARC has a new home, and it is revolutionary. The new 3,500 square foot center, which is located on Broadway at 111th Street, possesses a formal reception area, five advising deans' offices, four flexible workstations, an eight-seat round-table conference room, a pantry, and a flexible tutoring/conference and events space that easily seats 35. All in all, the new facility can serve more than 50 students simultaneously, plus staff. "We have expanded from an office that could serve about eight students at once uncomfortably, to a modern, state-of-the-art center that can easily support six tutors working with groups of two to six students at the same time," said Sara Remedios Bloom, Associate Dean of Students and Director of Academic and Learning Initiatives. "It's truly a game changer, and we are thrilled to put the space to use this fall."



FINANCING FROM THE HEART

DAWSON HER MANY HORSES '04 FOUND ALL THE DIFFERENCE THAT DEALS CAN MAKE

By Eric Butterman

Dawson Her Many Horses '04 sees a beauty in banking that many may miss—the nuances, the opportunities, the bolstering of dreams. Growing up, he did not aspire to work in finance. In fact, at Columbia he earned a degree in political science. But, over time, he saw that investment banking could partly be a way to help tribes, and he grew passionate about how making deals could make a difference.

Beginning his banking career as director of Native American business development at Merrill Lynch in 2004 in New York City, he later became an investment banking analyst for them. Today, based in Las Vegas, Her Many Horses holds the role of Senior Vice President & Head of Native American Banking, Commercial Banking, at Wells Fargo.

“I grew up on Rosebud Reservation” he said. “As a tribal member, to walk into the room and have an understanding of the issues that our clients and prospective clients are contending with is

helpful. Because of the maturation of the gaming industry across the United States, you don't see a lot of building of new hotel towers or new casinos. The discussions I'm having with our clients right now are what is the next business? And how can we help our tribal clients diversify their businesses?”

Her Many Horses finds his Columbia political science education informs much more of his approach than he expected. “It's helped me a lot because as I've worked as a banker and an advocate for my clients in whatever institution I've worked, a lot of my discussions center on and go back to tribes as sovereigns and tribes as governments with legal autonomy and distinction.”

Having participated in the Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS) at GS, Her Many Horses fondly looks back on his undergraduate days. He recalls how PALS, a scholarship designed to provide access to a Columbia undergraduate education for students who might not otherwise be able to attend an Ivy League university, offered him a chance to have an even more

personalized experience as a student, through working with deans and staff who mentored him to opportunities such as programming events PALS scholars facilitated together. Another standout opportunity to him was being a student representative on the University's Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing. Analyzing proxy statements and being part of offering advice on how the Columbia University endowment could be used with a sense of social concern is something that has informed his work in investment banking.

“It gave me an interest and understanding in how you can marry finance and social concerns, which later translated into what I do today. I bring in deals, but as a part of that process, we're also helping tribal communities, tribal programs, and individual tribal members.”

Having grown up on Rosebud Reservation, Her Many Horses brings a deep understanding into how to best support tribal businesses.



GIVING

Opening Doors, Transforming Lives

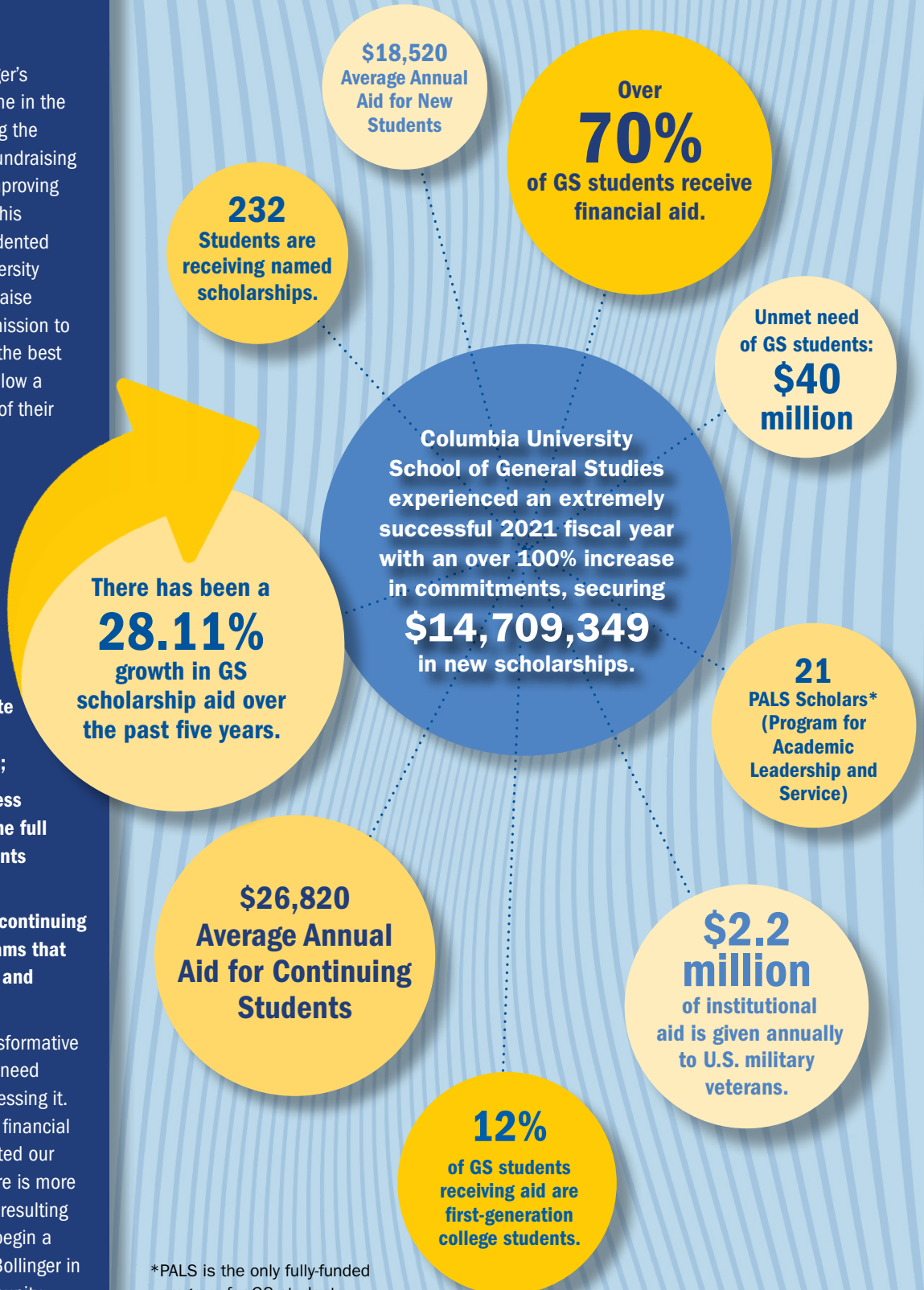
Columbia Student Support Financial Aid Initiative Announced

Under President Lee C. Bollinger's leadership, and for the first time in the history of Columbia, this spring the University announced a new fundraising effort singularly focused on improving financial aid for all students. This initiative provides an unprecedented opportunity for Columbia University School of General Studies to raise money to more fully fund its mission to attract, educate, and support the best and brightest students who follow a nontraditional path in pursuit of their undergraduate education.

Off to a significant start that includes a generous matching gift from Larry Lawrence '69, the campaign is dedicated to:

- Enhancing and sustaining the School's position as the preeminent college in the world dedicated to nontraditional undergraduate students and students who follow a nontraditional path;
- Expanding educational access and equity to better meet the full financial needs of GS students through financial aid; and
- Fully realizing our vision by continuing to develop innovative programs that transform higher education and society.

"A Columbia education is transformative for our students and financial need should not be a barrier to accessing it. We have for many years made financial aid a priority and have dedicated our resources accordingly, but there is more to do. This campaign, and the resulting support for our students, will begin a new era for Columbia," wrote Bollinger in a letter to the University community.



*PALS is the only fully-funded program for GS students.

SHAKING UP THE



By Allison Scola

GS alumni work in the film and motion picture industry in many different capacities. But within those different roles, they have a common desire to confront conventional thinking and tell a different kind of story. How very Columbia. How very GS.

From left to right: Blaine Morris '19, Larysa Kondracki '01, Bill Benenson '67, Isaac Zablocki '03, Kondracki on set, Erik Courtney '00, and Elegance Bratton '14

Bill Benenson '67 took a 14-hour journey by Jeep 250 miles into the interior of Brazil. His Peace Corps assignment was in the *sertão* of Bahia, a semi-arid region in the northeastern part of the South American empire equivalent to the Australian outback. Its scrubby landscape, not far from the equator, was host to a boom in diamond prospecting from the 1850s to the 1930s. But in 1967, he encountered an outpost that had once been populated by tens of thousands of people and powered by electricity, yet by then, was reduced to a desolate ghost town of just hundreds of people living by candlelight.

While a student at Columbia University School of General Studies (GS), Benenson majored in comparative literature. He wrote short stories, and with the guidance of his professors, experienced a “tectonic shift.” Prior to his enrollment at GS, dyslexia had plagued his educational experience. Columbia helped him reprogram his approach to learning and enabled him to absorb ideas that previously had been out of his reach.

When Benenson stood in the midst of that bleak corner of Brazil, he had an epiphany. “I had to make a film about it,” he said while concurrently admitting that he did not know how to make a film. But from his undergraduate studies, he understood

storytelling, and he knew how to take photos. So, born from the proverbial lightbulb was a more than 50-year career of documentary and narrative film making. *Diamond Rivers*, which was shown on WNET/PBS in 1977, was the thought-provoking result of his fascination with Brazil’s flirtation in diamond prospecting and the environmental and social traumas left when it collapsed.

Benenson, in partnership with his wife Laurie, has since created and/or produced more than 30 films that examine the human condition and consider misunderstood issues and underrepresented people. Among their successes are the award-winning documentaries *Dirt! The Movie* and *Kiss The Ground*. *Fantastic Fungi*, now trending on Netflix, further reflects his work as a passionate environmentalist. “I was called,” he said.

Isaac Zablocki '03 echoes this same sentiment. A lecturer and writer on cinema, director of film programs at Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, and the director and co-founder of ReelAbilities: NY Disabilities Film Festival, the largest disability film festival in the world, Zablocki has gravitated towards making films and curating motion picture festivals that impact change since serving in the film unit of the Israel Defense Forces before

THE STORIES



enrolling at Columbia. His work, in fact, recently garnered the prestigious Impact Award at the JCC, where he has cultivated a notable center for cinema for 17 years.

“Our film programs such as the Cinematters: NY Social Justice Film Festival and the Other Israel Film Festival, are ultimately about social questions,” Zablocki explained. “I encourage our audiences to dive deep into the themes of the films and explore the messages they offer through discussion and action.” According to Rabbi Joy Levitt, Chief Executive Officer of JCC Manhattan, Zablocki has inspired people from around the globe with his faith in the medium of film and its power to change the world. She recently described him as a film guru, leader, and innovator.

Another leader and innovator that came out of Columbia’s film program was Zablocki’s contemporary Erik Courtney ’00, founder of the Columbia Producers and Directors Club. “When we formed the group,” Courtney said, “We got some resistance from the student council who thought the club would be a personal resume builder for us to fund our own films, but we wrote into the constitution that the officers of the club don’t make the movies but would mentor the members who would be the filmmakers. It was a smart sacrifice ... because we learned from mentoring

others.” And it led to Courtney’s next move, which was landing a coveted spot in the UCLA School of Film and Television’s Producers Program. Since, Courtney has worked in motion pictures in many capacities, including as a visual effects artist, recently on the television show *Star Trek: Picard*.

Courtney aims to examine the patterns of humanity over generations and seeks to take big stories and drill them down to something intimate—both through the narrative presentation and the technology. A notable example of this is *The Persistence of Dreams*, a short that documents the moment President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. “Everything changed with a gunshot. Booth fired on the biggest laugh line of the play—an actor killed the president on the funniest line! It’s the transition you didn’t see coming—from joy to terror to sadness,” explained Courtney who filmed the four-minute re-enactment for IMAX. From this project Courtney and his co-creator obtained a patent for a method they invented called Large Format Negative Repurposing (LFNR) that recomposes large format media into a video stream suitable for more conventional viewing methods.

“The range of careers in the industry is far broader than screenwriter, filmmaker, producer, and director,” said Professor Rob

King, Director of Undergraduate Studies in Film at Columbia. “When you leave Columbia with a major in film and media studies, you can have an education on how to write a screenplay and how to make a film, but more so, you’ll have a deep knowledge of film history and media. The faculty [including luminaries like Loren-Paul Caplin, James Schamus, and Annette Insodorf] and the ethos are more in the image of Sundance than the Oscars,” he said.

2019 graduate Blaine Morris is currently an MFA candidate at University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts (USC). During her undergraduate coursework at Columbia, Morris watched more than 200 cinematic works, studied screenwriting, and completed dozens of papers analyzing films—in addition to her participation in the CU filmmaking community, which allowed her to direct, write, edit, and produce 16 films during her degree program.

Morris is currently working for Academy Award-nominated writer and director Charles Shyer as a director/writer assistant, which includes script analysis and other production responsibilities. Additionally, Morris, who is the recipient of the prestigious George Lucas Scholarship that promotes student diversity, continues to write and create projects. She recently launched an Indiegogo campaign to fund

“It seemed so obvious,” commented Erik Courtney ’00, on the fact that in 1998, there did not exist a film club on campus. So, to resolve the void, he founded the Columbia Producers and Directors Club.



a queer Latinx short horror film that she is writing, inspired by the Dominican folk-creature “La Ciguapa.” And while isolating in Florida during the pandemic, she made a psychological thriller, *Anne, With Love*, which will be completed later this year. “I’m interested in finding the gaps and asking the questions that haven’t been asked,” said Morris, who is of Puerto Rican descent. “I seek stories with an edge and with heart.”

Fellow alumna Larysa Kondracki ’01 also creates evocative pictures that challenge conventional thinking. “We need a shake-up in the stories. How we’re telling them, and what they’re about,” she said. Kondracki’s 2010 breakout work that she co-wrote and directed, *The Whistleblower*, a drama based on the experiences of Kathryn Bolkovac, a Nebraska cop who served as a peacekeeper in post-war Bosnia and outed the United Nations for covering up a sex trafficking organization, does just that. In fact, in his review Roger Ebert wrote, “Here is a film to fill you with rage.”

The Whistleblower was an official selection at the Toronto International Film Festival and distributed widely throughout theaters in the United States. Kondracki has since written feature projects for Focus Features, HBO Films, Participant Media, and Showtime Entertainment. She recently served as an executive producer on the

Amazon Prime show *Them: Covenant* and directed the pilot episode of *Power Book IV: Force* for Starz.

Filmmaker Elegance Bratton ’14 is fervent about “shaking up” the stories. “My job is to show the outsiders and the underdogs,” he said. His works such as *Pier Kids*, which made its television premiere as part of POV Season 34 on PBS on August 2, support his objectives. “I want to be the pathway to worlds that the audience can’t go to without me there. It’s about transporting them inside another’s experience and finding empathy,” he explained.

As a young person, Bratton spent 10 years homeless in the New York area and then five years in the Marine Corps before enrolling at GS. A combat filmmaker and photographer while serving, as an undergraduate, he majored in African American studies. The curriculum gave him an understanding of the generational traumas and family dynamics common in the lives of black Americans as a result of slavery and its aftermath. It helped him gain perspective on his own life, in which his mother, who was orphaned at 12 and had him at 16 years old, kicked him out of the house when he was 16 upon learning he was gay.

“While at Columbia, I realized that my life experience was my capital. I stopped

listening to the negative voices of self-hatred around my identity of black, poor, gay, and homeless, and began to view the world through my curiosity, through my genius.” Bratton, who earned an MFA from New York University Tisch School of the Arts for directing and writing, credits his studies with not only giving him the tools to examine and reinterpret his own life experiences, but also the push and inspiration to think more globally. “Every human being is living some sort of oppression,” he said. “It’s manmade for a specific purpose, and it can be deconstructed.”

With this charge he focuses on work that enables him to raise questions. His latest venture, *The Inspection*, is an autobiographical drama about a gay Marine Corps recruit. “It’s a dream project,” he said.

Summing up beautifully the thread that connects the drive and creativity of this small selection of the many GSers working in the motion picture industry, Zablocki explained, “We are moved, we learn, and we are changed by movies. I believe everyone should have a place in the sandbox, and when communities are pushed to the side, I have the urge to shine a spotlight on them.” Indeed. One might say the Columbia University School of General Studies motto, *Lux in tenebris lucet* (The light shines in the darkness), takes on new meaning when considered in this context.

POSTBAC PREMED CLASS DAY 2021

The Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Class Day event was broadcast online on Tuesday, April 27. Faculty, administrators, fellow students, friends, and family honored the Class of 2021 for completing this important step on their journey to medical school and beyond.



1. Chemistry Lecturer Ruben Savizky sends his congratulations via pre-recorded video.
2. James Colgrove, Dean of the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program, addresses the graduates.
3. Alumni Key Award recipient and Student Speaker Chelsia Melendez reflects on the Class of 2021's accomplishments.

4. The Postbac Premed Program advising team celebrates their advisees.
5. The Postbac Premed Student Council applauds the soon-to-be health professionals.
6. Keynote Speaker Dr. Ashley Paige Oliver '14, '18PS bestows words of wisdom: "However your journey unfolds from here, you are already enough."



CLASS DAY 2021

PHOTOS BY EILEEN BARROSO

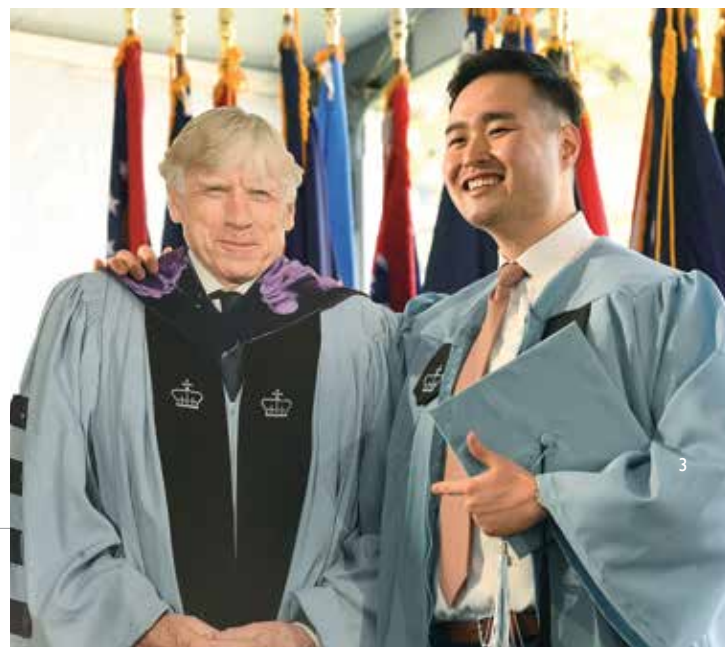


1



2

While “Grad Walk” offered an in-person opportunity to take photos in one’s regalia, GS’s 2021 Class Day ceremony was held online and broadcast worldwide via the internet on April 28.



3



4



5

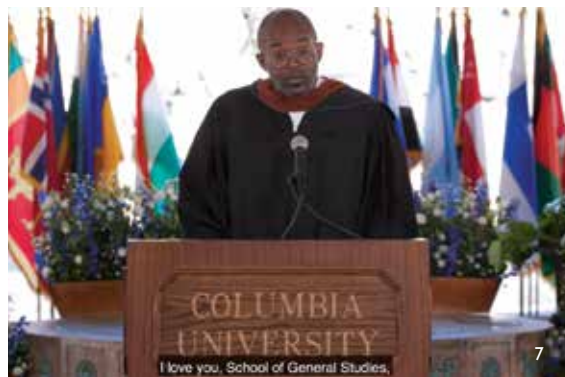
1. 2021 graduates strike a socially-distanced pose.
2. Dean Rosen-Metsch addresses the graduates.
3. A proud graduate poses with a cardboard cutout of Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger.
4. Almas David '21 displays her Columbia pride on her cap.
5. Officers of the GSSC congratulate GS graduates during the online Class Day celebration.
6. Salutatorian Qimeng Shi '21 delivered her Class Day address from China.
7. Filmmaker Elegance Bratton '14 delivered the keynote address, explaining that, "We have a responsibility to take the credibility we've earned here ... to make the world a better place. ... Through your experience, will come your greatest achievements."
8. Valedictorian Christopher Thompson '21 presented his Class Day remarks on campus to the virtual audience.
9. Isra Eldoghi '21
10. Jafar Tursunov '21, Paige Hinkley '21, and Sergio Pavon Lule '21



6



8



7



9



10

Owl Together 2020 & 2021



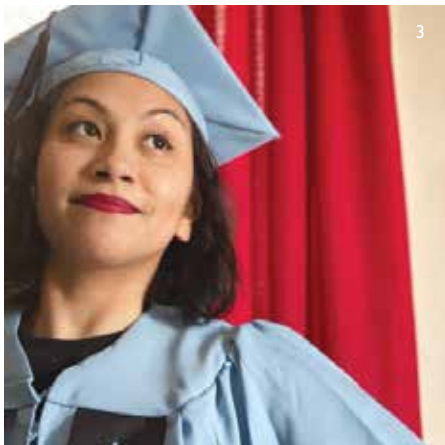
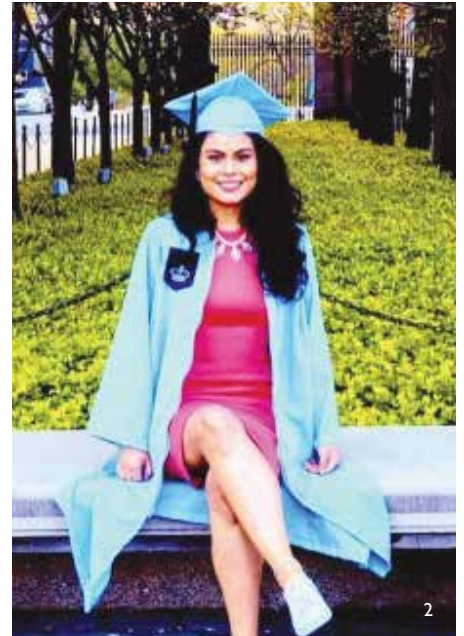
Although the Class of 2020 and 2021 have yet to have an opportunity to don their regalia and walk across the Commencement stage, a few posted their photos to social media to share their accomplishments. Here is a sampling.

Cheers to #OwlTogether!

Calling Class of 2020 and 2021 Claim Your Alumni Pin!

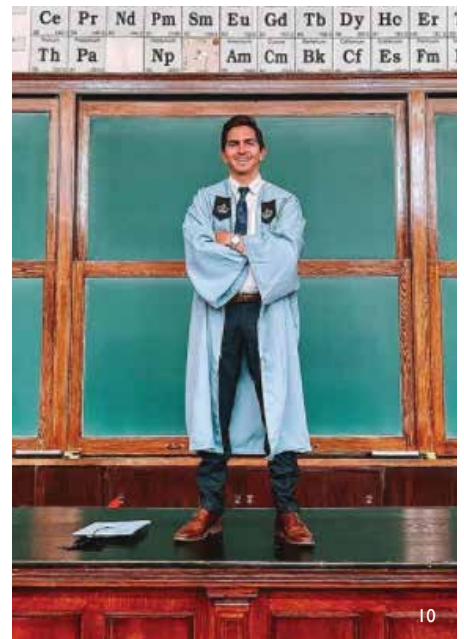
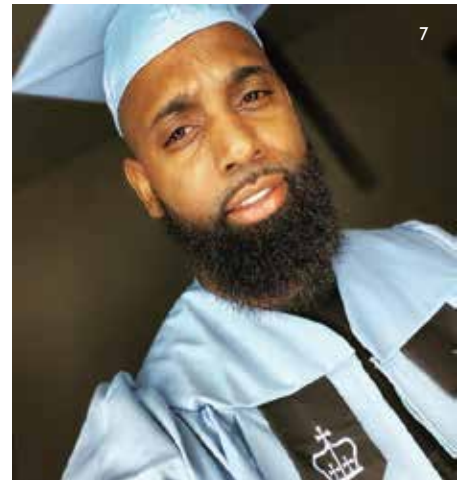
Philip Ehrlich '88 designed the alumni pin so you could demonstrate your Columbia GS pride. Submit your contact details to receive your pin and your alumni care package.

Contact Us for Your Alumni Care Package
gs.columbia.edu/gs-alumni-contact





- 1. Logan Everett '20
- 2. Karla Puga '20
- 3. Michelle Ashley Capuno '20
- 4. Samantha Jean '20 and loved ones
- 5. Simon Wexler '20, Clara Monk '20, Ellen Lou '20, and Kyrrik Pavlovsky '20
- 6. Heide Lindgren '21
- 7. Ceon White '21
- 8. Rodrigo Soza '21
- 9. Carlana Perla-Romualdo '21
- 10. Carlos Alberto Penuelas Lopez '21



NEW GRAD NOTES

GS Bachelor of Arts Recipients



Claude Knobler is a proud 56-year-old college graduate. During his career, not only has he delivered singing telegrams in a gorilla suit, hosted a radio show, acted

in television programs such as *Empty Nest* and *Booker*, and was a private detective, but he also published a memoir with Penguin Random House, *More Love (Less Panic): 7 Lessons I Learned about Life, Love, and Parenting after We Adopted Our Son from Ethiopia*. The stay-at-home father has written essays that have appeared in *Parenting* and in *This I Believe: On Fatherhood* a literary anthology compiled by NPR's *This I Believe* program. While at Columbia, Knobler majored in American studies and was inducted into the GS Honor Society. Post-graduation, he plans to work in hospice care and become a non-denominational chaplain.



Class of 2021 Salutatorian **Qimeng Shi** is a graduate of the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong and Columbia. From an early age

while growing up in China, Shi developed a strong belief that economics could bring about policies that effect social change. As a student at CityU, Shi participated in Canada's National Investment Bank Competition and served as a student mentor and peer-assisted learning leader in the Department of Economics and Finance. At GS, Shi focused on courses that addressed poverty and inequality. She worked as a teaching assistant for Intermediate Microeconomics in the Department of Economics, and with Professor Tamrat Gashaw on his research about asymmetric risk-taking behavior of foreign and domestic banks. Shi is now pursuing a master's in financial technology at The University of Hong Kong and plans to pursue a career that will contribute to economic development in mainland China.



Named the "World's Most Fabulous Financier" by the *New York Post*, **Pritika Swarup** has modeled for some of the biggest brands in the fashion and beauty industries, including

MAC Cosmetics, Fenty Beauty, and Prabal Gurung. Additionally, she has appeared on the covers of international magazines such as *Vogue*, *Elle*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. Swarup's impact, however, is felt on a much larger scale through her global advocacy on diversity and women's rights and as an ambassador for Operation Smile. While at Columbia, where she studied financial economics, Swarup founded the University's largest secondary market investment fund, Praetorian Management LLC, and joined New Legacy, a firm based in New York, as an investment analyst. Swarup recently launched Prakti, an Indian-inspired beauty and wellness company whose aim is to promote diversity and inclusion in the beauty industry.



Rhe-Anne Tan grew up in Singapore. Prior to starting in the Columbia Dual BA Program with Sciences Po, she took a gap year and taught history and social studies at her alma

mater and interned with Singapore's Ministry of Defence, which reinforced her desire to return to government service upon completing her education. During her time at Columbia, Tan was a Saltzman Scholar at SIPA's Saltzman Institute of War and Peace and a Cold War Archives Research Fellow conducting research on Cold War Asian cinema. Additionally, Tan served on the editorial team and as Director of Outreach for the *Columbia Journal of Politics and Society*. Earlier this year, she published an essay on West Papuan autonomy in the *Columbia Journal of International Affairs*, which was selected as the Andrew Wellington Cordier Essay. Tan is currently pursuing a master's in colonial and global history at Universiteit Leiden.

GS Celebrates the Class of 2021

The School of General Studies celebrated the accomplishments of the 663 members of the Class of 2021 on Wednesday, April 28 at GS Class Day via a virtual ceremony.

The ninth Dean of the School of General Studies, Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, welcomed more than 750 virtual guests, who joined faculty and administrators in recognizing the accomplishments of the graduates.

Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger spoke at length to the graduates, stating, "I have said, on many occasions, that I believe there is a genius in the School of General Studies. We know that academic talent and educational ambition come at different points in life for different people. We [at Columbia] benefit enormously from your presence. You have been the classic nontraditional student in the most nontraditional of times. We are grateful for your presence with us."



Christopher Thompson is the Class of 2021 Valedictorian. Thompson grew up in New Orleans. After high school, he worked in restaurants in the United States and Europe as a

fine-dining chef. At age 30, he enrolled at Red Rocks Community College, where he proved that he could succeed in academic and intellectual environments. While at GS, Thompson was involved in student life, working as a GS Peer Advisor, serving as Student Body President in 2019-20, and co-founding the Columbia Recovery Coalition. Most recently, he participated in the inaugural Justice and Pandemics Preparedness Academy and was appointed to the research cluster in the Historical Study of Race, Inequality, and Health with The Center for Science and Society at Columbia University. Post-graduation, Thompson is pursuing a PhD in anthropology at The New School. His research will focus on inequality in the American South.

Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Graduates



After graduating from Binghamton University with an environmental studies degree, **Devon Gingrich** went to the Adirondacks to work on an organic vegetable farm. After

spending five years at various small-scale farms across New York State, Gingrich moved from a small cabin in the woods to Brooklyn to work as a garden manager for a New York City non-profit centered around edible education for public school students. Splitting her time between Gravesend and East Harlem, she managed several school gardens and worked with volunteers and

students teaching them how to grow and cook their own food. The one-on-one connections she made in public health inspired her to pursue a career in medicine. This fall Devon enrolled at University of Michigan Medical School via the Postbac Premed Program's Linkage Admission Program.



After graduating from University of Maryland, **Nandan Vithlani** was an investment banking analyst for almost two years before enrolling in the Postbac Premed Program. He has always

had a passion for service work, in which he

continued to engage while working in banking; however, he eventually decided that he wanted to make service his professional endeavor. Having finished his premedical coursework, Vithlani is now applying to medical schools while volunteering as an emergency medical technician with the Central Park Medical Unit and as a research assistant at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. He continues to be involved with Conserve Inc., a non-profit he co-founded in 2017 that aims to empower donors with the information and means to make giving easier and more informed. He also works extensively with Rayse Academy, a charity that provides free digital education tools to girls in rural India.

Class of 2021

Columbia University School of General Studies



663
GRADUATES



21-72
AGE RANGE



174
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS



57
REPRESENTED
COUNTRIES



35
REPRESENTED
STATES



307
PELL GRANT
RECIPIENTS



108
U.S. MILITARY
VETERANS



186
FIRST
GENERATION



51
PHI BETA KAPPA
(PBK) INDUCTEES



174
HONOR
SOCIETY
MEMBERS



151
INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMS GRADS



38
JTS/GS



79
SCIENCES PO



14
CITY UNIVERSITY
OF HONG KONG



AEDAN MACDONALD '21 HELPS OTHERS CRACK THE CODE POST-INCARCERATION

By Tobi Phang-Lyn and Lori Paulson

In the early 2010s, Aedan Macdonald was focused on building a fashion brand in Los Angeles. He owned and ran Foundry, a luxury clothing boutique, and Holographic Universe, a men's and women's fashion line. With editorial spreads in *Marie Claire* and other publications, his success seemed imminent.

When a marijuana charge in which Macdonald was involved during his late teens and early twenties resulted in a conviction, his momentum as an emerging talent came to a crashing halt. "My businesses and the life that I had built for myself were completely destroyed," he said.

Despite this setback, Macdonald's incarceration set him on an entirely new path when, while serving his sentence, he learned about the School of General Studies and the work surrounding mass incarceration at the Columbia University Center for Justice. He became intent on being admitted to the School, and to prove he could thrive in education, he began taking classes in prison. "Having seen my own success in fashion, I was determined to return to school and make the best of an incredibly terrible and traumatic situation."

Throughout primary school, Macdonald wrestled with learning disabilities and found himself internalizing the idea that he could not excel academically. "When I arrived in prison, I was at a point in my life

where I had processed that trauma, and in turn, I developed a sense of self-worth that allowed me to love and see myself as worthy of doing well in school," said Macdonald. "Removed from the constraints of a special education classroom and designation, which caused me to feel othered, I blossomed as a scholar."

One year before his release, Macdonald applied to GS with his sister's help. He continued his studies while waiting for both his release and an admissions decision. "In many ways, GS saved my life, as it provided me with a clear goal to work towards while I was incarcerated," he said.

Once accepted to GS, he recognized how fortunate he was to be able to make the transition from prison to the Ivy League. "Although my incarceration was devastating and destroyed everything I had built in my previous life, I understood that my privilege as a white male and someone who had experienced success before my incarceration and had a robust support network when I came home, made my process of re-entry easier."

As a student at Columbia, Macdonald, with support from the Center for Justice, established Justice Through Code (JTC), a program designed to teach previously incarcerated people to write computer programs with the goal of cultivating lucrative and fulfilling coding careers.

"Starting JTC has allowed me to extend some of the same opportunities that

"Starting Justice Through Code has allowed me to extend some of the same opportunities that GS has provided to me—the promise of education, a better life, and a pathway towards stability—to our students who overwhelmingly come from the communities of color disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration."

**- Aedan Macdonald,
Founder of Justice Through Code**

GS has provided to me—the promise of education, a better life, and a pathway towards stability—to our students who overwhelmingly come from the communities of color disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration and the low wages and high rates of unemployment that returning citizens experience," said Macdonald.

Immensely popular, JTC has placed students in positions at a variety of prestigious businesses. The program now has over 1,000 applicants, and Macdonald is working with the Center for Justice to cultivate its next steps.

"My experience at GS has been incredibly impactful and has changed me in ways I couldn't imagine. It has forced me to be the best version of myself that I can be," Macdonald said. "I intend to continue to build upon my work with Justice Through Code at Columbia as we work to test and scale the model of this program at other universities throughout the country."

GENERAL INTEREST

Alumni News

Svetlana Samandyk '20

GENERAL INTEREST



Michael Rovner '18 and Yasmeen Ibrahim '19

Co-chairs of the GSAA's Recent Alumni Committee (RAC)

Yasmeen Ibrahim '19

Current Position:

Consulting Senior Analyst at Accenture in Washington, D.C.

Free-time Interests:

Exploring Washington, D.C.; hiking the Shenandoah mountains; playing board games

Michael Rovner '18

Current Position:

Senior Account Executive at Goodfuse Communications in Washington, D.C.

Free-time Interests:

Traveling; skiing; jogging; reading

What drives you to contribute to the GS alumni community?

Yasmeen: When I first arrived on the Columbia campus, I had no idea how I was going to survive this academic experience. The imposter syndrome I experienced was haunting, and I initially felt so out of place; however, I started to meet other GS students who were open and willing to candidly discuss sensitive yet real topics that almost all new students face. My fellow GSers helped guide me through everything from appealing my financial aid award decision to submitting a successful first University Writing essay. This level of support I received as a student is precisely what drives me to contribute to the GS alumni community. As an alumna, I work alongside our incredible alumni relations team to craft programming that connects GS alumni to one another all over the world.

Michael: I first became involved with GSAA after attending the 2019 Winter Reception. It was the first GSAA event I attended since graduating, and I was having such a great time reconnecting with some of my classmates and meeting fellow alums from other classes, that halfway through the event I knew I wanted

to get involved! I want to ensure that every alum feels supported as they progress onto their next opportunity and encourage various forms of participation to maintain a connection to the GS community.

What's been the most fun and/or rewarding GSAA project with which you've been involved thus far?

Yasmeen: The most fun GSAA project that I have been able to take part in was recording a congratulatory video with Michael for the class of 2020. Not being able to walk across the stage and celebrate this extraordinary moment in the presence of family, friends, professors, staff, and fellow graduates was heartbreaking for 2020 graduates and the GS community, so I felt extremely honored and privileged to contribute anything that could help celebrate and welcome this resilient group of graduates and now new alumni.

Michael: When the pandemic made travel inadvisable, our committee paired GS alumni with current students to share a virtual Thanksgiving meal. It was rewarding to help bring students and alumni together at a time when we were not able to gather in person. It was also nice to see the initiative help reconnect colleagues who had fallen out of touch.

What is your favorite Columbia GS memory?

Yasmeen: During my last semester, I started a bi-weekly morning routine of grabbing a scone and tea from Joe's to enjoy during my East Asian Music Humanities class then working off the calories at Dodge Gym after. This ritual helped me soak up all the joy I could prior to graduating while alleviating the stress induced by the uncertainty of my next chapter.

Michael: One of the activities that was organized during NSOP was a New York City scavenger hunt. My team and I rode the subway and (literally) ran all over the Upper West Side, Morningside Heights, and Harlem. Our destinations spanned the Bolivian Llama Party at Turnstile under Columbus Circle to the Harriet Tubman Memorial in Harlem. It may have been a very hot August day, but it was so much fun, and my team won the event!

Alumni Reunion

Recap

GS Alumni Gathered Virtually for Reunion 2021

This year's Reunion took place over two weeks and brought together GS alumni, students, family, and friends from all over the world through a variety of online events. Beginning on May 24, the two-week-long series kicked-off with a welcome gathering that featured an update about the School presented by Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch, a student panel discussion, and virtual break-out rooms that enabled alumni spanning more than five decades to connect.

On the Frontlines: Nursing Leadership in Pandemics featured a group of Columbia faculty from public health, the humanities, public policy, nursing, and oral history coming together to tell stories of frontline nurses and midwives during the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak.

The second week of programming began with three-time Emmy Award-winner Craig Wilson '95, Senior Broadcast Producer for CBS News, who hosted **Inside the Newsroom** along with CBS field producer Suvro Banerji '12JRN. The two producers reflected on a year of covering unprecedented world events.



Alicia Graf Mack '03, Dean and Director of the Dance Division at The Juilliard School, returned for her third year as a participant in Reunion programming, this time as an instructor for an interactive dance masterclass with audience members over Zoom.



For the third year in a row, GS hosted a Reunion event dedicated to the arts. **A Celebration of the Performing Arts at Columbia** featured recorded performances by the Columbia Ballet Collaborative and Columbia Repertory Ballet.

The Role of Military Veterans in Academia and Society was hosted by the School of General Studies, the Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI), and the Saltzman Institute.



During **Voices from Uganda: Delivering High-Value Healthcare in a Low-Resource Setting** Postbac Premed alumnus Ken Schaeffe '09 presented a selection of video interviews with the Ugandan healthcare providers with whom he works via a unique partnership between Montefiore Hospital/Albert Einstein College of Medicine and a remote government hospital in Kisoro, Uganda.

GS Alumni Events Have Gone **Global**

More Highlights from Reunion 2021



Professional Athletes in the Ivy League

During a virtual round table, Matt Duran '20, a former third baseman for the New York Yankees, Olympic figure skater Timothy Goebel '10, the first athlete to land three quadruple jumps in competition, and figure skater Sasha Cohen '16, a two-time Olympian, three-time world medalist, Grand Prix Final champion, and 2006 U.S. champion, spoke with GS Director of Alumni Relations Aviva Zablocki about their athletic careers, paths to the University, and what a Columbia education meant to them.

CELEBRATING DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS AT GS

The final day of Reunion programming brought together alumni and students from the Dual Degree Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po. Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, and Stéphanie Balme, Dean of the Sciences Po Undergraduate College, reflected on the origins of the groundbreaking program between these two institutions and the success of its first 10 years.



Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90GS
Dean of The School of General Studies

Over the past months, the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA) has offered online events that have been accessible to guests all over the world. The virtual conversations, talkbacks, and social events have featured a diverse range of topics and speakers and have welcomed alumni, current students, friends, and family members.

So far in 2021, the GSAA has hosted nearly three dozen online occasions meant to inspire and engage our global community. From January's Testing, Tracing, and Conquering Fear discussion to July's Virtual Paint & Sip, hundreds of alumni have participated. The following are a sampling of the past months' highlights:

Alumni In Conversation: Science, Research, and Public Health



Stacia Kargman '80 hosted an interactive conversation about her career as a scientist, mentor, and researcher on March 10. During the event, Kargman reflected on her career as a biologist and nonprofit manager as well as on her work with physician/clinical researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and The Rockefeller University, where she has worked on cutting-edge therapies to treat diseases such as COVID-19 and cancer.

Graduating During Uncertain Times: A Conversation with GS Alumni

On February 11, GS Alumni who graduated during the financial crisis of the Great Recession explained how they leveraged their GS education to not only get through a challenging world event, but also establish the foundations of a successful career. Molly Ola Pinney '09 shared these words of wisdom, "While it's easy to look around and say this is a really challenging time and things are really hard, there is a ton of opportunity right now. You can literally work for places all over the world that you couldn't necessarily work for before. Jobs that we never thought would be virtual, are virtual now."



GENERAL STUDIES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The GSAA works to enhance the GS alumnus/a experience from the beginning of one's journey as a student to throughout one's life as a member of the worldwide Columbia University community.

Alumni Benefits

GS undergraduate and Postbac Premed Program alumni are members of the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA) and the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA), and are provided a broad array of services, benefits, and discounts. This includes a directory of alumni clubs, events, interest groups, access to Columbia facilities, and support from the Center for Career Education.

ALUMNI AWARDS CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Recognize a GS Alumnus/a

The GSAA strives throughout the year to identify alumni who make a difference in their communities, whose career or volunteer work is noteworthy, or who contribute to Columbia in ways that enrich the GS community. Prestigious awards and honors are presented each year by both the University and the School of General Studies. Contact gsalumni@columbia.edu for more information or to submit a nomination for yourself or someone you know.

save the date

REUNION 2022
THURSDAY, JUNE 9-SATURDAY, JUNE 11

GSAA Officers

GSAA Board Co-Chairs:
Damienne Harfouche '14
Kirsty Jardine '15, '16PH

Executive Committee:

Arthur Bingham '84
Torah Bontrager '07
Megan Calderazzo '20
Joshua Kraus '93
Trevor Lawson '01
Sarah Rebarber '20
Brittne Rivera '14
Michael Rovner '18
Tatiana Ryabova '19



ALUMNI IN CONVERSATION: VENTURE CAPITAL

On April 12, venture capital leaders **Elie Wurtman '91**, co-founder and partner at **PICO Partners**, and **Yahal Zilka '82**, co-founder and managing partner at **10D** and **Magma Venture Partners**, shared their decades of experience as entrepreneurs, executives, and investors.

ART + ARCHITECTURE TOUR IN EUROPE

Alumna Alina Girshovich '06 presented a live, online art and architecture journey to three spaces in three countries in one hour on May 6. During the program, participants were transported to Barcelona, Spain to the MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, to Bazoches-sur-Guyonne, France for a visit at the Maison Louis Carré by Alvar Aalto, and to Riga, Latvia for a stop at Kim? Contemporary Art Center.



Other events included **Southern and Northern California Virtual Alumni Gatherings**, **Navigating Your Professional Pivot During the Pandemic**, **Winter Reception Hosted by the GSAA**, **Alumni in Conversation: Science, Research, and Public Health**, and **Alumni in Conversation: Corporate Sustainability**, to name a few.

get in touch!

Stay connected with the GS alumni community by letting us know where you are or in what types of programming you are interested. Events are held both in person and virtually. We would love to hear from you!

gsalumni@columbia.edu | 212.853.2445 | Visit us online at gs.columbia.edu/alumni

Follow us @ColumbiaGSAlumni



By Alexander Huls

SARAH WALKER '95 THE WORLD IS HER STAGE

Sarah Walker '95 was born into a family of people who help others. Her mother was a nursery school teacher, and her father was a neurosurgeon. Her sister is a medical researcher, and her brother is an environmental scientist. Walker, a clinical social worker specializing in helping children, suspects it was fated that she too would follow in their footsteps. "There was just not really another option," she says.

That is not to say there was not a major detour first. Attending the all-girls Garrison Forest High School in Baltimore, where she grew up, Walker was interested not only in helping children, but also in acting. When she moved to New York to attend Sarah Lawrence College, she pursued both academically: theater and early childhood development. That is, until one day, while working in a gourmet food store, she was scouted to become a fashion model. Putting

After a successful career in modeling and acting, the now social worker keeps connected to the arts through philanthropy.

a pause on her education, she embarked on a 15-year modeling career, acting in commercials and participating in shoots all over the world.

Eventually, however, modeling began to feel unavailing. Maybe it was the family genes asserting themselves, but she came to feel it was too much about promoting herself, not others. She decided to return to her interest in child psychology and matriculated at Columbia University School of General Studies to study psychology. There, Walker loved how GS embraced her non-linear path, providing guidance based on a consideration of her accumulated life experience. Advisors suggested classes she never would have considered and set her on a path to help the children of New York.

After graduating in 1995, she worked in a variety of places: the AHRC New York City, The Bronxville School, New Alternatives for Children, and the Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center at Montefiore Hospital. She assisted in everything from fostering to mental health. Currently she provides psychotherapy to young adults between the ages of 15 and 26 at The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, that is, when she is not raising her own twin sons—now 21 years old—who she says "are hands down, the thing I'm most proud of."

Walker has not lost touch with her artistic side, however. She invests in Broadway shows, including an upcoming Princess Diana musical written by the Tony Award-winning team behind *Memphis* and produced by Barbara Whitman '05SOA. She serves on the development board of WFUV, promoting independent, emerging musicians, and she is also on The Lincoln Fund board where she helps give grants to small art and education programs. Those are not the only boards she has joined.

At a General Studies Alumni Association mixer four years ago, she talked to several board members and became interested in joining the Awards Committee, the working group that recognizes exceptional alumni, nominating them for prestigious awards and honors, both from GS and across the University. "Looking back, GS was a great experience and I wanted to be able to give back," Walker says.

Walker's side commitments—Broadway and boards—are a nice break from a career that is important and challenging. "My job is very clinical. I'm dealing with kids who have a lot of trauma. This is a happy thing," she says. Besides, it's in keeping with a family tradition Walker has made entirely her own. "The natural way to live is to give back. I'm not particularly religious, but I always think, 'Are we not our brother's keeper?'"

Ken Schaeffle '09 PBPM Found A Different Audience

By Eric Butterman

He co-founded a successful improv group—then traded the entertainment world for a stethoscope.

Some say modern improv comedy started out in the Chicago area. Well, so did Dr. Ken Schaeffle '09, who came of age in the Windy City when Mike Myers, Tina Fey, and Chris Farley were making the town laugh. Though Schaeffle was more interested in playing bass guitar in his formative years than doing comedy, it was his facility with audio and visual technology that partly made him a fit as a co-founder of Boom Chicago, a comedy theatre in Amsterdam. Teaming up with Andrew Moskos and Jonathan Rosenfeld from his Northwestern University days, they went from producing shows annually to managing a staff of more than 100 employees between their flagship theater and two touring Chicago Boom companies. When Schaeffle and his co-founders' philosophies diverged, he knew it was time for a new occupation. Where do you go from the world of comedy? Even Schaeffle himself would not have answered medicine.

"I couldn't identify a career that I could love as much, but then one day I remembered what it was like to be involved in college," he says. "I remembered how nourishing the seminars were, how exciting it was to go to a lecture at 9 a.m. and listen to an intelligent person."

Within that same week, he met someone who graduated from a postbaccalaureate premedical program, and it was a serendipitous encounter. This would be his path, and, after researching programs, he found Columbia's Postbac Premed Program would light the way. "Columbia was serious about what it was doing, and it felt right," he says. "The deans were so supportive ... and the faculty were very personable and patient. I never felt like they wanted us to leave their office during office hours or they were looking at their

phone. I felt they were committed to us understanding the material."

Schaeffle, despite being older than many applicants, felt the opposite of discrimination when he applied to medical school. "The message I got was that they were happy to have my life experience in the classroom," he says.

Graduating from Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he now works in the global health faculty group as an assistant professor in the Department of Medicine, Schaeffle finds himself in another place he did not expect—Uganda. For at least three to four months out of each year, he practices medicine within about 50 miles of the borders of Rwanda and the Republic of Congo. "You really need to connect with people and help them to trust you," Schaeffle says. "They're dealing regularly with tough diseases like tuberculosis ... Sometimes because of lack of money or even trust, they wait so much longer to get help. But I've gone back and found I couldn't even recognize a person I treated because they're now so much healthier."

As we talk, he is preparing for another trip to Africa. He admits he must get himself in

the right frame of mind—preparing himself for 11-hour days, seven days a week and spending much of his off hours reading medical literature.

Schaeffle confesses that he misses being a part of the comedy world at times but his desire to prompt smiles did not go away when he left the business of improv. "Doing this work in Uganda, I've really shared some great laughs with patients," he says. "A sense of humor can help!"



THE GENERAL DIRECTION

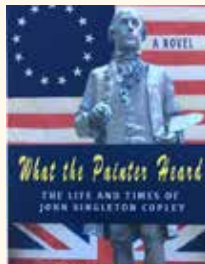
Alumni Notes

1950s



Herbert “Harry” Kuhner ’59 publishes his most recent works on his blog *Our Man in Vienna* at www.viennanet.info.

1970s



Fine artist **Emily Marks ’70** published an historical fiction, *What the Painter Heard: The Life and Times of John Singleton Copley*. Copley was present at the beginning of the American Revolution and painted all the patriots we have come to know from American history. Based on verifiable events and personalities, Marks imagined Copley overhearing conversations of his subjects, founding fathers such as Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and Dr. Joseph Warren, and created the scenes and dialogue for the novel.



Chef **Jacques Pépin ’70** recently reflected on his life and career for CBS *This Morning*. In 2020, he released his latest book, *Jacques Pépin Quick & Simple*.



In 1973, **Edward Harris ’71** invented the Harris Matrix, which became the subject of his doctoral thesis at University College London. The essence of the thesis was published in 1979 as *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy*, which has become an industry standard in archaeology. The Matrix has stood the test of time for almost 50 years, and there are now 11 translations of the work. In 2020, the Arabic edition of the book was released.

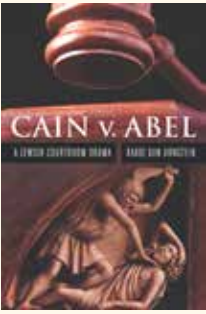


Nighthawk Press recently published the latest release from **Bonnie Lee Black ’79**, *Sweet Tarts for My Sweethearts: Stories and Recipes from a Culinary Career*. The cookbook is a compilation of Black’s favorite, tried-and-true sweet tart recipes along with related stories drawn from her twenty-year culinary career.

1980s



Award-winning analyst, **Steve Brozak ’82, ’94BUS** published “It Will Take The G-7 To Stop Covid-19: Here Are 5 Reasons Why” in *Forbes*. Brozak is president of WBB Securities, LLC, an investment bank and research firm that specializes in the biotechnology, specialty pharmaceutical, and medical device sectors. His research is highly regarded, and he has written articles and opinions for *Forbes*, *CNN*, *ABC News*, and *Businessweek-Bloomberg*. He appears regularly as a guest commentator on financial television outlets such as *Bloomberg*, *BNN*, *CNN*, and *CNBC*.



Rabbi Dan Ornstein '84 released *Cain v. Abel: A Jewish Courtroom Drama* from The Jewish Publication Society. Ornstein is rabbi of Congregation Ohav Shalom in Albany, N.Y. He also writes for the Times of Israel and contributes essays at WAMC Northeast Public Radio, among other outlets.



Award-winning filmmaker and educator **Whitney Dow '86** was featured on the iHeart Radio podcast, "Reparations: The Big Payback" and as a speaker for *Making A Case for Reparations*, an event presented by Columbia's Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies and the Institute for Research in African-American Studies. The conversations explored the century-long fight for reparations and what it says about race in America. Dow has been producing and directing films focused on race and identity for almost two decades and is a sought-after lecturer on race, storytelling, and documentary filmmaking.



1990s

University of Arizona Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Veterans' Advocacy Law Clinic **Kristine Huskey '92** was awarded the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Society's 2020 Copper Sword Award, presented annually to individuals who did not serve in military forces but have distinguished themselves by their dedication, humanitarianism, and support of veteran initiatives.



Craig Wilson '95 was named Senior Broadcast Producer at CBS News. Wilson has contributed to countless broadcasts at CBS News in his nearly three-decade career as a producer and writer for the network.



In February, **Leslie Ordeman '98, '99SIPA** was appointed the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Libya. Prior to serving in this capacity, Ordeman served as the political/economic chief at the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli.



Rick Schatzberg Bends Time in *The Boys*

"We bear the indignities of aging stubbornly, a catalogue of maladies that come with the territory." — from *The Boys*

By Adrienne Anifant

Rick Schatzberg '78 recently released *The Boys*, a memoir photo book published by powerHouse. In the book, Schatzberg juxtaposes vintage photographs of his close childhood friends, known affectionately as "the boys," with individual portraits he shot of each one in old age, many with bare torsos. Schatzberg supports the photos of his lifelong friends who grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in Long Island with reflective, poetic prose. The book has garnered extensive media attention, receiving wide acclaim from *New York Journal of Books*, *Vogue*, and *The Guardian*.

A complex, imaginative rendering told through the lens of 60 years of friendship among 14 men, Schatzberg's work deals with issues of loss, mortality, and identity. The impetus for the book was the sudden death of two of these friends.

"The idea was to show people's vulnerability," Schatzberg said. "I wanted to do something new and interesting and maybe even a little uncomfortable. First you see a snapshot of my group of old friends and then you open the gatefold and you are face-to-face with this old guy. I wanted to show many levels of vulnerability, isolation, and intimacy."

The contrast between the grainy snapshots of jubilant young men in the 1970s to the portrait of each man, now decades older and bearing the encrustations of time in his face, is dramatic. Schatzberg said he chose snapshots that showcased the playfulness and camaraderie of youth. In the portraits, he felt he should reduce all formal aspects and context that is found in most portraits to emphasize the difference between what is in the snapshot to what is in the more recent photograph.

"For the portraits, I wanted it to be just the subject with a blank wall behind them. Very simple," Schatzberg said.

"It says, 'This is how I am. Take it or leave it.' First, you have to get past the embarrassment stage—the embarrassment of seeing the flaws of our bodies. Then you have intimate access to the subject who is more isolated, often sad, but who also possesses a certain defiance."

Schatzberg graduated from the School of General Studies in 1978 with a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology. While he was a student, he played jazz in the avante-garde scene in and around New York City and initially thought he would pursue a career in music. However, he ultimately joined a start-up company and cultivated a lucrative career in business.

While Schatzberg was approaching retirement from the corporate world, he completed various graduate programs including graduate studies in history and political science from Columbia University; an advanced photography intensive from Columbia University School of the Arts; a certificate in general studies at the International Center of Photography (ICP); and in 2018, an MFA in photography from the University of Hartford.

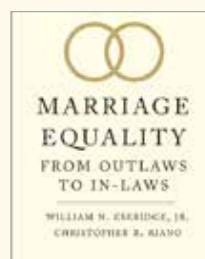
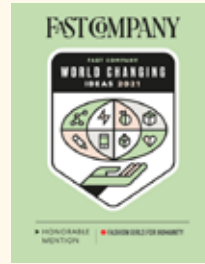
Photography has always spoken to the transience of life and fleeting nature of moments in time, but in *The Boys* Schatzberg alters that perception of linear lost time, making past, present, and future seem to coexist—to still live. With each looming, unrelenting gaze of each man, one also feels the substance and eternal nature of each unique life captured behind Schatzberg's lens.

Ringling Endorsement of an Audiologist's Work

By Nancy J. Brandwein

Audiologist Dr. Marc Fagelson '86 is a national expert on tinnitus, a ringing or buzzing noise in one or both ears. On August 17, 2020, there was a distinct buzzing about Fagelson's work at Eastern Tennessee State University when an animated video he wrote for Ted-Ed (the youth and education initiative of TED) went live on YouTube. The short video succinctly explains what tinnitus is, why it happens, and offers management strategies. Within three days it garnered over 500,000 views and, in another six months, over one million. The tinnitus population is large—one in seven people experience it—and their symptoms were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Fagelson, "Many people with tinnitus are going out less, are around sound less, and are more stressed than they were last January [2020], hence they have more time to observe their tinnitus. In other words, they're not coping well." In the video, Fagelson offers hope in the form of sound therapies coupled with counseling. "Although there may be no simple way to shut the sound off, there are many ways to help a patient manage the symptom," he said.

Marc Fagelson's route to audiology was as circuitous as the inner ear canal. He dropped out of college and moved to New York City to play bass in a band, The Ex-Husbands, then enrolled for a BA School of General Studies (GS). "GS gave me the flexibility to get a great education, exposed to all kinds of thinking," said Fagelson, explaining that it allowed him to study and to spend time playing at CBGBs and Max's Kansas City with the band. It took ten years to graduate, after which he thought he was done with school. Yet, Fagelson landed an opportunity to study for a degree in audiology. "I'd always liked sound, music for sure, but sound in general," he admitted, adding, "Audiology is littered with musician wannabees!" But not all of them are also natural teachers. "Teaching is probably what I do best," said Fagelson, "and that's something I took from my experience at GS and at Columbia Teachers College ... I get to teach in the classroom, and to teach patients in the clinic [primarily veterans], and I'd suggest the TED thing is just another attempt at teaching."



2000s

As a result of their response to the massive shortage of PPE for frontline workers at the beginning of the pandemic, **Kikka Hanazawa '00** and her Fashion Girls for Humanity (FGFH) co-founders were recognized as one of *Fast Company's* 2021 World Changing Ideas honorees. FGFH transformed www.fashiongirls-forhumanity.org to become an information hub with downloadable patterns and crowd-sourced tutorials on how to make PPE.

Writer and nationally touring comedian **Steve Hofstetter '02** has garnered over 150 million views on YouTube. He recently founded Steel City Arts Foundation, a live/work/play environment for comedians to hone their craft.

In March, **Isabelle Freidheim '04, '09BUS** was featured in *Forbes* alongside business partner Phyllis Newhouse. The two are co-founders of Athena Technology Acquisition Corp., a special-purpose acquisition company (SPAC) meant to fuel "an ecosystem of female investors, advisors, and founders that can start changing the composition of the SPAC landscape."

Award-winning producer of music videos, commercials, and films, **Lia Mayer-Sommer '06** and her company Walter Pictures produced the documentary *In & Of Itself*. The film, which is currently streaming on Hulu, was directed by Frank Oz and executive produced by Stephen Colbert. It follows illusionist Derek DelGaudio, preserving his one-man show that ran at the Daryl Roth Theatre in New York City.

Ariel Osterweis '06 is a scholar-practitioner of dance and performance. She is on the faculty of The Sharon Disney Lund School of Dance at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where she teaches performance studies and critical dance studies. Her book *Body Impossible: Desmond Richardson and the Politics of Virtuosity*, is currently under contract with Oxford University Press.

Event planner, producer, and sales director **Elizabeth Hollister O'Donnell '07** and her husband Casey O'Donnell announced the birth of their son James Barrett O'Donnell in July.

Christopher Riano '07 recently won the American Bar Association's 2021 Silver Gavel Award for his book *Marriage Equality: From Outlaws to In-Laws*, which presents a history of America's marriage equality debate while highlighting personal stories and the constitutional debate.

Bisundev Mahato '08PBPM Expands Access to Mental Health Care in Rural New York

By Adrienne Anifant

Dr. Bisundev Mahato is a third and final-year psychiatry resident at Garnet Health Medical Center in Middletown, N.Y. In addition, Dr. Mahato serves as an associate chief resident and briefly served as chief resident at the medical center.

During summer 2021, he was fast-tracked into attending psychiatrist at the rural Garnet Health Medical Center-Catskills due to his previous two years of anesthesia training and a year of general medicine practice in California. In addition to taking care of inpatient, consult, and emergency room psychiatry patients at the hospital, he launched a residency program and works to improve access to mental health care in Sullivan county. Dr. Mahato's vision is to develop Garnet Health into a center for training residents in rural and public psychiatry. Rural areas of the country, such as the Catskills, suffer from a shortage of psychiatrists and access to mental healthcare. Mahato says it is gratifying to be a clinical doctor and see the faces of those he is helping.

"My father always wanted me to be a doctor. When I was a boy, he told me to study as hard as I could. My family couldn't afford books, clothing, boarding ... certainly not tuition for any school," said Mahato, who was born at the

base of the Himalayas in a southeastern part of Nepal called Lahan, which is only 91 miles south of Mount Everest.

Mahato's parents owned a small plot of land that they and his siblings farmed. "There weren't educational opportunities where I grew up. We really struggled," he said, explaining that when he was five years old, he attended the town's first school, which was a bamboo hut.

When he was 10 years old, Mahato was accepted on a full scholarship to a boarding school in Katmandu that was originally established by the British government to educate the Nepalese royalty. In the early morning hours while everyone slept, Mahato would study the language in which the classes were given because it was different from his own language. Despite such challenges, he graduated first in his class.

Mahato began his distinguished academic career in the United States at Brown University supported by a robust financial aid package. He transferred to Harvard and graduated *cum laude* in economics. Following that, he worked as an economic consultant before joining Commonwealth Fund and the Department of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University as a senior economics programmer. Mahato also worked as a teaching fellow in Columbia's Executive Master of Public



Health program. In 2015, he graduated from Harvard Medical School after which he trained in anesthesiology and practiced general medicine in California.

"Most of the skills I use now, I learned at Columbia through my work and the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program" said Mahato. "I developed analytical tools while doing the policy work at Columbia combined with the support from my mentors and all the physicians I met, such as Dean Andrew Sunshine, Dr. Neils Dua, Dr. Sherry Glied, and Dr. Peter Muennig. If it weren't for Columbia, I don't think I would have gotten into medicine at all."

"I hope my father would be proud. I am from nothing; my family came from nothing. I am very grateful for all of the opportunities I've had. My parents would never have imagined this for me. There is a lot of work to be done now to help others, and that is what I will do," said Mahato.



In July 2020, oncologist and cancer survivor ◀ **Shekinah Elmore '08, '09PH** gave a TED Talk about having the courage to live when your future is uncertain. In the video, which has garnered nearly 250,000 views on YouTube, Elmore shares how she embraced life after a rare genetic diagnosis, and why she believes doctors have a duty to help their patients learn to live with radical uncertainty.



◀ **Adrienne Herrera '09**, Media & Communications Manager for Griffin Capital, secured \$25,000 from Invest in Others, Grants for Change for the CAY2 Girls in STEM Program of the Coleman A. Young II Educational Foundation. The award will fund an afterschool STEM program for high school girls in Detroit. Herrera collaborated with fellow alumnus **Raul Wikkeling '10**, Director of Donor Relations at CAY2 Foundation, to secure the grant.



◀ **Michael Novak '09**, Artistic Director of Paul Taylor American Modern Dance, is among 12 Columbians on this year's *Crain's New York Business* "40 Under 40" list.



2010s

Compassionate Release directed by **Lynn Dow '10** was screened at the Halifax Black Film Festival. The powerful short film follows a mother struggling to bring her dying daughter home early from prison. In May 2020, Dow, a Wall Street financial professional turned film writer, director, and producer, spoke to *Forbes* about the personal inspiration for the film.

Keith Roberts '17 Takes Flight

By Nancy J. Brandwein

Like most performing arts companies, American Ballet Theater (ABT) was shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to the fall of 2021. Keith Roberts '17, then ABT's director of repertoire, remembers the grim cascade of events. "Every week something else kept getting cancelled—tours and upcoming performances. It was completely heartbreaking," he said, and for everyone in the company the uncertainty was unnerving.

Still, on a hopeful note, "artists constantly reinvent themselves," said Roberts, pointing to Picasso and Madonna as exemplars. For his part, he said, "This period gave me a chance to contemplate, 'What do I want to do? What's important to me? Where is it that I really need to speak my truth?'"

Roberts knows something about reinvention. A principal dancer for ABT and other companies for over 25 years, he sustained a career-ending injury in 2012. Yet, he adroitly transitioned to a key role behind the curtains, moving from what he called the "self-involved" role of dancer to an outward-focused director of repertoire position. Roberts describes that job as being a "librarian of dance history," who helps keep the staging and vision of repertory works true to the choreographer's original intent. In addition, he served as a rehearsal coach and trainer for over 60 dancers. But what happens when the dancing stops?

Fortunately, Roberts had not only transformed himself in the dance arena but had also lit out for new territory. After his injury, he entered Columbia's School of General Studies and "decided to go out on a limb and study something completely out of my comfort zone—economics." He remembers attending an economics department event and a professor asking him, "Why aren't you an art history major?" The question angered him but egged him on to prove dancers could make mental leaps. Now with an executive MBA, which he earned in the spring of 2020, Roberts spent time during lockdown studying for his Certified Financial Analyst exam and is contemplating his next move.

Out of this pandemic year, he said, "I have learned first and foremost, mental health is extremely important. Taking care of myself and choosing myself first is not selfish; it is mandatory." And with that Roberts made a decision to exit his dance repertoire position and transition into a business career. He is currently researching organizations and management positions at companies that have integrity, solid values, and a strong commitment to their employees. "It seems as if I've jumped off a cliff to see if I fly, but if you don't take the risk, then you'll never get the chance to see the view."



Samantha Jackson '11 is a public diplomacy officer. In November 2020, she contributed to an opinion piece, "Female, (Won't) Curtail & Yale: Waiting to Exhale: Reflections on Race and Service from Six Black Women Working at the State Department," which appeared in *The Foreign Service Journal*.



Michael Taylor '12 earned an Emmy Award for his show *Theatre Corner* in the category of Interview Discussion for an episode featuring Dulé Hill and Daniel J. Watts. Taylor's work is dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion in the national theater scene.

Alessandra Vecino Gazabon '15 was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.



In June, **Philippa "Pippa" Biddle '16** released *Ours to Explore: Privilege, Power, and the Paradox of Voluntourism*, published by Potomac Books. The narrative reveals the hidden costs of voluntourism and "West knows best" mentality and offers a plan for how the service-based travel industry can break the cycle of exploitation.

While at GS, former professional ballerinas **Carrie Walsh '16** and **Likolani Brown '17** successfully prepared for second careers in medicine. Walsh is now an emergency medicine resident at Harvard University's Affiliated Emergency Medicine Residency and Brown is a student at NYU Grossman School of Medicine. They shared their stories in "Act II: A Career in Healthcare After Being a Performer," published by *The Student Doctor Network*.

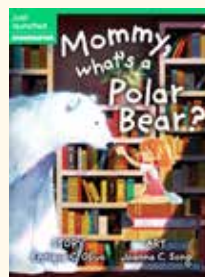


Rosalie Calvet-Soubiran '17 was awarded the Carswell Scholarship, Brooklyn Law School.



Justice Betty '18 and her sister Nia launched a new platform for young activists called *Révolutionnaire*. The social network empowers young changemakers to connect, learn, and put their dreams into action. Their story was featured in the *Toronto Star* in March.

Earlier this year, **Paweł Maśląg '18** was sworn in as a new councilman in Garfield, N.J. He recently joined the United Nations Emerging Leaders cohort for 2021. Maśląg and his peers will work on initiatives that meet UN goals, specifically focusing on reducing inequality.



Enrique Olivo '18 wrote a children's book, *Mommy, What's a Polar Bear?*, inspired by his time crafting stories as an English tutor in France while a student in the Dual BA Program. In August, he and his illustrator, Joanna C. Song, reached their Kickstarter goal in support of publishing the volume.

Hannah Sweets '18, a former professional dancer who found her love for science unexpectedly, was featured in *State of the Planet*, the Columbia Earth Institute's online news publication. Sweets is a research staff assistant in geoinformatics at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory.



A photo taken by **Richard Grosbard '19** was featured on the 2020 holiday card of Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger and Jean Magnano Bollinger.



After completing a master's in sociology of media and culture at University of Cambridge, **Elizabeth Ulanova '19** was awarded a Dean's Merit Scholarship to attend Harvard Graduate School of Design where she is pursuing a Master in Landscape Architecture.



2020s

Betsy Bush '20 interviews people in midlife who are pursuing their passions, changing their careers, and reinventing themselves. During her podcast, *The Latest Version*, Bush engages her guests to share their joys, setbacks, and hard-won advice. Listen at www.thelatestversionpodcast.com.

Kris Goldsmith '20 is a U.S. Army veteran and veterans' advocate. He tracks internet trolls who target veterans to convert them to extremism. In 2019, he presented his findings to the U.S. House of Representatives Veterans Affairs Committee. In January 2021, his work was covered on Arizona 12 News.

Olurotimi Osha '20 is a John S. McCain Strategic Defense Fellow at the U.S. Department of Defense.

Access to the Fullness of Presence: Shelby Elsbree '19

By Adrienne Anifant

For seven years, Shelby Elsbree '19 worked as a professional ballerina, dancing for the world's most renowned companies including The Royal Danish Ballet and Boston Ballet. Originally from Sarasota, Florida, Elsbree began her career when she was only 9 years old. She retired from the stage in 2016 to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in psychology at Columbia University School of General Studies.

During recent years, Elsbree received multiple yoga teacher certifications through Modo Yoga International, and she has made a career as a corporate and personal yoga instructor.

"As a former ballerina, I believe with my whole heart that mindful movement, music, and performing arts hold the power to change the world," Elsbree said.

Elsbree found joy in striving to master the precision and technique of ballet as well as the immersion into the present moment that it provided.

"When you are dancing," she said, "You really can't be anywhere else but in that moment. It is one of the things I miss the most about not dancing anymore—that ease and access to the fullness of presence."

When the global pandemic hit in 2020, it had a deleterious impact on performing arts and artists. Elsbree and her roommate in New York City, Jessica Cohen, also a former ballerina and Broadway star, wanted to support the mental health and wellness of performing artists who do not have financial access to often expensive wellness resources.

Combining her understanding of the power of presence through movement techniques, her Columbia psychology degree, and her yoga and wellness studies, in April 2021, the roommates launched Artists Becoming. The program is a four-week wellness workshop designed for performing artists to support their holistic well-being through mindful practice and a mentorship community. It combines yoga practices, visual guided meditations, and conversations with influential artists and psychologists in and around the industry.

The program invites a new cohort at the beginning of every month through a private Instagram feed @ArtistsBecoming. Elsbree said they have had overwhelming interest from artists of all types and ages, including Broadway stars, Olympians, ballet dancers, and opera singers ranging in age from 14 to 45.

"Artists Becoming resonates with artists who have been experiencing and processing their complicated emotions amid isolation. Most artists have been going through an identity crisis—their art form was taken away from them and with that, a large portion of their identity. You're left to grapple with who you are, who are you without your art, who are



you without your purpose. There has been a lot of deep digging, and to do that in isolation can be overwhelming," said Elsbree. Artists Becoming provides a community where an artist can feel seen and proactively supported.

"I don't see a world where the arts will squander the losses of this past year. I think it is going to metabolize the hardships of 2020 and turn out some of the most extraordinary artwork we have yet to experience."



As co-chair of the GSAA Awards Committee, **April Nicole Carter '02 (1958-2021)** dedicated much of her energy to celebrating her fellow alumni—researching and consistently nominating them for prestigious GS and University honors and ensuring the voices of her peers were heard. She worked with GS staff, brainstorming and developing programs that continue to support the diversity of nontraditional students at Columbia. Carter passed away in April after a brief illness. She enrolled at Columbia University School of General Studies, majoring in film and media studies, once her four sons had grown. Raised in Brooklyn, Carter called Morningside Heights home, where through her gardening, volunteer work, and constant presence in Morningside Park, she touched many lives. Carter will be remembered fondly by her family members, friends, and neighbors.

Anne Strickland Cameron '46 (1924-2021) possessed a sense of wanderlust throughout her life. After meeting President Harry Truman and his wife Bess at the White House in 1949, she and a girlfriend sailed to England on the Queen Mary, bought bicycles, and cycled through England and France for two months. An avid writer, she earned a Master of Arts from University of Iowa in 1953. In 1955, she married William L. Cameron. The couple had two sons, Bob and Chuck.

Donald McCarty '49, '50TC (1921 - 2021) was a World War II U.S. Army veteran. He attended Columbia on the GI Bill, receiving a Bachelor of Science in history from GS and a Master of Arts in teaching from Teachers College. Having earned a PhD in educational administration from University of Chicago, McCarty cultivated a vibrant career in education for more than 50 years. With his late wife Betty, he raised four children and is survived by six grandchildren.

In Memoriam

Pianist, organist, harpsichordist, harpist, teacher, producer, author, and activist **Herbert Burtis '52 (1930-2021)** died in February attended by his partner, David Fleeer. Burtis possessed many gifts that he shared with friends, students, and colleagues. In college, Burtis met John Ferris, also a gifted organist and pianist, and the two became inseparable. The couple became active in the effort to contain and eradicate AIDS, and later, joined GLAD GLBT Legal Advocates and Defenders to advance the cause of gay marriage. Thanks in part to their active participation, Massachusetts legalized same-sex marriage in 2004, allowing Burtis and Ferris, after a courtship of some 55 years, to be married that year. Ferris died from complications of Parkinson's disease in 2008.

Most well-known for reading the Pentagon Papers, a secret government study of the war in Vietnam, into the public record, former United States Senator for Alaska **Maurice "Mike" Gravel '56 (1930-2021)** passed away in June. Gravel ran for President three times and created The Gravel Institute, a think tank. A U.S. Army veteran, he moved to Alaska when it was still a territory and worked in real estate and as an Alaska Railroad brakeman. In 1965 and 1966, he was elected to the Alaska legislature, eventually serving as its speaker of the House of Representatives. As a U.S. senator in the 1970s, he fought for the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline, which brought crude oil 800 miles from Alaska's North Slope to the ice-free port of Valdez, making oil the center of Alaska's prosperity.

A U.S. Army veteran, **John A. Lees '54CC, '58 (1931-2021)** had a long career as a geologist after earning his PhD from Pennsylvania State University. He retired in 1988 from the U.S. Geological Survey in Washington, D.C. Lee was married to Alice Allan Hoyt for almost six decades, and the couple raised three children.

Elena Maria Giamatti "Elria" Ewing '63 (1940-2021) had a full life cultivating a family of four children, 10 grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter with her husband of 58 years, David Ewing. Counting at least 15 jobs throughout her adult life, the romance languages major did everything from teaching English in Japan to academic advising at American University in Washington, D.C.

Poet **Richard "Dick" Gallup '68 (1941-2021)** is remembered for employing graceful lyricism and everyday language into his work. A recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Fund for Poetry, in the 1960s and 70s he was an active member of the "New York School" of poets and a founding member of the affectionately-called "Tulsa School of Poetry," having grown up in Arizona.

Attorney **Brian Leary '68 (1941-2020)** was one of 14 children. In the 1960s he lived in New York City and was a musician and taxi driver, which he discussed in a 2010 article in *The Owl*. Leary was the 1967-68 editor of *The Owl*, a student newspaper at the time, and he was instrumental in campaigning for the implementation of the Bachelor of Arts degree at GS. After earning a law degree from University of California at Berkeley, Leary cultivated a successful practice in Oakland, Calif. from which he retired early in order to spend time with his grandchildren and enjoy sailing.

The co-founder of Gods Love We Deliver, **Ingrid "Ganga" Stone (1941-2021)** attended GS in the late 1960s and in 1971. Born in New York City, in 1985, Stone saw an urgent need to give sustenance to desperately ill AIDS patients and other homebound individuals. Her compassion and vision changed New York through relieving the suffering of so many.

Andree Maitland Dean '74 (1929-2021) was considered a force of nature by her family. At age 16 she attended Barnard College yet left after two years to marry Howard Dean Jr., a finance executive. After raising four sons, at age 45, Dean enrolled at Columbia GS and graduated with a degree in art history. She became an art appraiser and purchaser for individuals, corporations, and museums. Politically active, Dean campaigned for her eldest son Howard's 2004 democratic presidential campaign.

Edith Joy Baumann '75 (1931-2020) was born near Zurich, Switzerland. In 1957, she immigrated to the United States with her husband, settling in Norfolk, Va. While raising her four children in Pearl River, N.Y., Baumann attended Columbia GS, graduating with honors in 1975 with a degree in English literature. She proceeded to earn master's and doctorate degrees in German literature from Rutgers University.

Opening Doors, Transforming Lives

*The Power
of the Match*

TURNING **\$5,000,000**

INTO **\$10,000,000**

ON THE WAY TO **\$60,000,000**



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Larry Lawrence '69, '71BUS, has given this campaign an incredible start with his deep generosity, continuing a legacy of support for GS that goes back 35 years. Through the Larry J. Lawrence Match Fund, Larry has made a commitment of \$5 million to match scholarship gifts to the School.

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GENERALLY SPEAKING

Classes are back in session in person. This photo of two nurses at Columbia University Irving Medical Center giving each other COVID-19 vaccine shots while a third takes their photo illustrates a significant theme of 2021. It is mandatory for students, faculty, and staff present at Columbia University campuses in fall 2021 to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to participate in on-campus activities (with exceptions for religious reasons). To access campus, all individuals have participated in the University “gateway” testing program, signed a pledge of mutual responsibility called the Columbia Community Health Compact, and taken an online COVID-19 safety training. Using the ReopenCU smartphone app, each day, everyone who is present at the University must complete a symptom self-check. Meanwhile, the University has outfitted its facilities with enhanced air circulation and maximum air filtration systems and employed rigorous cleaning practices, and is sharing health and well-being information in a prompt and consistent manner. Stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our community is a top priority.



PHOTO: ELLEN BARROSO/COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY