WINTER 2017/2018

GW

Arts & Sciences

The National Mall
INSIDE AMERICA'S FRONT YARD

Battling TB's Resurgence
STUDENT COMBATS DEADLY DISEASE

Echoes of Genocide
VOICES FROM RWANDA'S PAST

A Night at the Opera
ALUMNUS TENOR HITS HIGH NOTES

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
COLUMBIAN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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WINTER 2017/2018

GW Arts & Sciences

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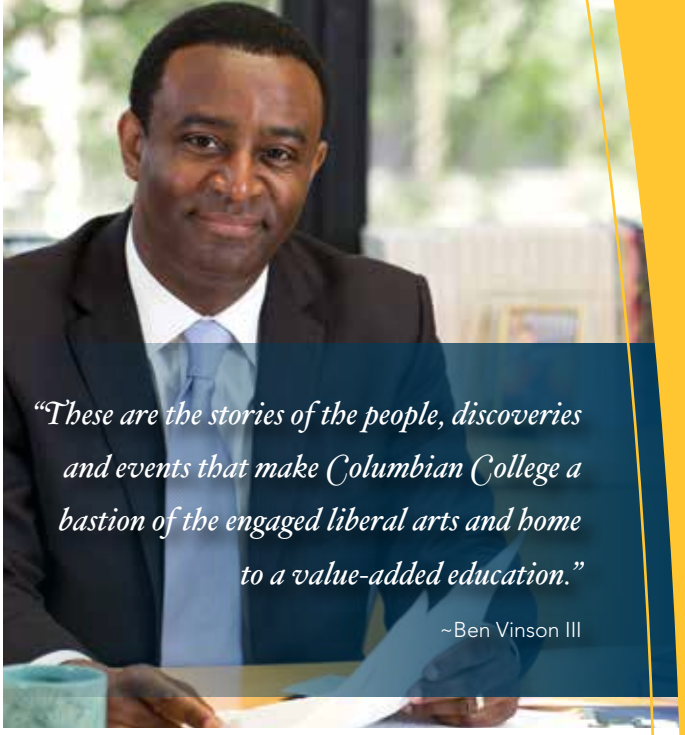
DEAN'S MESSAGE



This issue of *Art & Sciences* showcases the remarkable breadth of our college. The stories of impact, collaboration and discovery are a testament to the continued relevance of a liberal arts degree, one that focuses on engagement, cross-disciplinary education and creating a level of expertise among our students that is sought after by virtually every sector of our society.

From classrooms on campus to the educational canvas of the world, our students are a continual source of inspiration and amazement to our entire community. Working side-by-side with faculty, their activities stretch from labs and libraries to the hidden mysteries of microscopic cells and the vast wonders of celestial bodies. No matter the field—science, social science, the arts, the humanities—they are making an impact on people's lives with their intellectual inquisitiveness, their artistic creativity and their quest for knowledge.

These are the stories of the people, discoveries and events that make Columbian College a bastion of the engaged liberal arts and home to a value-added education. In these pages, you'll meet faculty who are giving a voice to waves of immigrants and survivors of genocide; students who are confronting the most profound issues of the 21st century such as religious tolerance, climate change and disease; and alumni who have used their passion and talents to reach teens in crisis, entertain opera fans around the world and motivate a new generation of Latino leaders. Each day, new stories like these come alive at Columbian College.

This past year has been a particularly significant one for the college and the university. With the arrival of **Thomas LeBlanc** as GW's 17th president, we begin a new era of leadership and, as with any change, there's a palpable feeling of excitement in the air. We've also concluded our successful "Making History" campaign in which Columbian College numbers were very strong, exceeding all targets and raising more for our students, faculty and programs than any other school at GW. And we achieved record enrollment numbers and launched a number of new learning and research initiatives, including the Sophomore Colloquia to further engage our second-year students in focused scholarship and the Gamow Postdoctoral Fellowship to boost research productivity and address the need for greater diversity in the nation's research science community. These are points of immense pride.

Even as we celebrate our achievements, we will continue to look toward garnering greater research and scholarly achievement for our faculty, ever-improving the educational experience of our students and building upon our strengths while charting new avenues of growth throughout our college. We seek to continue our notable traditions of vigorous academic scholarship and civic determination—traditions first put forth by our nation's first president when the college was founded nearly 200 years ago—being carried into our third century by our Columbian College family. Our students, along with a faculty who enlighten minds and alumni who touch hearts, are changing the world as we know it.

Of course, our college's vision and accomplishments are built upon the commitment of those whose service and philanthropy supports everything we do. Your spirit of giving back is helping to propel our work on a number of fronts, and we are truly grateful for your generosity. As we move Columbian College forward, I encourage you to stay involved in the life of your alma mater. Drop me a line, stop by my office or join one of our many outreach events. We are a vast and vibrant community connected by a shared purpose: to build a better future through knowledge and understanding. Your continued engagement can and will make a difference.

Sincerely,

Ben Vinson III
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Thomas LeBlanc

WELCOME, PRESIDENT LEBLANC!

Thomas J. LeBlanc, an accomplished academic leader, administrator and professor, has become GW's 17th president, succeeding **Steven Knapp**, who stepped down after serving 10 years at the helm. LeBlanc brings a passion for research, innovation and academic advancement to GW, as well as a commitment to diversity and expanded access to education. Most recently he served as executive vice president, provost and professor of computer science and electrical and computer engineering at the University of Miami, where he increased retention and graduation rates, doubled the number of doctoral programs ranked in the top half of their discipline and raised the school's *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. On his arrival to GW, LeBlanc said that he and his wife, Anne, are "thankful to be part of this vibrant community and tremendously excited for the opportunities ahead."

GW OUT FRONT

GW has once again placed among the nation's top producers of Fulbright scholars with 12 undergraduate and graduate students winning 2016-2017 Fulbright awards. Recipients will teach English and conduct research projects in Israel, Spain, Germany, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Malaysia, Czech Republic, Austria, Mexico, Jordan and South Korea. In addition, GW was recognized as a top producer of Peace Corps volunteers, ranking third among medium-sized schools nationwide—its 11th consecutive year in the top five. GW students were also named the "Most Politically Active Students" in the nation, according to a *Princeton Review* survey of colleges and universities. It was the fourth straight year GW claimed the top spot.

GETTING THE GUGGENHEIM

Associate Professor of Anthropology **Sarah Wagner** and Professor of History and International Affairs **Andrew Zimmerman** were awarded Guggenheim Fellowships, among the most prestigious of scholarly honors. Wagner was recognized for her project identifying and commemorating Vietnam War MIAs, the culmination of years of ethnographic and archival research.


Andrew Zimmerman and Sarah Wagner

Zimmerman was cited for his forthcoming book, *Conjuring Freedom: A Subaltern and Transnational History of the American Civil War*, which offers a new interpretation of the Civil War and serves as a model for rethinking archetypical national events.

CLASS OF 2017 CELEBRATED

The Class of 2017 received both a warm sendoff and an enthusiastic welcome to the family of GW alumni at the Columbian College Celebration ceremonies. Dean **Ben Vinson** urged graduates to "be the change-makers, the creators, the discoverers, the innovators, the leaders that will help push our society forward." The celebration, which recognized 936 undergraduates and 558 graduates for their achievements in the arts and sciences, was followed the next day by the Commencement on the National Mall, where U.S. Senator **Tammy Duckworth** (D-Ill.), MA '92, encouraged graduates to "get into the arena" and face challenges at home and abroad.

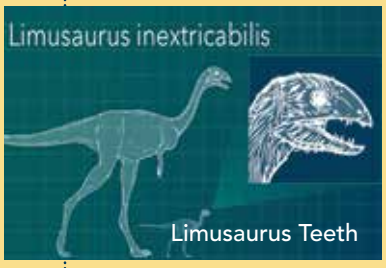
SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENT RESEARCH

Columbian College students received top recognition for poster presentations on subjects across disciplines at Research Days, GW's two-day celebration of student research. Nearly 600 students showcased their work and competed for prizes—a record high for the 22nd annual event. Presenters included a


Research Days

human paleobiology PhD candidate who examined the tooth enamel of mountain gorillas and a human services and social justice undergraduate who tested elementary school teachers for bias against overweight students.

NO TEETH? NO PROBLEM FOR DINOSAUR



A study co-authored by Ronald Weintraub Professor of Biology **James Clark**, found a new species of dinosaur, *Limusaurus inextricabilis,* that lost its baby teeth in adolescence and did not grow another set as adults. The finding, published in *Current Biology*, is a radical change in our understanding of life-span anatomy. Clark studied 19 skeletons uncovered in the Xinjiang province of China. The baby skeletons had small, sharp teeth while the adult skeletons were toothless—indicating that young *Limusaurus* could have been carnivores or omnivores while the adults, who had no teeth to chew meat, were herbivores. The *Limusaurus* fossils offer new insight on how birds evolved from dinosaurs and why birds have beaks but no teeth.

MILLENNIAL STEREOTYPES ROOTED IN MYTH

Millennials are often portrayed as narcissistic job-hoppers—stereotypes that are not backed by research, according to a study by Associate Professor of Psychology and of Organizational Sciences **David Costanza** that examined the effect of generational stereotypes in the workplace. Whether it's saying they'll never buy houses or they'll never settle down with an employer, common misperceptions of millennial attitudes are often promoted by business managers, sometimes leading to unfair hiring practices. Costanza said millennial myths stem from a lack of solid, empirical research.

BONOBOS: OUR CLOSEST 'LIVING' ANCESTORS?

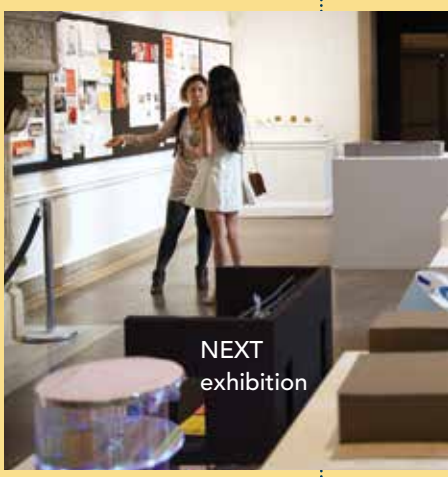
Bonobos, a rare great ape species, may be more closely linked to human ancestors than chimpanzees, according to a research team led by **Bernard Wood**, professor of human origins at Columbian College's Center for the Advanced Study of Human Paleobiology. Modern human and common chimpanzee/bonobo lineages split about 8 million years ago—with the two great ape species splitting from each other 2 million years ago. Comparing the anatomy of the three species, the study concluded that bonobo muscles—which indicate how they function physically—have changed less than in chimps since their evolutionary split. "That means they are the closest [humans] can get to having a 'living' ancestor," Wood said.

NO PrEP/RISKY BEHAVIOR LINK

Medical providers who prescribed PrEP to prevent HIV saw no widespread increases in risky sexual behavior among those patients, according to a survey of U.S.-based health care providers by Assistant Professor of Psychology **Sarah Calabrese**. PrEP was approved in the United States in 2012 and is widely considered a breakthrough in HIV prevention. Each year, 40,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with HIV while 1.2 million more are at significant risk for contracting the virus. Still, fewer than 100,000 Americans have been prescribed the PrEP prevention option.

'NEXT' SHOWCASES STUDENT ART

From fine art to mixed media, Corcoran students showcased their art and design talent at NEXT, the month-long annual exhibition of cutting-edge thesis artwork. More than 50 graduating students presented their creations to the D.C. community at the event, which drew 900 people on its opening day. With an emphasis on visual storytelling, the exhibits included a virtual reality game that simulates the experience of walking into a classroom at a new school and a photojournalism series exploring the isolation of asylum seekers who flee their homelands due to homophobia.




Lisa Bowleg

POLICE: THREAT TO MENTAL HEALTH?

Lisa Bowleg, professor of applied social psychology, has devised a tool that measures how interactions with law enforcement affect the mental health of African American men. Her Police and Law Enforcement Scale, a series of eight questions about individuals' experiences with law enforcement, appeared in *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, a publication of the American Psychological Association. Bowleg's research, among the first to include black men's point of view, found that police-based discrimination is linked to depression symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness and loss of ambition. She argues that police discrimination should be considered a public health threat.

ANCIENT BLUE JEANS?

If it weren't for textile dyeing advancements from 6,000 years ago, we might not be wearing blue jeans today. That's one conclusion Assistant Research Professor of Anthropology **Jeffrey Splitstoser** surmised when he identified centuries-old Peruvian textiles dyed indigo blue produced more


A 6,200-year-old textile dyed indigo-blue

than 1,800 years before the previously known oldest fabric in that color. The finding sheds light on the advanced textile technology the ancient Andean people developed thousands of years ago—skills that may have led to today's blue jeans. The indigo textile was discovered in a desert on Peru's north coast, a site that was likely a temple where textiles may have been part of a ritual.

FRUIT FLY SUPER SONS

The diet of a male fruit fly can determine the success his sons will have in mating, according to a study by Assistant Professor of Biology **Mollie Manier** in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters*. Because females in nature usually mate with multiple males, there is intense competition for fertilization of her eggs. Father flies who consume high-protein diets are more likely to have offspring who are highly successful when competing with other males for female flies' attention. Manier's results have implications for understanding biodiversity and phenotypic evolution.

SCIENTISTS POWER STAR QUEST

An all-star team of researchers led by Assistant Professor of Physics **Alexander van der Horst** are building an instrument that will allow scientists to see farther into space than ever before. The OCTOCAM will bolster telescopes to spot astronomical objects with unprecedented precision and document billions of new stars and galaxies. Van der Horst assembled a project team of 50 scientists from around the world who are experts in 20 areas of astronomy. GW will receive a portion of the $15 million grant to lead the scientific efforts and develop software for astronomers to use the new instrument.

A 'TAIL' OF TWO PULSARS


Geminga pulsar

Not all pulsars rocketing through space are alike. Some emit radio waves, others gamma rays and still others both. Using NASA images light years from earth, a team of researchers including physics PhD candidate **Noel Klingler** may have discovered why some stars shine with different lights. Klingler authored a study in *The Astrophysical Journal* that examined images of two half-a-million-year-old pulsars. Their appearances vary due to our line-of-sight from earth. Pulsars don't emit radiation in all directions uniformly, Klingler explained. Whether we see radio or gamma rays depend

upon the angle between the pulsar's spin axis and the earth. His research on pulsar geometry will allow scientists to better estimate the number of exploded stars in the galaxy.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

From understanding the effects of pollution to learning about efforts to preserve the Chesapeake Bay, girls from D.C. middle schools experienced a hands-on environmental education as part of SummerTrek, a service-learning program co-sponsored by Columbian College's Department of Biological Sciences. Among the outdoor living-classroom activities, the girls accompanied student volunteers to the department's new Wilbur V. Harlan Greenhouse where they tended plants that will eventually absorb groundwater runoff. A collaboration with ArtReach, SummerTrek promotes awareness of storm water management through cleanup projects, art workshops and environmental education.

D.C. schoolgirls at the new Harlan Greenhouse in Science and Engineering Hall

CHALLENGING ORIGIN OF HUMAN GENUS

Defying the scientific theory that broad-scale events like global climate change caused the origination of diverse new species, Assistant Professor of Anthropology **Andrew Barr** suggests that the rise of advanced animals 2.5 million years ago—including modern humans—could have

Andrew Barr

occurred by chance. Using computer simulations to model what the period's fossil record might look like over time in the absence of any climate change, Barr still found clusters of similar species originations. His findings mean scientists must rethink widely-accepted ideas about why humans became smarter and more technologically advanced than our ancestors.

Flag Day

MOST GRATEFUL YEAR YET

GW celebrated its third annual Flag Day, a campus-wide event recognizing philanthropy's impact on the community, with students writing more than 1,400 "thank you" cards to acknowledge the generosity of alumni who give back to the university. The event also recognized the nearly 1,500 students who made gifts in 2017, inspiring a $5,000 contribution from anonymous donors to the Ronald W. Howard Student Assistance Fund.

THOMPSON: NABJ EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Cheryl W. Thompson

Associate Professor of Media and Public Affairs **Cheryl W. Thompson** was honored as the 2017 Educator of the Year by the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the largest organization of journalists of color. Thompson, who helped launch the GW chapter of NABJ, is a former prize-winning investigative journalist. In the classroom she stresses the need to be factual not first."

CORCORAN WELCOMES DESIGNER KUNKEL

Joseph Kunkel

The Corcoran School of the Arts and Design welcomed **Joseph Kunkel**, an architect and designer who is helping build housing capacity in Native American communities, as its 2017-2018 William Wilson Corcoran Visiting Professor of Community Engagement. A Northern Cheyenne tribal member, Kunkel draws from his own experiences as a designer and educator to help his class examine how art, design and design practices can impact communities and effect social change.

THE NATIO

NAL MALL

Home to monuments, memorials and marches, the National Mall is our most important public space. To Geography's Lisa Benton-Short, the Mall is also a symbol of the American story.

Lisa Benton-Short

The National Mall in Washington, D.C., has been called "America's front yard" and "a stage for democracy." By any name, the 146-acre park grounds, stretching more than two miles from the Lincoln Memorial to the United States Capitol, is our nation's premier public space. Each year, more than 25 million people from around the world visit the Mall to take in its memorials and museums. It's the place where we inaugurate presidents and commemorate people and events, where demonstrations like those led by Martin Luther King challenge us to reaffirm our constitution and our democratic ideals.

"The Mall tells the story of America," said **Lisa Benton-Short**, associate professor of geography and author of the book *The National Mall: No Ordinary Public Space*. "It's where we celebrate, protest and play. It's the most important public space in American civic life."

"The symbolism of the Mall makes an incredibly powerful statement about the American identity. It's a reflection of how we see ourselves as Americans—of who we are."

~Lisa Benton-Short

In her book, Benton-Short traces the history of the Mall from L'Enfant's original 1791 design to controversies like the design of Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial to the pressures of enhanced security following the 9-11 attacks. And with its most recent additions, including the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Benton-Short maintains that today's Mall honors a more diverse and inclusive American history.

"The symbolism of the Mall makes an incredibly powerful statement about the American identity," she said. "It's a reflection of how we see ourselves as Americans—of who we are."

The Power of Place

As a geography professor, Benton-Short's research on the Mall focuses on what she called "the power of place." Geographers look at "place" in the same way as historians view "time," she explained. "We look at the layers of changes, the developments of physical artifacts and the meaning and symbolism of places as they shift over time. I tend to think of places as having their own biography—and there's certainly no more fascinating biography to write than the Mall's."

For Benton-Short—as with countless others—a walk on the Mall is like a tour of American democracy. On the eastern end, the Capitol represents the physical practice of democracy. To the west, the Washington Monument signifies the ideals of equality, freedom and justice. Further west, the Lincoln Memorial stands for emancipation and equality.

But the Mall is also where crowds gather to protest injustices—from the 1913 Woman Suffrage Parade and King's 1963 March on Washington for Jobs to the Million Man March, the first Earth Day, the AIDS quilt display and the Women's March. "It's a place where people come to force a dialogue about what it means to be an American," noted Benton-Short.

Inside America's Front Yard

Perhaps the most undervalued role of the Mall is as a recreational location. "We tend to forget that it's not just a commemorative space with memorials and museum," said Benton-Short. "It's an active space—a place for celebrating and playing." While the Fourth of July celebration is the most distinctive example, daily recreational activities such as jogging, volleyball and biking are important threads of the Mall's fabric.

The Changing Mall

The Mall is far from a static monument. Until recently, many people didn't necessarily see their history reflected on the Mall—a blemish that recent additions have sought to correct. "Between, for example, the 2014 MLK memorial and the dedication of the African American Museum, we have now made space on the Mall—figuratively and literally—for people who have been ignored or neglected in the past," Benton-Short said. "It's a more inclusive space now."

Still, the Mall has been home to its fair share of controversies. The original plan for the Washington Monument, for example, was an obelisk surrounded by a Greek circular temple with statues of all the Founding Fathers. At first, Congress refused to fund its construction. When they reluctantly agreed—after it sat unfinished for decades during the pre- and post-Civil War period—they omitted the temple and statues. Even the Lincoln Memorial spurred a backlash. Illinois Representative Joseph Cannon vigorously opposed the memorial, calling the planned site "remote" and "malarial." He purportedly promised: "I'll never let a monument to Abraham Lincoln be erected in that...swamp." Cannon delayed the memorial's approval for more than a decade.

"There are really two kinds of controversies around monuments," Benton-Short said. "One is over the design. Does it speak to what people think it ought to say?" Maya Lin's stark design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was thought by critics to be overly focused on loss and sorrow. "People wondered if this was what we wanted to say about the war." The other source of controversy, she noted, is "location, location, location." Opponents of the World War II memorial, for example, argued its central location intruded on the space between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial.

In the aftermath of 9-11, the challenges the Mall faces today largely revolve around the need to fortify public spaces in the name of national security—but often at the expense of public access. "To me, there's no more public space at odds with being fortified than the National Mall. It stands for freedom and democracy, but we surround it with barriers and cameras and chain link fences. That really contrasts with its symbolic role in our society," Benton-Short said.

Despite the challenges and controversies, the Mall continues to catch our collective breadth in all its symmetrical beauty, symbolism and vastness of space. "There's nothing like the fireworks on the Mall to celebrate the Fourth of July or seeing the Korean War Veterans Memorial at night with snow falling on the ground," said Benton-Short. "But I also love just watching people throwing a Frisbee around the Mall. It really is a special place. And it belongs to all of us."

BATTLING TB'S RESURGENCE

Abby Pepin (left) with Associate Professor of Chemistry Cynthia Dowd

Once thought to be all but eradicated, tuberculosis has made a tragic come back. Luther Rice Fellow Abby Pepin is working with Chemistry's Cynthia Dowd to turn back the TB tide.

"The importance of what we are doing in this lab cannot be understated. Drug resistance is so rampant that we need to design new ways to treat these diseases."

~Abby Pepin

In the 1940s and '50s, the scientific community appeared to be winning its war against tuberculosis. In the wake of 19th century epidemics, newly created vaccines and effective drug treatments had the deadly chronic bacterial infection on the run. As infection rates dropped, the United Nations even predicted that TB would be eliminated worldwide by 2025.

But that prognosis proved tragically optimistic. As the disease became ever-more drug resistant, TB once again emerged as a global health crisis. Today, tuberculosis is one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide, infecting 10.4 million people in 2015 and killing 1.8 million, including 170,000 children.

What went wrong—and can science still turn back the TB tide? Those are among the questions senior chemistry major **Abby Pepin** explores inside Associate Professor of Chemistry **Cynthia Dowd**'s lab in the Science and Engineering Hall.

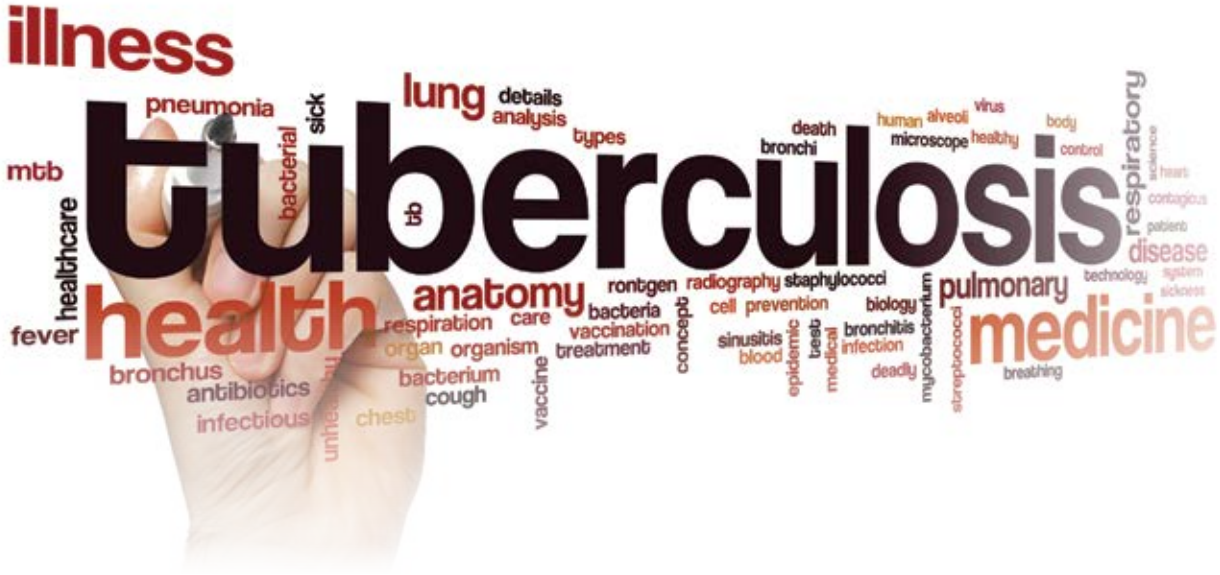
With a $2.6 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, Dowd's research focuses on developing novel compounds to fight the world's deadliest infectious diseases, including tuberculosis and malaria. Dowd and her team of student researchers —Pepin, four graduate students and a post-doctoral researcher—are investigating new avenues for blocking the chemical reactions that are crucial for tuberculosis and malaria's survival.

"Our goal is not only to find a way to treat resistant strains [of TB and malaria] but to more effectively treat the sensitive strains so that resistance doesn't happen as frequently," Dowd said.

As a Columbian College Luther Rice Undergraduate Research Fellow, Pepin's role involves examining ways to sidestep the resistance TB has built up to previous drugs by synthesizing a new compound that disrupts the disease cells. "The importance of what we are doing cannot be understated," she said. "Drug resistance is so rampant that we need to design new ways to treat these diseases. I'm so fortunate to be a part of Professor Dowd's team. Her guidance and knowledge really sets our research apart."

While TB-fighting antibiotics have existed for decades—and they cure 90 percent of the patients who receive them—the current treatment regimen for the disease is not adequate, according to Dowd. Patients must take multiple drugs daily for nearly a year, often under the direct supervision of a health care provider. "That means one thing in the United States, but it means a totally different thing in the middle of Cambodia or Indonesia where you can't get access to a health care provider every single day," Dowd said. No new drug has been approved for TB since the 1970s, forcing patients to rely on a heavy dose of antiquated medications that cause side effects like flu-like symptoms, painful hives and rashes. "Suffice it to say, the drugs we currently use for TB are old and are wanting in a lot of areas," Dowd said.

These same anti-TB medicines are also rapidly becoming ineffective against increasingly virulent drug-resistant strains of the disease. Two particularly bad forms of TB have emerged in the last few years—multidrug-resistant



tuberculosis (MDR-TB), which does not respond to the two most important anti-TB drugs, and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB), which does not respond to those two drugs plus a score of other anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without treatment options. Nearly half a million people developed some form of drug-resistant TB in 2015.

Pepin is assisting Dowd in research to target an enzyme known as DXR, which drives chemical reactions within both malaria and tuberculosis cells. DXR is critical for the survival of TB cells. They are searching for a compound that inhibits DXR to essentially block the enzyme's function inside the TB cell. Since the enzyme doesn't appear in people, shutting down DXR would theoretically cause no harm to human physiology.

Similar DXR-inhibiting experiments have shown some success in battling malaria. But TB presents more daunting challenges. TB cells sport a thick outer-coating that is difficult for drugs to penetrate. They also have proteins known as efflux pumps, which expel the drugs before they can do their job. "TB is a very evolved pathogen; it's much, much harder to kill than malaria," Dowd said. "Normal drugs like penicillin just don't work against TB."

"TB is a very evolved pathogen; it's much, much harder to kill than malaria. Normal drugs like penicillin just don't work against TB."

~Cynthia Dowd

Pepin's contribution—synthesizing a particular molecule that will play an integral role in the team's DXR-inhibiting research—has led to long nights in the lab and more than a few false starts. "It's incredibly frustrating when you go down a path with a compound that looks promising and suddenly it degrades on you and you have to go back to the starting line," she said. "I'm learning that, in the lab, things don't always work out on the first or the second or even the third try."

Pepin joined Dowd's team in 2015 after working as a research assistant for Assistant Professor of Biology **Mollie Manier**. She balances her work in Dowd's lab with a volunteer research project on prostate cancer at GW's Radiation Oncology Center.

"Science is like a sanctuary for me," she said. "It's a way to get my head out of the noise and chaos that can be swirling around sometimes and focus on a detailed, complex task. That may not sound like fun to a lot of people, but it's rewarding to me."

Islamic Studies' students from left, Kelly El-Yacoubi, Ali Mohamed, Halim Khoiri and Yi Lei

IN ISLAMIC STUDIES, A WORLD OF STUDENTS SHARE INSIGHTS

When **Halim Khoiri** announced that he was leaving his native Indonesia to pursue a master's degree in Islamic Studies at GW, his friends and family tried to talk him out of it. Why would he travel from Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population, to study his own religion in America? He already held a BA in philosophy and religion from Paramadina University in Jakarta. Why not complete an Islamic Studies degree from scholars who immersed themselves in Muslim life—if not at home, then perhaps in Egypt or Syria?

His answer was simple: Khoiri was searching for a broader perspective. While he had been raised with a deep connection to Islamic traditions and attended an Islamic boarding school from age 11 to 17, "Islam is where my passion lies, and I need to study it from many different sides," he said.

At GW, Khoiri found that he wasn't alone. Of the 18 students in the Columbian College Religion Department's 2016-2017 Islamic Studies program, nearly half came from countries outside of the United States—from Egypt and Iran to Malaysia, Turkey and China. In the four years since its inception, the program has seen growth in both size and scope, offering students the chance to step into diverse, internationally-influenced classrooms and share experiences with people from different religions and nationalities.

"The individuals in the program become resources themselves," said **Kelly El-Yacoubi**, a second-year student from Colorado. When, for example, the class discussed the state of Islamic feminism in Indonesia, Khoiri supplied first-hand knowledge. When the subject turned to the dearth of mosques in China, second-year student **Yi Lei** chimed in about conditions in her homeland.

"The individuals in the program become resources themselves. Everyone has something to contribute."

~Kelly El-Yacoubi

And students didn't shy away from debating current issues, including violence and extremism. "You can't paint Islam with one broad brush," said **Ali Mohamed**, MA '17, who left his home in Egypt to join the program. "You can't say Islam is violent or Islam is against America because there are a small number of black sheep who feel this way. In our classes, we had these diverse people who were working together. That's like the Islamic world and the rest of the world: We can work together."

DEEP CONNECTIONS

The Islamic Studies program developed as a collaboration between Religion Professors **Robert Eisen**, who is Jewish, and **Mohammad Faghfoory**, an Iranian-American Muslim scholar. Close friends and colleagues, the pair expanded their mutual interest in Islam and interfaith dialogue into a graduate level degree. "It shows what can happen when an Iranian Shi'ite Muslim and an American Jew get together," said Eisen, chair of the department. "We can have a fabulous and successful venture. Whatever you read in headlines, there's another side to the relationships between faiths."

The program was conceived as an interdisciplinary approach to teaching Islam as a religion, a civilization, a culture and a political force. "We didn't want it to present just one side—just religion, religion, religion," said Faghfoory, the program's director. "We are showing different branches of Islam and a variety of readings of the tradition within each branch, as well as the connection between religion, politics, sociology, economics."

For international students—some of whom plan to go on in fields likes public policy, international relations or national security—the program is providing a much deeper understanding of the Muslim faith. Despite an intensive Islamic education, Khoiri's Indonesian schools taught only Sunni Islam, omitting the minority Shi'ite perspective. "Although Shi'ite Islam is just about 20 percent of the Muslim population, they have a big influence on aspects of Islamic Studies like philosophy," he said. "That's an area of study that was closed to me back home."

For Lei, whose parents are economics professors in China, a degree in Islamic studies wasn't an option if she had studied at home. "Because of the political sensitivity of this topic, there aren't many universities [in China] that would actually offer something like this," she said.

For Mohamed, who earned an undergraduate degree in Islamic Studies and translation from Cairo's Al-Azhr University, the lure of studying in Washington was enticing. "I am interested in the interplay between religion and politics. There is no better place to study that than Washington, D.C.," he said. During his time at GW, Mohamed worked as a teaching assistant and interned at the nonprofit Arab Gulf States Institute. "In Egypt we think of Cairo as the center of the universe. We call it the 'mother of the planet.' But I'm learning that, if you get out of your comfort zone and explore the world, there's a lot out there."

"Most people have only heard of Islam in the context of the news and that's usually a negative portrayal," added El-Yacoubi, who converted to Islam at age 14 after spending her lunch periods reading books on the Muslim world in her Colorado high school library. "Islam has contributed so much to civilization, but it's hard to learn about Islam unless you seek it out."

For Lei, hearing the opinions of fellow students who actually practice Islam—voices she might never have heard in China—was as eye-opening as her classroom lessons. "They have lived it their whole lives," she said. "Who better to learn from?"

"I am interested in the interplay between religion and politics. There is no better place to study that than Washington, D.C."

~Ali Mohamed, MA '17

Isabelle Berger

WOMEN + MATH = OPPORTUNITIES

As a 6th grader, **Isabelle Berger**, BS '17, was convinced she hated math. When her middle school teacher used baseball batting averages to explain statistics, Berger's eyes glazed over with confusion. She brought home one poor homework grade after another. Finally, she confessed to her mother that it was simply no use. She just wasn't any good at math.

"Luckily, my mom wouldn't let me quit on myself," Berger recalled. "She told me that I wasn't bad at math—I was just bad at baseball."

By her junior year in high school, Berger was acing AP calculus courses and developing a love of math that would follow her through her undergraduate studies at Columbian College and lead to her board membership on the student-run GW Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM). She went on to graduate with a degree in mathematics and a research fellowship with the National Institutes of Health.

"All it took to get me started were a few words of encouragement and the right teachers," she said.

That's the exact message AWM and Columbian College's Math Department attempt to convey to young women who are considering a career in mathematics. With women persistently trailing men in both math degrees and STEM-related professional positions, students and faculty are trying to counter the long-held stereotype that science and math are typically male fields. From AWM networking events and study sessions to department outreach efforts, GW's mathematics community is engaged in finding a solution to the women and math equation and making the numbers add up.

"Our goal is to see more confident women in math, more role models for women in math and more opportunities for women in math—whether on a university level, in research or in the workforce," said **Maria Gualdani**, associate professor of mathematics and AWM faculty advisor. "I see many female math majors now who are extremely good and extremely hard-working. Most of all, they are stubborn and won't let anyone tell them what they cannot do."

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP

Researchers have long struggled to explain the dearth of women in the STEM workforce. A 2016 U.S. Commerce Department report sited factors like "a lack of female role models, gender stereotyping and less family-friendly flexibility in the STEM fields." While the last 30 years have seen an exponential growth in women's representation in scientific careers, the progress has been uneven across math-intensive fields. Women make up half of the total U.S. college-educated workforce, according to the Commerce Department, but hold only 29 percent of science and engineering jobs. And only 25 percent of those jobs represent computer and quantitative sciences positions.

The figures are similarly unbalanced in higher education Women earn more than half of all science and engineering bachelor's degrees, but they are concentrated in psychology, biology and social sciences, according to a 2016 National Science Board survey. Only 43 percent of mathematics BAs go to women. A Cornell University study revealed that, within 100 U.S. universities, as few as 9 percent of tenure-track positions in math-intensive fields were occupied by women. Female mathematics professors numbered just 7 percent.

"It's certainly an advancement compared to 20 or 30 years ago. But does this mean our work is done? Of course not," Gualdani said.

Three of GW's 19 math professors are women: Gualdani and Associate Professor **Svetlana Roudenko**, both of whom are National Science Foundation CAREER award recipients, and **Valentina Harizanov**, professor of mathematics and recipient of the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Prize for Scholarship. About 40 percent of GW's 100 math majors—and about an equal percentage of math minors—are women, according to Mathematics Professor and Department Chair **Murli Gupta**.

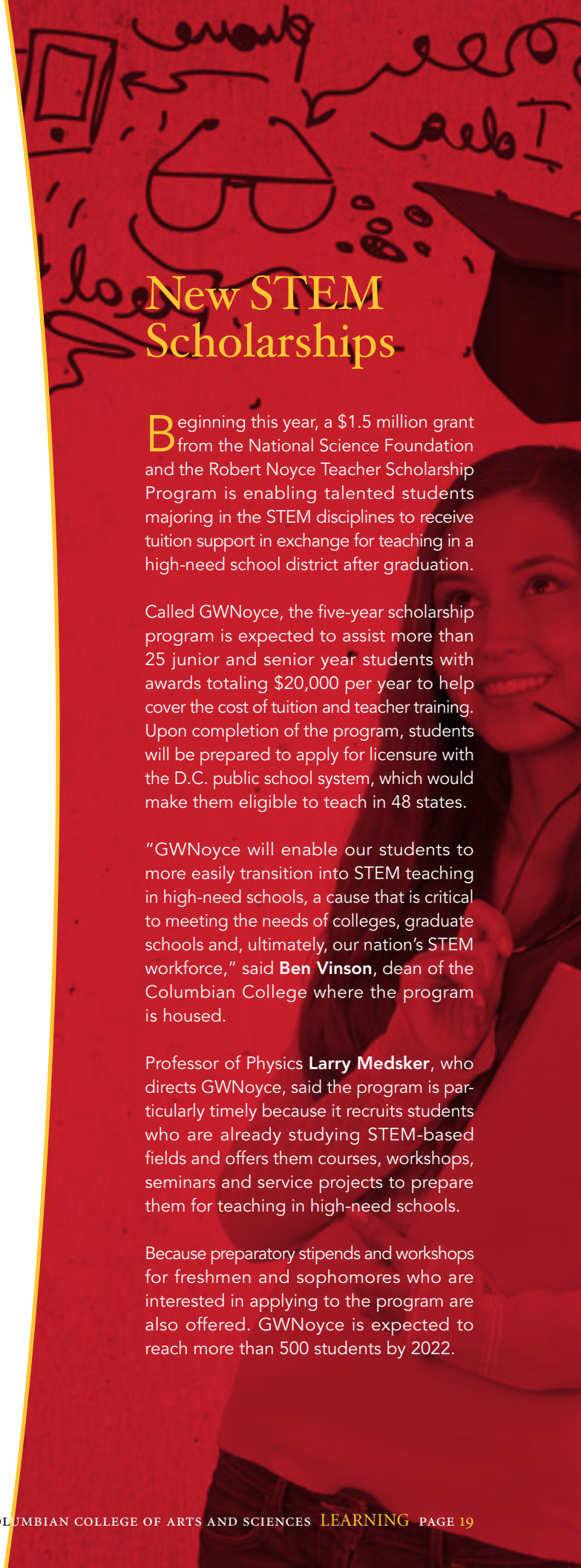
The department has launched several initiatives to attract female math majors, including establishing chapters of SIAM (Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics) and the Pi Mu Epsilon honor society. Since 1995, Gupta has overseen the GW Summer Program for Women in Mathematics, a five-week long retreat to help undergraduates cultivate math skills.

"We are committed to increasing the participation of women at all levels—from undergrads to grads to faculty," Gupta said.

Samantha Sadiv, BA '17, a math major and former AWM president, never doubted that she would pursue a math or science related career. "No one ever told me there was a stereotype of women being bad at math," said Sadiv who now works at a D.C. nonprofit accountancy firm. Through AWM, she strived to offer the same kind of inspiration and encouragement to her classmates. "There are a lot of women who are not deterred by people telling them they aren't supposed to be good at math," she said. "We see girls who are excelling at math and a lot of it has to do with their parents, their peers and their teachers pushing them to keep at it."

AWM, which has about 40 members, holds weekly study sessions to help students adjust to college-level math. It also hosts an annual student-alumni networking dinner, featuring a panel of GW math alumni now working in research, graduate school or math-related careers. "The goal is to facilitate a one-on-one conversation with alumni to give students an open honest insightful view of the opportunities that are available to them," Sadiv said. In 2017, alumni guests included **Marissa Wiener**, BA '14, a financial analyst at Geico; former AWM President **Katie Willard**, BA '16, a social media consultant; and **Kendall Moffett-Sklaroff**, BA '16, a data analyst at WIC, a federally-funded health and nutrition program for women, infants and children.

"When people hear 'math,' they think about math theory and proofs on the chalkboard," Moffett-Sklaroff later said. "But there are so many ways to apply math. You can be a stock trader or a game designer or an astronaut."



New STEM Scholarships

Beginning this year, a $1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation and the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program is enabling talented students majoring in the STEM disciplines to receive tuition support in exchange for teaching in a high-need school district after graduation.

Called GWNoyce, the five-year scholarship program is expected to assist more than 25 junior and senior year students with awards totaling $20,000 per year to help cover the cost of tuition and teacher training. Upon completion of the program, students will be prepared to apply for licensure with the D.C. public school system, which would make them eligible to teach in 48 states.

"GWNoyce will enable our students to more easily transition into STEM teaching in high-need schools, a cause that is critical to meeting the needs of colleges, graduate schools and, ultimately, our nation's STEM workforce," said **Ben Vinson**, dean of the Columbian College where the program is housed.

Professor of Physics **Larry Medsker**, who directs GWNoyce, said the program is particularly timely because it recruits students who are already studying STEM-based fields and offers them courses, workshops, seminars and service projects to prepare them for teaching in high-need schools.

Because preparatory stipends and workshops for freshmen and sophomores who are interested in applying to the program are also offered. GWNoyce is expected to reach more than 500 students by 2022.

Modern

ARCHITECTURE DRAWS BLUEPRINT FOR DEBATE

It's a face-off between east and west in the lively Dean's Seminar on Modern Architecture and Design—as in the architect I.M. Pei's modernist design of the East Building of the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art contrasted with John Russell Pope's neoclassical style of its West Building. And the debate over design and philosophy can get heated.

In one corner you'll find sociology major **Kimmie Krane** extolling the East's soaring atrium and rigorously geometrical design. "I'm mesmerized by its open space and its triangular shapes," she said. "In so many museums, you walk in and go right to the galleries. The East Building has a vastness that's really beautiful." But to Interior Architecture and Design (IAD) major **Jamie Oakley**, those avant-garde open spaces may be a little too vast. "I get lost walking around there," said Oakley, who is partial to the West Building's domed rotunda and traditional halls. "I'm a lot more attracted to the classical look," he noted.

Interlocking volumes, grid organization, movement, light, horizontality and transparency—these are some of the concepts explained, defended and even criticized in the freshman seminar taught by Associate Professor of Interior Architecture and Design **Stephanie Travis**. But before stepping into her classroom, many of her students had never heard of these terms—let alone felt confident enough to use them in a debate. "Before this class, those words weren't in my vocabulary," said **Jason Katz**, an urban development major. "I'd never looked twice at a building. Now I notice the design of the sprinkler systems."

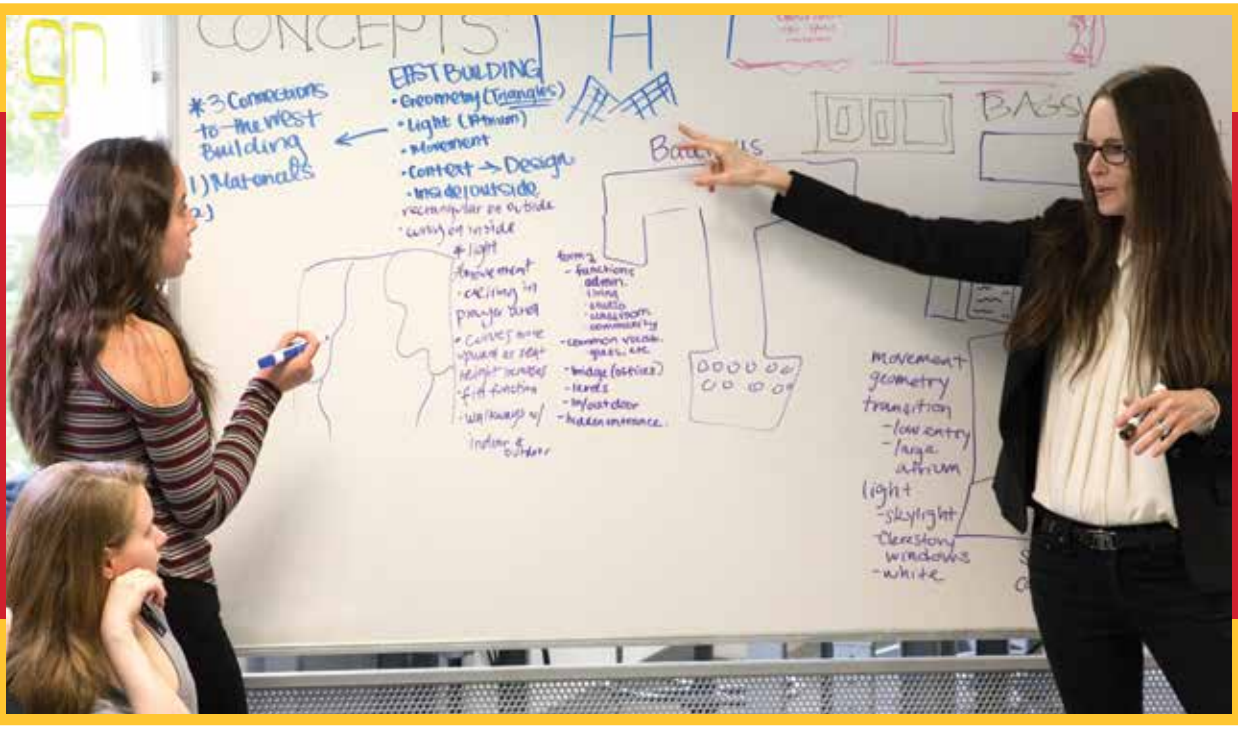
Sprinklers may not have been on Travis' mind when she created the course, which, like other Dean's Seminars, offers small classes on concentrated topics. But opening students' eyes to architecture is exactly what she was hoping for. From pre-meds and psychology majors to future architects and fine arts students, Travis' class serves as a model for a cross-disciplinary introduction to modern architecture and design through the context of key buildings of the 20th century.

"Architecture is all around us. We confront great buildings every day," Travis said. "I don't want my students to walk around oblivious to the buildings they pass. I want them to be able to identify the concepts they see and to understand and explain them."

FORM AND FUNCTION

Through participation-heavy lectures, classroom games and dynamic debates on topics like building heights and furniture knock-offs, Travis instills basic design concepts while providing a background in modern masters and their work. And the class forgoes slide shows for hands-on site visits to D.C. landmarks, including Philip Johnson's Kreeger Museum, Gordon Bunshaft's Hirshhorn and Pei's East Building.

Students are encouraged to look at each building like an architecture critic for *The Washington Post*. Travis asks them to go beyond a subjective opinion on whether they like or don't like a building and look deeper into aspects such as the



A Dean's Seminar taught by Stephanie Travis (right) introduces freshmen like Bailee Weisz (left) to architectural concepts.

"I don't want my students to walk around oblivious to the buildings they pass. I want them to be able to identify the concepts they see and to understand and explain them."

~Stephanie Travis

structure's form meeting its function. "Architects don't just design a building because they like it," Travis said. "There's an underlying concept to everything—how a building connects to nature, to a city grid, to local material. None of it is an accident. As Charles Eames said, 'Everything connects.' That is true of this course too!"

Political science major **Bailee Weisz** enrolled in the seminar as an adventure, a chance to explore a subject outside of her comfort zone. In the beginning, merely familiarizing herself with architectural terms was intimidating. "There was a lot of information on topics I'd never heard of, like symmetry and geometry and how you move through spaces." By the end of the semester, Weisz felt confident critiquing modernist icon Le Corbusier's austere designs, like his Marseille housing project Unité d'habitation.

Katz, who had barely noticed buildings before, now declares Phillip Johnson's Glass House a "masterpiece," but dismisses his Crystal Cathedral as "atrocious." The class, he said, "has made me more critical but not more judgmental."

Likewise, Travis isn't shy about expressing her own, sometimes controversial, architectural opinions during the seminar. "Frank Lloyd Wright is really not my favorite," she laughed. While she concedes that Wright, perhaps the world's best-known architect, is "a genius," she prefers, for example, the Hirshhorn's open cylinder and courtyard fountain. Her assessment may leave some scholars shaking their heads, but her seminar students learn that even a controversial claim can be defended.

"Whether or not they pursue the study of interior architecture and design, analyzing these designs and articulating what works and what doesn't is an exercise in critical thinking," she said. "That skill will make them stronger designers—or just stronger thinkers."

SCIENCE ON THE HIGH SEAS

On a 12-week journey aboard a tall ship in the South Pacific, students combined oceanography research with the rigors of seamanship.

The Robert C. Seamans, a 135-foot Brigantine ship on the South Pacific Ocean

At latitude 42 degrees South, longitude 165 degrees West—somewhere in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean, roughly 200 nautical miles east of New Zealand—**Lily Anna Segalman** got her sea legs. An environmental studies major, Segalman held steady to the rail of the tall ship, a 135-foot Brigantine named the *Robert C. Seamans*, as 20 foot swells sprayed her head to toe with salt water. For the first time since setting sail 10 days earlier, she stumbled across the wooden deck in 25 knot winds without getting seasick.

"I considered that a major victory," she laughed. "I wouldn't say I was a sailor yet. But it was a start."

Segalman was in the midst of a 12-week journey at sea. Along with 13 other students from 12 different schools—including GW's **Turi Abbott**, an international affairs major and environmental studies minor—she enlisted in the Sea Education Association's SEA Semester, a study abroad program that combines oceanography research with basic seamanship.

Segalman and her shipmates spent 37 days aboard the *Robert C. Seamans* on a 3,900-mile voyage through French Polynesia—virtually of all it without seeing land or another ship—before dropping anchor in Tahiti. Along the way, they conducted hands-on environmental research into the man-made dangers facing the ocean and sea life. And, by the end of their trip, Segalman, a professed landlubber, could stitch sails, tack through the wind and navigate the open ocean by charting the stars.

"When I set foot on that boat, I didn't know the difference between port and starboard," she said. "When we finally made land, I couldn't wait to get back out to sea."

SEA Semester students aboard the *Robert C. Seamans*, including GW's Lily Anna Segalman (second from left) and Turi Abbott (second from right)

Since 1971, SEA Semester has hosted more than 8,000 students traveling over a million miles on maritime missions. Students conduct scientific research on threats to the health and sustainability of the world's oceans—such as climate change, marine pollution, habitat loss and overfishing—while also learning all the duties of a ship's crew.

Neither Segalman nor Abbott had much sea experience, but both had a passion for environmental studies. At GW, Segalman worked with Assistant Professor of Biology **Keryn Gedan** on measuring the impact of rising sea levels on the Chesapeake Bay tidal marshes. SEA Semester gave her the opportunity to use the entire South Pacific as her lab.

"I thought this was a once-in-lifetime experience to do what only oceanographers get to do," Segalman said, noting that, while the ocean covers three-quarters of the earth, 90 percent remains largely unexplored. "I thought the best way to learn what was going on out there was to see it first-hand."

SETTING SAIL

After a training and study program at SEA's oceanographic research center in Woods Hole, Mass., the crew set sail. The first leg of the journey focused on turning student-scientists into sailors. In addition to taking classes from faculty on board, the students worked rotating shifts to maintain all aspects of the boat. They monitored the gusty winds, manned the engine room and towed tuna nets—all while marveling at the diversity of marine life surrounding them, from dolphins swimming among bioluminescent plankton to pyrosomes, inch-long organisms that glow through the water in giant tubular colonies.

For her research project, Segalman tested the ocean water for evidence of micro-plastics, remnants of which were found in virtually every sample. "It's astounding that we found so much plastic, essentially a huge trash heap, in the middle of the South Pacific," she said. Her findings point to the density of plastic polluting the world's oceans and the sheer volume of industrial chemicals that find their way to even the most remote corners of the world. "There's not much out here. There aren't many other humans or vessels or development. That means this plastic is traveling throughout the entire ocean to get here."

When the crew made landfall in Pape'ete, Tahiti, the ground felt unsteady to Segalman. The rush of sensations, from dodging pedestrians on sidewalks to stomaching the mulch-like smell of fresh dirt, were as overwhelming as the saltwater waves weeks before. "When you've been off-land for so long, it's hard to manage all of the sights and smells and movements that suddenly rush at you," Abbott said.

Upon her return to campus, Segalman said that while she isn't ready to trade in her lab coat for a scuba suit, she jokingly wondered whether the GW Sailing Team had room for an environmentalist who can chart their global positioning with sextants and celestial bodies. And she fully appreciated her incredible ocean journey. "I took a lot of memories and experiences off that boat that will stay with me for a lifetime—whether that's a lifetime on land or at sea."


Jennifer Curt

STUDENT'S RECOVERY STEERS PEERS ON SOBER TRACK

On some days, Columbian College graduate student **Jennifer Curt** felt as if she could barely check her phone without finding a text or email from another student looking for help. It could be a freshman with a drinking problem who hadn't touched a beer all semester but felt the familiar temptations as her dormmates prepared for a night of partying. Or maybe it was a student coping with the drowsy side effects of depression medication that had him sleeping through classes. The messages never seemed to stop. Students dealing with a variety of personal issues—eating disorders, anxiety, self-harm—all looking for someone to talk to. And Curt understood—because she had been there herself.

"I see myself in a mentorship role," said Curt, who has been in recovery from battles with alcoholism and an eating disorder since 2012. "I try to make myself available if only to say, 'I can relate. I've felt that way too.'"

Curt, a five-year student who earned her BA in women's studies in May while simultaneously working toward her master's in public policy, has left her mark on campus and on other students' lives. As a past president of Students for Recovery (SFR), the first student-run recovery group in D.C., she's been a tireless advocate of peer-to-peer support for those living with substance use and mental health issues.

In her role at SFR, Curt was among the student leaders who spearheaded the establishment of Recovery Day, an annual on-campus gathering of experts, legislators and advocates to strategize university and legislative support. She also helped found the Serenity Shack, a 22nd Street townhouse that serves as a meeting spot and safe space for recovering students. And she aligned SFR with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, working closely with alumna **Jacqueline Hackett**, BA '08, MPP '10, who was deputy director of the policy group under the Obama administration. With Hackett, Curt worked on projects that included a Facebook live interview that reached 43,000 viewers.

"Jenny is warm, professional and very impressive, the kind of student that makes you proud to have a GW diploma," Hackett said.

Still, Curt's most profound achievement may simply be picking up the phone when a fellow student in crisis calls. "Recovery has enabled me to achieve a lot of things," she said, "but at the end of the day what matters most is having an impact on people's live."

Curt was a star high school student with a 4.0 grade point average and a mantle lined with sports trophies. "My story doesn't align with the typical image of an alcoholic," she said. "My family was normal. My parents never worried about me. I was a great kid."

But alone in her room at night, Curt felt overwhelmed and depressed. An eating disorder steadily grew into a drinking problem and self-harm cutting. After a suicide attempt and a bipolar disorder diagnosis, Curt and her parents sought help. "The fact that I got into recovery was a small miracle. I was so young, I had so many opportunities to keep doing what I was doing," she said.

Starting college sober presented its own challenges, including a separation from her support network and the temptations of life away from home. "A college campus can be a recovery-hostile environment," Curt said. "It is a difficult place to be sober and substance free."

Curt fully expected to sacrifice friendships and traditional student events, but after attending her first SFR meeting in 2013, the prospect of living a richer college life opened up to her. SFR provides peer-to-peer support, offering students an additional resource beyond the professional counseling and treatment provided by the Colonial Health Center. With SFR's aid, Curt "bridged the gap" between juggling sobriety and schoolwork without feeling isolated from other students. She soon threw herself into SFR volunteerism, organizing events and eventually serving as president.

"Jenny took the principles she learned in recovery and applied them to academics, her professional career and to all her personal relationships she formed at and away from GW," said SFR founder **Timothy Rabolt**, BA '15. "She understands self-care, but also goes above and beyond to help others—whether they're in recovery or not."

Curt is exploring strategies to form a nonprofit that advocates for sober student housing. "I want to help these students get to a place where they feel like they can do anything they want with their lives," she said. "Recovery has shown me that I have so much to pursue. That's what I want to share with them."

HELPING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE FIND THEIR VOICE

Speech-language pathology graduate student Alyssa Giegerich (left) with Professor Adrienne B. Hancock

When 15-year-old Lisa (not her real name) walked into the GW Speech and Hearing Center, she looked and acted just like most other 9th grade girls. But there was one trait she wanted to change: her voice.

"I want to sound more like a girl," she told **Adrienne B. Hancock**, associate professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science and a certified speech-language pathologist. Like many other transgender people, Lisa saw her voice as an obstacle to portraying her gender identity. But, while sounding feminine was important, Lisa didn't want to conform to a stereotype of a young female voice—and Hancock let those wishes guide the direction of treatment.

"I listened to Lisa's need to express her power and confidence as a young woman," said Hancock, who has spearheaded clinical advances in transgender voice and communication since arriving at GW in 2005. "She reminded me that cultural competence is a necessary compliment to clinical competence."

The Speech and Hearing Center, part of Columbian College's Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, not only provides a full range of communicative services to the community, it also serves as a training ground for graduate students entering the field of speech-language pathology. When helping transgender people with voice modification, student clinicians incorporate voice exercises and breathing techniques to loosen vocal cords and relax neck muscles. Using software applications, they measure changes in signals listeners perceive as pitch, tone and quality of voice. The entire process typically takes six months to a year of regular practice, although some people don't see results for two to three years.

"It definitely requires a lot of practice and there are a lot of ups and downs, but the [clients] we work with at the clinic are very motivated to put in the time and effort," said graduate student **Alyssa Giegerich**. "Helping them get there can be both incredibly frustrating and incredibly exhilarating."

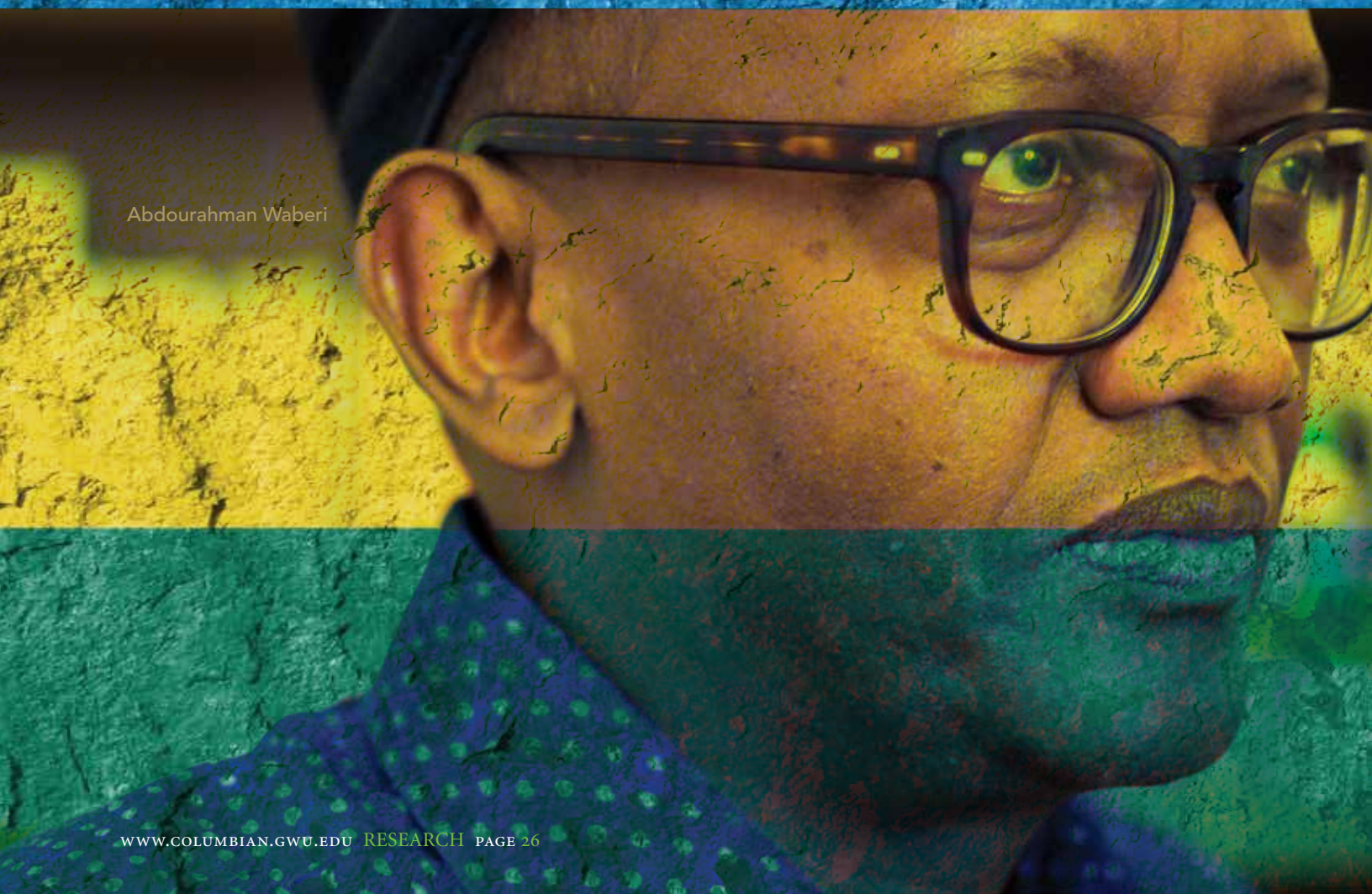
When working with transgender clients, Hancock stresses to students that, in addition to helping them overcome physiological challenges, their job is to be mindful of personal needs. Some, like Lisa, have a clear idea of how they want to sound—even if it doesn't conform to society's expectations. Others have strong emotional ties to their original voice, even as they voluntarily choose to change it. "When they lose their old voice, they lose their old identity, and often they need to mourn that loss," Hancock said. "Fortunately, they can celebrate this new identity when their voice finally matches their authentic selves."

But how do you train a voice to align with a gender that is different from the one assigned at birth? It's a long and effort-intensive process, one that's particularly difficult for males transitioning to females. Most transgender men—people assigned the female sex at birth but identifying as male—can develop deeper voices by taking testosterone. But for transgender women, estrogen hormone treatment has little to no effect on the voice. Transwomen like Lisa, and 10 to 30 percent of transgender men, rely heavily on voice therapy with speech-language pathologists.

By the end of a successful round of therapy—whether or not the clients have met their original expectations—more than just a person's voice has changed. When comparing pre- and post-therapy videos, Hancock and student clinicians often observe more lively facial expressions and confident body language.

"You might think that the voice is such a little part of everything going on in their lives as a result of gender transition," said Hancock. "But … for a lot of our clients, having a voice that aligns with their gender identity is life-giving."

Voices of Genocide Echo From



Abdourahman Waberi

Rwanda

French Professor Abdourahman Waberi, an acclaimed author and poet, traveled to Rwanda to speak to both the survivors of the nation's genocide and its perpetrators. Two decades later, the stories he heard continue to haunt his writing and his life.

In 1998, **Abdourahman Waberi**, then a 32-year-old novelist and poet, embarked on a mission to Rwanda with 10 African authors and filmmakers. It was just four years after the devastating genocide in which thousands of the country's Hutu ethnic majority unleashed unspeakable violence, mostly on the Tutsi minority. In only 100 days, nearly one million people perished.

Waberi, now an assistant professor of French and Francophone literature at Columbian College, went to Rwanda in part to open the eyes of the international community, but mostly to listen to witnesses of the massacre. A native of Djibouti, Waberi felt compelled "to mourn with the Rwandan people, to show them compassion and solidarity," he said. He visited traumatized survivors in their homes, as well as unapologetic perpetrators in their prison cells.

When Waberi sat down to piece through the harrowing notes he'd collected, he was reminded of German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno's dictum on "the impossibility of writing about Auschwitz." How do you tell the story of an atrocity, Waberi asked himself, without trivializing peoples' pain?

"Language remains inadequate in accounting for the world and all its turpitudes, words can never be more than unstable crutches," Waberi said. "And yet, if we want to hold on to a glimmer of hope in the world, the only miraculous weapons we have at our disposal are these same clumsy supports."

After another mission to Rwanda in 1999, Waberi was ready to begin his book *Harvest of Skulls*, a genre-bending mix of fiction, journalism and poetry that he originally wrote in 2000 but was released in English for the first time in 2016. Despite the passage of time, the voices of the people he met—from grief-stricken mothers to machete-toting teenagers—still resonant in his life and his work. "My trips had a huge impact on me, both artistically and emotionally," Waberi said. "They made me a better man and a better writer."

A Voice to Pain and Struggle

Even before traveling to Rwanda, Waberi's writing was interwoven with Africa and his native Djibouti, a tiny nation nestled in the Horn of Africa between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. He grew up poor in a "shantytown." Few people in his village were literate. By age 10, Waberi was paid in candy to draft neighbors' love letters and job applications. He was just 12 when Djibouti declared its independence from France in 1977.

Critical of Djibouti's authoritarian regime—President Ismail Omar Guelleh has been cited by Human Rights Watch for abuses such as denying freedom of speech and suppressing political opposition—Waberi considers himself an exile from his own country. He left in 1985 to study in France and hasn't returned since 2007. Not all of his books are readily available in Djibouti and he worries that if he enters the country to see his mother, he might be jailed for his outspokenness. Still, Waberi felt a literary obligation to write about his homeland. His novels like *Transit* and *Passage of Tears* explore his personal feelings of displacement. "My books are filled with returns and departures," he said.

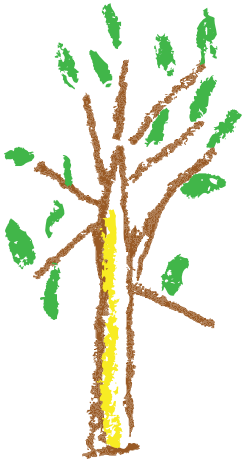
Waberi had completed a trio of novels about Djibouti when he first traveled to Rwanda with the team of African artists. For two months, he "immersed, shared and mourned" with Rwandans who were willing to talk about the horrors they'd seen. Not everyone was forthcoming. For many, the wounds were too fresh. Others challenged Waberi. "They said to me: 'Now you want to write my story? Where were you four years ago?'"

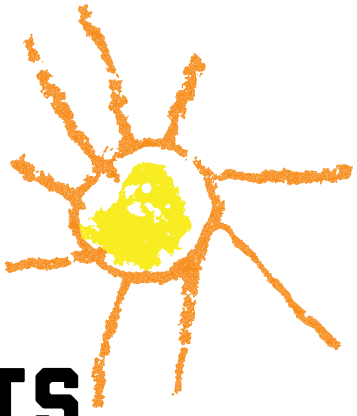
In *Harvest of Skulls,* Waberi set out to represent a full portrait of the genocide, capturing the stories of the victims alongside the murderers—"lightly fictionalizing" his real life encounters. In one chapter, he described an elderly widowed woman who named her dog Minuar, after the French name for the United Nations peacekeeping mission that she said "failed to protect us." The dog "fattened up on human flesh during the genocide," Waberi writes, even feasting on the bodies of slaughtered family members. At Rilima prison, Waberi spoke to genocidaires ("those who commit genocide") who justified their killings as acts of war. "We found them to be accusatory and punctilious," he recalled. "They were determined, assured in their position and didn't sound the slightest bit penitent."

Since leaving Rwanda, Waberi has received numerous awards and honors. In 2005, he was chosen one of the "50 Writers of the Future" by the French literary magazine *Lire*. In 2017, he received the prestigious "Chevalier" Order of Arts and Letter Medal from the French Culture Minister. His writing has been translated into 10 languages. *Harvest of Skulls* is his fifth book to appear in English. His most recent works—a novel about writer and activist Gil Scot Heron and a new volume of poetry—will be translated in 2018.

Since coming to Columbian College in 2013 to teach Francophone literature, Waberi's classroom has been a forum for discussions relating to philosophy and the global view. "I have had the privilege of crisscrossing the world and sharing my words, thoughts and emotions with the amazing students of this fabulous institution," he said. He is encouraged by the recent emergence of African novelists—from Nigeria's Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (author of *Americanah*) and Chigozie Obioma (*The Fisherman*) to Ethiopia's Dinaw Mengestu (*All Our Names*)—and applauds what he predicts is a shift in the epicenter of the literary world. "Maybe the next great novel isn't coming from Vienna, Venice or Valencia, but from Nairobi, Lagos or Dakar," he said.

Still, the legacy of Rwanda weighs on him. Looking back, he continues to worry that his writing didn't do justice to the emotional gravity of the tragedy. "It's not only an issue of artistic failure. It's also something you cannot overcome psychologically," he said. But he's heartened by Rwandan writers and artists who have since produced their own works about the dark era in their country's history. "Maybe what I did was only to put down a first layer of ink, but that first layer may have given tools to Rwandans to talk about these events."





NIH GRANT TARGETS ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS TO CHILDREN

Funded by a $3.2 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Professor of Psychology **Jody Ganiban** is leading GW's pediatric cohort of researchers charged with investigating how exposure to a range of environmental factors in early development influences the health of children and adolescents. Her work is part of a seven-year, $157 million NIH initiative to investigate how exposure to a range of environmental factors in early development influences childhood health. The massive multi-cohort initiative, labeled ECHO (Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes), is examining these influences from conception through early adolescence.

During this first phase of the project, Ganiban and her cohort are drawing on a wealth of collected data from an earlier adoption study of birth parents, adoptive parents and adopted children and siblings that examines how heredity, prenatal environment and rearing environment—including family, peer and other relationships—affect a child's adjustment. The data includes measurements of family interactions, biological markers and medical records from birth parents and the adopted child.

"The work of our cohort will include genetically related and unrelated siblings from across the United States, as well as some sibling pairs who are living together in the same family and others who are being raised in different families," Ganiban said. "Comparing the health and environments of biological siblings who are being raised apart will enable us to understand how different settings affect children who may share the same genetic or biological risks. Conversely, including genetically unrelated siblings being raised in the same home will enable us to understand how the same environment affects the health of children with very different genetic or biological risks."

At the family level, according to Ganiban, her cohort's research will shed new light on which specific aspects of the home environment—diet, sleep routines, conflict, screen time and family relationships—can maximize or undermine health outcomes for individual children. At the same time, the team's work may provide information about the broader impacts of environmental toxins and socioeconomic disparities on adolescent health.

During the second phase of the project, all members of ECHO consortium will spend five years collecting new behavioral and biological data as well as information about environmental stress and toxins. They will also conduct new analyses that encompass all of the ECHO pediatric cohorts, focusing on the impact of early social adversity on the emergence of biological health risks as early as the prenatal period. In addition, the interplay between genetic and biological risks with environmental stress and toxin exposures across childhood will be examined.

"When all the study samples are combined, the entire ECHO consortium will provide a rich data set for the identification of the specific mechanisms and processes that lead to health problems for children living in diverse environments and who have different types of risk factors," Ganiban said. "We hope that our data, combined with other ECHO-funded projects, will lead to improved prevention efforts to minimize health problems and promote healthy development."

The ECHO grant extends Ganiban's ongoing work on genetic and environmental factors that contribute to the development of childhood obesity.

Major New Research Grants

In addition to grants awarded to **Jody Ganiban** and **Larry Medsker** (see story, page 19), the following Columbian College faculty were recent recipients of grants of $200,000 and above:

Sarah Calabrese (psychology): $291,458 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/National Institutes of Health (NIH) to examine interventions that promote PrEP (an HIV prevention method) awareness among providers.

James M. Clark (biology): $279,868 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study Triassic-Jurassic fossils and the origins of the crocodilian skull.

Evangeline J. Downie (physics): $420,000 from NSF for her experiments revealing nucleon structure and dynamics through muon and photon scattering.

Gerald Feldman (physics): $580,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy to study high-intensity Gamma ray sources.

Helmut Haberzettl (physics): $200,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy to analyze hadronic and electromagnetic interactions.

Arnaud Martin (biology): $312,000 from NSF to study the regulatory basis of butterfly wing pattern evolution.

Shannon McFarlin (anthropology): $394,000 from NSF to unlock the hard tissue record of baboon adaptability in response to environmental change in the Amboseli basin of Kenya.

John H. Miller (chemistry): $333,000 from NSF to research hyperspectral extinction and emission spectroscopy of nascent soot for insights into electronic structure and morphology.

Peter Nemes (chemistry): $1,890,000 from NIH to study single-cell metabolomics and proteomics as the "missing link" to understanding vertebrate embryonic patterning; $650,000 from the Biology Directorate as a recipient of the National Science Foundation Career Award.

Weiqun Peng (physics): $581,487 from NIH to explore the proteins Tcf1/Lef1 and beta-catenin in follicular helper T-cells.

Xiangyun Qiu (physics): $397,093 from NSF to examine elucidating chromatin, a highly dynamic nucleoprotein complex of DNA and proteins that controls DNA-dependent processes.

Mark Reeves (physics): $216,389 from NSF to study community sourcing introductory physics for the life sciences.

Xiaofeng Ren (mathematics): $283,000 from NSF to reconstruct morphological phases from nonlocal geometric systems.

Frank Sesno (media and public affairs): $200,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for The Media and Security Project.

Amy E. Zanne (biology): $539,000 from NSF to research tropical deadwood carbon fluxes and improving carbon models by incorporating termites and microbes.

Maria Cecilia Zea (psychology): $594,827 from the National Institute of Mental Health to launch a webnovela-based intervention program to promote HIV testing among at-risk Colombian men.

HOLIDAY DEPRESSION IS MORE THAN THE BLUES

From stress and anxiety to depressive disorders, seasonal sadness is hard to define—and even harder to spot.

Amid the family gatherings, parties and gift-giving, the holiday season overflows with joy and good cheer—or does it? Many people feel out of step with ruddy-cheeked revelers. While holiday depression is hard to define—and, as a psychological phenomenon, may not actually exist—experts caution not to dismiss it as merely a case of the blues. Significant psychological issues can be tied to the holiday season, ranging from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) to heightened stress to intense feelings of sadness among people dealing with loss.

"A lot of people experience the holidays as a stressful time, and we know that stressful events tend to trigger depression and sadness," said **James Sexton**, assistant professor of professional psychology. "So, to that extent, holiday depression is very real."

Sexton and others emphasize the importance of recognizing the symptoms of seasonal depression and treating them like one would any illness. Euphemisms like the "holiday blues" diminishes the real difficulties people face as the calendar turns to fall, making it harder for sufferers to spot the signs of depression and for health care professionals to diagnose and treat it.

"Everyone has the blues," said Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology **Sherry Molock**. "But the way you may be feeling—fatigued, withdrawing from things you find pleasurable, trouble sleeping or concentrating, not having the energy to engage in conversation—that's not normal. That's not just having a bad day."

From a research standpoint, there are scant studies supporting the idea that the incidence of depression is higher around the holidays, according to Professor of Psychology **George Howe**. He even suggested the opposite may be true. "The findings seem to lean towards the holidays as a time when people generally feel better," he said. In fact, people often feel worse once the holidays are over.

Some depressive conditions that seem to relate to the holidays may actually be caused by other factors, like the recent loss of a loved one or a job. Likewise, SAD, a recurrent depressive state-of-mind triggered by changing seasons, is sometimes mistakenly attributed to holiday depression because it occurs at the same time of year. Many of those with SAD often develop depression symptoms during the fall that they continue to experience throughout the winter. Most people stop having them during the spring and summer, but the pattern re-occurs the following year. "It's not the holidays per se that are the source of depression," Molock said. "It just so happens that Thanksgiving and Hanukkah and Christmas all coincide with the time when most people are affected by SAD."

EASING EXPECTATIONS

But even for people who have not experienced loss or a disorder like SAD, holiday pressures can magnify stress and anxiety—particularly when everyone else seems to be having a great time.

"The holidays are portrayed in the media and held out socially as times that are happy and easy and should come naturally to all of us," said Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology **Richard Ruth**. "For some people the holidays are truly a wonderful time. For others, it's more a matter of finding a way to get through them." Ruth advocates keeping expectations modest and easing the self-imposed burden of trying to construct a TV-perfect holiday.

Facebook and the steady stream of social media merrymakers around the holidays can worsen a feeling of exclusion, particularly for individuals with a fear of rejection and abandonment—also known as relational depression. Sexton suggests stepping away from Facebook and setting up prescribed times to be with people, whether by phone, Skype or in person.

And don't be afraid to forgo the traditional holiday routine, especially if it stirs up family conflict. "It's OK to design a holiday in a way that is satisfying for you," said Ruth. "Not all of our holidays have to look alike." Some alternative holiday celebrations include volunteering at a homeless shelter, participating in a community event over family dinner or simply spending an afternoon at the movies with a like-minded friend.

In Hunt for Zika Vaccine, Is Tiny Fruit Fly the Missing Link?

Associate Professor of Molecular Biology Ioannis Eleftherianos (right) with chemistry major Nate Bachtel

Its scientific name is *Drosophila melanogaster*, but it is best known as the common fruit fly—the red-eyed, three-millimeter micro-pest that spoils summer picnics. This seemingly insignificant insect is actually one of the most valuable organisms in biological research. It has been studied extensively for more than a century and is the subject of at least 100,000 scientific papers. *Drosophila* researchers have won four Nobel Prizes while scientists have used the fruit fly to test Darwin's evolutionary theories, develop new cancer drugs and understand diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Now, the humble fruit fly is under the microscope once again, this time as the key to combating one of the most infamous diseases of our time: the Zika virus. Backed by funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Associate Professor of Molecular Biology **Ioannis Eleftherianos** and a team of student researchers are using *Drosophila* as a model to study the virus' transmission mechanisms and determine whether a Zika-infected host can devise a genetic defense. It's the first step in finding a vaccine to thwart the epidemic that has swept through more than 50 countries.

"There are so many things we don't know about Zika. And the fruit fly is a very handy little insect for answering questions," Eleftherianos said.

The fruit fly has long been prized as a research organism because of its practicality. *Drosophila* is tiny, has a short life cycle of just two weeks and is easy to maintain in large numbers. It became even more valuable in 2000 when its genome was completely sequenced. For scientists like Eleftherianos, having a complete *Drosophila* genetic map at their fingertips provides a blueprint for manipulating the fly's physiology in response to pathogens like viruses and bacteria.

Until recently, Zika was a little known, ultra-rare virus. Fewer than 15 cases had been described in the scientific literature. It was believed to be so mild that researchers showed almost no urgency in identifying drug candidates or creating a vaccine. First isolated in 1947, the mosquito-transmitted infection—which is related to dengue, yellow fever and West Nile virus—was known to occur in Africa and Southeast Asia. Zika did not begin spreading widely in the Western Hemisphere until as late as 2015.

Scientists still have more questions than answers about Zika—including how it infects human hosts—and the fruit fly may provide the perfect model to test potential Zika theories, Eleftherianos said. Its immune system bears a resemblance to humans, and 60 to 75 percent of human disease genes share equivalents in the flies. Eleftherianos also sees promising parallels between *Drosophila* and Zika-carrying mosquitoes. Both belong to the same insect order, *Diptera*, and share similar physiological attributes and genetic information.

Perhaps most significantly, *Drosophila* is associated with microcephaly, a rare birth defect linked to Zika. Babies born with microcephaly have unusually small heads and are often stricken with severe brain damage. Little is understood about why Zika causes microcephaly and how the virus halts brain development. Eleftherianos mimics microcephaly within fruit flies, creating a living laboratory for studying and manipulating genes to combat the disorder. "Understanding microcephaly in the fruit fly is a bridge to understanding it in humans," he explained.

As part of the NIH-funded project—a $130,000 supplemental award to an already existing five-year $1.3 million general research grant—Eleftherianos and his team of post-doctoral, graduate and undergraduate students will also to travel to Brazil to collaborate with a research institute studying host-pathogen interactions in mosquitoes. "There are challenges ahead of us," he said, "but *Drosophila* is up to the task."

Mind Games:
Can We Really Shape Our Brains?


Tadeusz Zawidzki

Put a group of strangers in a social setting—a restaurant, for example, or an office—and the results are likely to be, well, unremarkable. Dinners will be ordered, conversations will ensue and decorum will be maintained. That is, if those strangers happen to be human.

Unlike any other primate, humans are extraordinarily good at getting along. Our ability to cooperate—to build and sustain large communities and institutions—may not seem like a particularly unique skill. But, as evolutionary scientists agree, it's actually a trait that distinguishes us as a species and accounts for everything from pre-school children playing in groups to the fabric of society holding civilization together.

"Even if we are in an unfamiliar setting or surrounded by people we don't know, we are still able to interact and behave in ways that fit societal norms," said Associate Professor of Philosophy **Tadeusz W. Zawidzki**, chair of the Department Philosophy and co-director of the interdisciplinary GW Mind-Brain Institute. "Believe me, if you put a bunch of unfamiliar chimps together in a closed space, you'd have a blood bath on your hands."

MINDSHAPING V. MINDREADING

How exactly our cooperative instincts work has long been a puzzle of human evolution. However, Zawidzki believes he has found an answer. His research points to an idea that pits two psychological and philosophical principles against each other: mindreading versus mindshaping.

The traditional theory of how human coordination and cooperation evolved relies on mindreading—essentially the notion that we are experts at observing human behavior and inferring thoughts, desires and mental states. According to that theory, we are such good mindreaders that we can accurately predict how another person will react in most situations.

Zawidzki rejects this widely-accepted concept. To him, mindreading leaves too many unanswered questions: How do we pick up on the thoughts of total strangers? How can we analyze mindreading clues so precisely that we can anticipate another's actions within split seconds?

Zawidzki offers an alternative explanation: Maybe, he suggests, we aren't particularly insightful mindreaders. "Maybe what we are really good at is shaping ourselves in ways that makes us easier to predict."

This concept of mindshaping, unlike mindreading, hinges on learned behavior and societal interactions rather than on an innate "theory of mind," Zawidzki explained. In mindshaping, humans train themselves to act in familiar ways and thereby make their behavior predictable, leading to better coordination within groups and between individuals who have been shaped in similar ways. "What we expect other people to do is pretty much exactly what they are going to do because we have been socialized to act that way," Zawidzki said.

Mindshaping may well explain why certain biases like racial stereotypes can be deeply ingrained in our beliefs, Zawidzki noted. Likewise, our instinctual need to follow social models can lead to unhealthy and even destructive behavior. When, for example, society promotes an absurdly unrealistic body image through air-brushed models in fashion magazines, Zawidzki says it's no surprise that teenagers might develop eating disorders to conform to an unattainable ideal. Similarly, a college student's obsession with achievement—from landing the best internship to excelling at sports and scoring all A's—can be attributed to "a desire to shape oneself to become a member in good standing of one's community," Zawidzki said. "It's a fundamental human drive, as powerful as a bird's drive to build a nest or a beaver's drive to build a dam."

Zawidzki hopes that linking psychological conditions to human mindshaping practices may promote alternative therapeutic approaches. "Rather than dismissing certain psychological problems as product of bad brain chemistry and prescribing a pharmacological intervention, we may be more willing to see them as societal issues," he said.

MALE CHIMPS CAN BE GOOD DADS

Despite a reputation for being highly promiscuous in the ape world, male chimpanzees can be dutiful fathers, often spending time grooming and caring for their offspring, according to a study led by Assistant Professor of Anthropology **Carson Murray** and postdoctoral paleobiologist **Margaret Stanton**. Their research is significant because past studies have questioned whether the male chimps could even recognize their offspring.

"As anthropologists, we want to understand what patterns could have existed early in human evolution that help explain how human behavior evolved," Murray said. "This research suggests that males may sometimes prioritize relationships with their offspring rather than with potential mates. For a species without pair-bonds, where it was assumed fathers didn't know which infants were their own, this is an important finding."

Murray's team analyzed more than 25 years of behavioral data from the Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania and the Jane Goodall Institute. They examined patterns of 17 father chimpanzees and 49 mother-infant pairs to see if the males could recognize their offspring and if the male's behavior was different around them.

The data revealed that, while males associated with the mothers of their offspring early in infancy and interacted with their infants more than expected, males spending time with nursing mothers did not increase the likelihood that they would be the father of that mother's next infant. That finding supports the "paternal effort hypothesis," in which males associate more with mothers in order to protect their offspring, rather than curry favor with the female. The research contributes to the broader anthropological question of why human fathers invest so much in offspring.

"Our findings are not only further evidence that chimpanzee fathers recognize their offspring, but also that fathers behave differently around their offspring," Stanton said.

While the study is an important piece of research, it does not answer the question of how human paternal behavior evolved, according to the researchers. The paper, "Chimpanzee Fathers Bias Their Behavior Toward Their Offspring," was published in the *Royal Society Open Science*.

IMMIGRANT SAGA SPANS CENTURIES OF DREAMS

In his book City of Dreams, *Tyler Anbinder reveals how—regardless of race, religion or nationality—generations of immigrants share a universal story.*

In the last 15 years, whenever Professor of History **Tyler Anbinder** mentioned to friends and colleagues that he was working on a book about immigrants, he invariably received the same reaction: That's so timely!

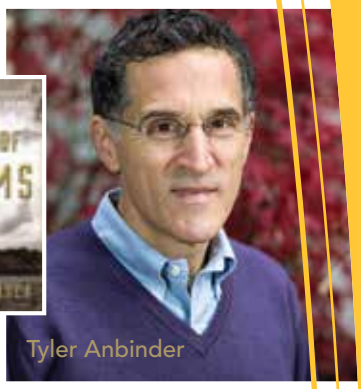
Why, yes, he'd reply ... and no. While immigration is a hot button issue, Anbinder's *City of Dreams*, which was listed as a *The New York Times*' notable book, begins 400 years ago. It spans the scope of immigrants' journeys through New York, from Dutch fur traders sailing to the southern tip of Manhattan to the 1886 dedication of the Statue of Liberty to the "huddled masses" who continue to arrive on the city's streets today.

And throughout a career of researching and writing about immigrants, Anbinder has come to an inexorable conclusion: Every wave of immigrants—Irish, Germans, Russians, Italians, Chinese, Mexicans—in some ways share the same dreams, the same challenges and the same stories. "The story of immigrant New Yorkers changes constantly on its surface, yet not at all at its heart," he said.

From Italians barbers to Dominican livery drivers, from the Irish who settled in the gang-infested Five Points region to the Germans who dotted the Lower East Side Kleindeutschland neighborhood, Anbinder maintains that the American immigrant story is largely universal. "They come for the same reasons. They suffer the same hardships. They are discriminated against, sometimes even persecuted. And yet they persevere and eventually thrive, if not themselves then their children and their grandchildren. The essentials of immigrants' story are exactly the same."

"The story of immigrants changes constantly on its surface, yet not at all at its heart."

~Tyler Anbinder


Tyler Anbinder

HUMAN FACES

For *City of Dreams*, Anbinder and a team of 10 undergraduate research assistants spent countless hours combing through old newspapers, census records, immigrant memoirs and troves of material from sources like the Ellis Island archives and ancestry.com. **Zach Sanders**, a senior history major, was among them, charged with compiling a data table that breaks down the city's foreign-born population for each year from 1850 to the present. "I utilized resources within our library system that I didn't know existed," he said, pointing to rows of census records in the Gelman library stacks.

Early in the research process, Anbinder chose to focus solely on New York City—historically America's defining port of entry for immigrants. (Even today, more than a third of the city's residents are foreign-born.) He also decided to tell his story less with facts and figures than through profiles of individual immigrants. "To make it relatable, I felt I had to put human faces on this story," he said.

Through the narratives of both ordinary citizens and celebrities like Dominican-born Oscar de la Renta, Anbinder recounts the contributions of generations of immigrants, from bringing hundreds of languages to the city to introducing distinct cultures and food that became American staples. "It's hard to believe that in the 1940s, not many people in America knew what pizza or bagels were," he said.

But along with embracing dreams of American freedom, every new era of immigrants has typically endured discrimination. Anbinder describes an 1853 *New York Herald* employment ad that accepted "any country or color—except Irish." A late 1800s apartment rental sign stipulated: "No Jews and no dogs." In a 1901 speech, President Theodore Roosevelt warned of immigrants' "low moral tendency."

"Every generation of immigrants is resented and to some extent feared," Anbinder noted. "The very same things that are said about today's immigrants—that they take our jobs, that their religion is incompatible with American values, that they can never be true Americans—was said about Italian immigrants and Irish immigrants more than 100 years ago."

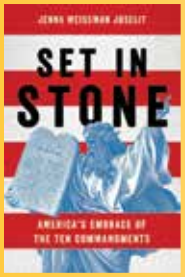
SAMPLING OF

BEFORE MESTIZAJE: THE FRONTIERS OF RACE AND CASTE IN COLONIAL MEXICO

Columbian College Dean **Ben Vinson** opens new dimensions on the history of race and caste in Latin America in this examination of the extreme caste groups of Mexico. Focusing on lobos, moriscos and coyotes, he details the experiences of different races and castes while tracing the implications of their lives in the colonial world—exposing the connection between mestizaje (Latin America's modern ideology of racial mixture) and the colonial caste system. Relying on his extensive review of primary sources—bigamy records, marriage cases, census documents and inquisition reports—he uses Mexico as a case study to explore how the concept of caste evolved by studying the most extreme racial mixtures in society.

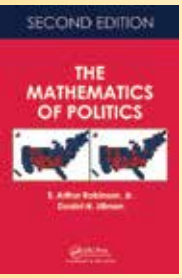
SET IN STONE: AMERICA'S EMBRACE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Jenna Weissman Joselit, Charles E. Smith Professor of Judaic Studies and professor of history, situates the Ten Commandments within the fabric of American history. She reveals its influence on our national identity—from the 1860 archaeologists who claimed to have discovered pieces of the tablets in Ohio to politicians who proposed them as citizenship tests to psychotherapists who touted them as psychotherapeutic tool. She travels to Indian burial mounds in Ohio and sand dunes in California where researchers have uncovered centuries-old monuments to the Biblical directives. She shows how the Ten Commandments became the public face of the American Jewish



NEW BOOKS BY COLUMBIAN COLLEGE FACULTY

community, especially during its bid for acceptance in the United States, and provides context to contemporary debates on public displays of the scriptural passage.



THE MATHEMATICS OF POLITICS, 2ND EDITION

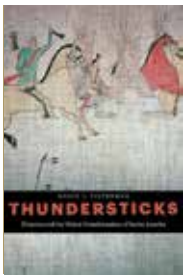
For anyone who remembers endlessly reciting multiplication tables in elementary school, it's hard believe that mathematics is anything more than the study of numbers, operations and formulas. But in the second edition of their popular book, Professors of Mathematics **E. Arthur Robinson** and **Daniel H. Ullman** take math where it's rarely gone before: into the realm of politics. The authors apply mathematical reasoning to politics and explain the role math plays in our government and our election system. They examine the Electoral College and address political questions such as: Is there a mathematical formula for choosing winners of elections? How does math help apportion congressional seats? And can math be applied to decision-making in situations of conflict and uncertainty?

INTERACTIVE JOURNALISM: HACKERS, DATA AND CODE

Interactive journalism has transformed the newsroom. Its visual storytelling techniques allow users to connect directly with the reporting of information. But as Assistant Professor of Media and Public Affairs **Nikki Usher** explains in *Interactive Journalism: Hackers, Data and Code*, today it stands at a nexus: part of the traditional newsroom, yet still novel enough to contribute innovative practices and thinking to the industry. Examining the impact of digital technology on reporting, photojournalism and graphics, Usher presents a comprehensive portrait of a new journalistic identity. Her eyewitness study of the field's evolution and accomplishments ranges from the creation of Al Jazeera English to *The New York Times*' Pulitzer-winning innovations. She creates an illuminating, richly reported portrait of the people coding a revolution that may reverse the decline of traditional journalism.

THUNDERSTICKS: FIREARMS AND THE VIOLENT TRANSFORMATION OF NATIVE AMERICA

The adoption of firearms by American Indians between the 17th and 19th centuries marked a turning point in the history of North America's indigenous peoples—a cultural earthquake so profound, says Professor of History **David J. Silverman**, that its impact has yet to be adequately measured. In *Thundersticks*, Silverman reframes our understanding of Indians' historical relationship with guns. He argues against the popular notion that they prized these weapons more for the pyrotechnic terror they inspired than for their efficiency as tools of war. Native peoples, Silverman insist, recognized the potential of firearms to assist them in their struggles against colonial forces—and against one another. He maintains that firearms empowered American Indians to pursue their interests and defend their political and economic autonomy over two centuries.



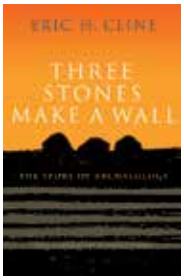
SPILLOVER EFFECTS OF CHINA GOING GLOBAL

When the People's Republic of China was granted Most Favored Nation status by the United States in 1979, no one imagined the massive transformation the Chinese economy would make within just a few decades. In *Spillover Effects of China Going Global*, Professor of Economics **Joseph Pelzman** focuses on

China's remarkable transition since the 1980s from being a "world factory" to the source of the world's new R&D and product design. He shows how the second largest world economy triggered unforeseen spillover effects beyond mass-labor production of durable and non-durable goods, many of which—such as the provision of foreign aid to African, Latin American and Asian economies—are bringing positive opportunities for much of the world in the 21st century.

THREE STONES MAKE A WALL: THE STORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY

In *Three Stones Make a Wall,* **Eric Cline**, professor of classics, history and anthropology, traces the history of archaeology from its amateur beginnings to the cutting-edge science it is today. He takes the reader on a tour of major archaeological sites and discoveries, from Pompeii to Petra and Troy to the Terracotta Warriors. He also illustrates the personalities behind these digs, including Heinrich Schliemann, the former businessman who excavated Troy, and Mary Leakey, whose discoveries advanced our understanding of human origins. Along the way, he addresses the questions archaeologists are asked most often: How do you know where to dig? How are excavations actually done? How do you know how old something is? Who gets to keep what is found?



ALUMNI & FRIENDS

A Night at the Opera:

ALUMNUS TENOR HITS HIGH NOTES

From arias to curtain calls, Zach Borichevsky, BA '06, is a rising star in the opera world. But for the political science and music major, the road to international acclaim took more than just practice.

Opera singer **Zach Borichevsky**, BA '06, has been a Romeo in Chile, an Einstein in Cincinnati and an Alfredo from Verdi's *La traviata* in cities from Knoxville to Seattle to Glyndebourne, U.K. He's performed Tchaikovsky in Tucson and Puccini in Finland, London and New York.

But Borichevsky, political science and music major, initially envisioned himself in a different role: As Josh Lyman, the president's legislative assistant in TV's *The West Wing*. Throughout his time at GW, he sang in Music Department recitals, Chamber Choir concerts and gigs with the emo-a cappella group Emocapella. But he assumed he'd end up with a law degree and a career on Capitol Hill, closer to the Oval Office than an opera house.

Zach Borichevsky (Photo: Simon Pauly)

"There's an excitement, a tension, in good opera that makes it as precarious for audiences as watching a sporting event."

~ Zach Borichevsky

"I was in an opera before I ever saw an opera," Borichevsky laughed.

After acing the LSATs and exploring law school options, Borichevsky took what he called a "personal inventory" of his years at GW and discovered that his favorite memories all involved music and theater—from performing Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins* with the Generic Theatre, GW's oldest student theatre company, to seeing Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the Washington Opera with his then-voice teacher Music Department Chair **Robert Baker**. "I realized I was happiest around music," he said. "So I thought: 'OK, let's give this opera thing a try.'"

That revelation led Borichevsky from GW to Yale School of Music to the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia—and to a career in opera that has garnered curtain calls from international audiences and accolades from critics. *Opera Magazine* praised Borichevsky's "seductive, ringing" voice and *Opera News* highlighted his "dashing good looks, soft-eyed charm and gleaming tenor." After appearing twice at the world-renowned Metropolitan Opera in New York, his 2017 schedule included a return to GW as part of the Music Department's Stanley & Evelyn Yeskel Memorial Concert Series.

"The groundwork for my music career was laid at GW," he said. "People like Robert Baker and [Associate Professor of Music] **Douglas Boyce** were my main influences and introduced me to everything I know about music theory and performance. They showed me what music can be and started me on this path."

From Rock to Rodolfo

Never an opera lover as a child, Borichevsky was raised on his father's eclectic record collection, with '60s rock and roll stacked alongside Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli CDs. A high school music coach was the first to identify Borichevsky's striking tenor voice—a trait that gives him an advantage in the competitive professional opera world. "My voice type is at once one of the rarest and also one of the most popular in opera," he said. With few young men able to hit the high tenor notes, Borichevsky often finds himself in contention for leading-man roles like his favorite part, the romantic Rodolfo in Puccini's *La bohème*.

Still, Borichevsky's road to opera stardom hasn't been an easy one. With five years of postgraduate training under his belt, Borichevsky says he's been in school longer than most doctors. And, despite the standing ovations, an opera singer's career requires as much training and discipline as an athlete's.

Borichevsky estimates that he spends only seven days a year at his Philadelphia home. He is typically on the road for weeks, rehearsing and performing in venues from the Met and the London Coliseum to hidden gems like Milwaukee's Skylight Music Theatre. In addition to working with musical directors at each stop, he schedules sessions with a vocal coach several times a year and keeps both his voice and his physique in peak shape with regular

Zach Borichevsky as Alfredo in Verdi's La Traviata
(Courtesy of the Detroit Opera House)

exercise. He equates singing with a garden. "To keep your vocal technique sharp you have to prune it, water it and maintain it on a daily basis," he said, noting that he even tries to limit vocal cord-straining conversations when performing a role.

In fact, Borichevsky greatest on-stage fear isn't a sore throat—it's forgetting his lines in front of a packed house. He's blanked on Italian librettos before, only to remember them a second before they escape his lips. "Muscle memory takes over and the words come back to you," he said, "but those are a terrifying few seconds."

More often, critics and fans say Borichevsky is the picture of confidence in the spotlight, even in his hardest roles like Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* ("I'm pretty convinced that Strauss hated tenors," he joked) or hitting the all-but-unreachable high-C in his signature *La bohème* aria.

"There's an excitement, a tension, in good opera that makes it as precarious for audiences as watching a sporting event," said Borichevsky. "They are on the edge of their seats wondering, 'Will he make that note or not?' It's the reason you go to operas or even Nascar races—to see people do difficult things and make them look easy."

"The groundwork for my music career was laid at GW. [My teachers] showed me what music can be and started me on this path."

~Zach Borichevsky

COLUMBIAN COLLEGE PROPELS 'MAKING HISTORY' OVER $1 BILLION GOAL

Ben Vinson, left, with Max Ticktin and Susie Gelman at an event honoring Rabbi Ticktin's contributions to GW

"Making History: The Campaign for GW" surpassed its $1 billion fundraising goal a year ahead of schedule, thanks to contributions from nearly 67,000 donors including more than $185 million raised by Columbian College—the highest in total campaign commitments among the university's schools.

Nearly 42,000 alumni donated to their alma mater, with 40,000 donors making their first-ever gifts. During the campaign, 235 new endowments were established, providing perpetual support for student financial aid, professorships, instructional and academic programs, libraries, athletics and more.

"This outflow of support from our alumni and friends is a testament not only to their generosity but to their continued commitment toward making our university home to the highest level of research and learning," said Columbian College Dean **Ben Vinson**. "This kind of support is truly game-changing."

"Making History" realized significant accomplishments around three of its campaign pillars: supporting students, enhancing academics and breaking new ground. More than 18,000 donors gave to Power & Promise, providing over $144 million in funds for undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships; 20 new endowed faculty positions were created, providing resources to recruit, support and retain the best faculty across a variety of disciplines; and over $163 million was donated to build new and upgraded facilities such as Science and Engineering Hall and the GW Museum and The Textile Museum.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Columbian College led the charge, exceeding its own $100 million campaign goal by 185 percent. In the past year alone, the college raised $17.9 million in new gifts and commitments and added $4.5 million in new endowment to faculty. The largest component of the college's campaign gifts and commitments went to faculty research and new professorships, with $86.6 million raised. The most recent example of that support came from **Char Beales**, BA '73, and her husband, **Howard Beales**, who together committed $3.2 million to establish the Char Beales Endowed Professorship of Accountability in Journalism. (See story, page 44.) And, while alumni represented the majority of campaign donors supporting the college, friends, parents, organizations, faculty and staff also provided a significant amount of support.

The impact of the campaign on creating new research opportunities and educational experiences is being felt throughout Columbian College. The following is a sampling of some of the top gifts received and the ways they are making a difference within the college:

- The Wilbur V. (Bill) Harlan Scholarship Trust, established through a $9 million bequest from the estate of the late **Wilbur V. (Bill) Harlan**, BS '35, provides undergraduate and graduate students with scholarships and summer stipends to pursue their research interests. A botany major who briefly served as a lab instructor at GW, Harlan became an accomplished agricultural specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. His remarkable philanthropic legacy to Columbian College is supporting new generations

Gil and Jackie Cisneros (standing under portrait) with the 2017 Caminos al Futoro scholars

Greenhouse Manager Rachel Klein at the Wilbur V. Harlan Greenhouse

of young biologists through scholarships and research stipends, and funding for the new greenhouse laboratory, that opened in Science and Engineering Hall this fall.

- A $7 million gift from **Gilbert Cisneros**, BA '94, and his wife, **Jacki Cisneros**, led to the creation of the GW Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute, which helps qualified students attain academic success, build leadership skills and engage in a long-term commitment to making a difference within the Hispanic community. The institute encompasses numerous opportunities to address the challenges Latino youth face in the education arena, including scholarship and mentorship support for select GW students who have aspirations to give back to the Hispanic community. And the institute is home to the Caminos al Futuro pre-college summer program for academically talented rising high school seniors who are involved in leadership and service activities.

- A $2 million grant from **Susie and Michael Gelman's** Morningstar Foundation endowed the Max Ticktin Professorship of Israel Studies that is now held by **Arie Dubnov**, a renowned historian from the University of Haifa in Israel. The endowment also supports the training and mentorship of students to foster a broad understanding of the history, politics, society and culture of modern Israel. A towering scholar of modern Israel, beloved teacher, influential leader in the Hillel movement and cherished friend and mentor, the late Rabbi **Max Ticktin** was an iconic former professor of Hebrew and the cornerstone of Columbian College's Judaic Studies Program.

- Through a $2.5 million endowed gift from The John L. Loeb Jr. Foundation and the George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom, the Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr. Institute for Religious Freedom at GW is fostering renewed dialogue on religious understanding and the separation of church and state. The institute also serves as a center for academic collaboration in religion, peace studies, history, political science and other programs for scholars, students, educators and the public. A businessman, philanthropist and art collector, **John L. Loeb Jr.** served as the U.S. ambassador to Denmark from 1981 to 1983 and as a delegate to the United Nations. "I can't think of a more appropriate institution to carry on the work of the George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom than this university, named for our first president," Ambassador Loeb said.

- A $500,000 gift from **Bruce** and **Cindy Terker** to establish the Terker Distinguished Fellows in Media and Public Affairs provides aspiring communications professionals the invaluable opportunity to learn from leaders in the field. The fellows program brings to campus notable figures from media, political communication and public affairs—including national political correspondents, White House press secretaries and U.S. senators—to engage students through class discussions, public events and career advising. For the Terkers, creating the fellows program was their way of giving back for the "incredible" student experience of their daughter **Jennifer Terker**, BA '13.

Char Beales with SMPA Director Frank Sesno

$3.2 MILLION BEQUEST TO FUND PROFESSORSHIP OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN JOURNALISM

As a pioneer in the nascent cable television industry, **Char Beales**, BA '73, can recall the days when few people knew what CNN and ESPN were and cable television programming was not even eligible for mainstream Emmy awards. She has compared the evolution of cable to the more recent explosion of internet-based media, with one caveat: In cyberspace, the low barriers for entry enable almost anyone to declare themselves a journalist.

In an effort to ensure that accountability and accuracy are not left behind in the changing landscape of journalism, Char and her husband, **Howard Beales**, a professor of strategic management and public policy in GW's School of Business, pledged $3.2 million to Columbian College's School of Media and Public Affairs to fund the Char Beales Endowed Professorship of Accountability in Journalism. The gift, which is a bequest commitment from the Beales' estate, is the largest single gift in SMPA's history.

Originally attracted to GW because of its strong debate team, Char Beales pursued a successful career in the cable industry, including her role as president and CEO of the Cable and Telecommunications Association for Marketing. Generous in her service and support of the university, she served as SMPA's campaign chair for the "Making History" campaign and, since 2010, has chaired the National Council for Media and Public Affairs, SMPA's volunteer advisory body.

"Char Beales has been a leader at the School of Media and Public Affairs, and it has been an honor and an inspiration to work with her," said SMPA Director **Frank Sesno**. "The Beales professorship is a tremendous expression of Char's deep commitment to the future of journalism, GW and SMPA. It is an investment in the country itself, because holding the powerful to account is a pillar of journalism and central to our democracy. The research and teaching that this gift supports will lead the way for generations to come."

GW has a long history of educating journalists. The university began offering journalism courses in 1938 and founded the National Center for Communication Studies in 1991 with a focus on journalism and political communication. The center was renamed the School of Media and Public Affairs in 1996.

In creating the endowed professorship, the Beales were inspired by their belief that endowed faculty positions are critical to attracting and retaining top-notch academics and bolstering the university's overall profile and reputation. By setting a leadership giving example, they hope to encourage others to give as well.

"SMPA is on a trajectory to be a top-tier media school, and more support will make that happen more quickly," said Char Beales. "We want this gift to motivate others to join us in supporting the university and SMPA."

Bequest intentions—through a will, living trust, charitable gift reminder or similar vehicle—are an increasingly popular way to support institutions like GW. More than $100 million was committed to the university through bequest intentions during the "Making History" campaign.

Alumnus Leads Effort for Diverse PR Workforce

Vanguard Communications, the Hispanic woman-owned public relations giant, and Columbian College's Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute have partnered on a new program to advance diversity in the PR, communications and marketing workforce. Launched in conjunction with Vanguard's 30th anniversary, the program—called Comunicadores for the Future—funds six- to nine-week paid internships with nonprofit organizations in the D.C. metro area.

"We are excited about the potential of Comunicadores for the Future because we know internships give students a competitive advantage when applying for jobs," said **Maria Rodriguez**, BBA '82, president and founder of Vanguard Communications. "With unpaid internships not an option for many students, this investment begins to level the field, attract more diversity to our profession and hopefully create a pipeline of Latino talent that will lead the PR workforce of the future."

Comunicadores participants are Cisneros Scholars—academically talented students who have demonstrated leadership and a commitment to serving the Hispanic community. Selected Comunicadores are paired with D.C. metro area nonprofit organizations that are working on equity issues such as health, education, civil rights and economic justice.

"There has never been a more critical time for our students to engage in issue campaigns advanced by local nonprofits that are directly affecting the Latino community," said **Elizabeth Vaquera**, director of the Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute. "We are grateful to Vanguard for their vision, financial support and shared commitment to our mission of creating a comprehensive learning experience that includes academics, leadership, community engagement, mentoring and career development."

As part of Comunicadores for the Future, Vanguard staff provide one-on-one mentorship to each student participant, as well as develop a series of professional development trainings to build expertise in public relations and strategic communications.

FORENSICS MEETS FASHION

Real-life CSI sleuth Erika Di Palma, MFS '07, spends her off-hours designing a breakout new fashion line: Clothes and apparel personalized with unique fingerprints.

A typical work day for forensic identification specialist **Erika Di Palma,** MFS '07, might start at the scene of a burglary examining carpet fibers for drops of blood. Before lunch, she could make her way to a car theft, taking tire track impressions in the dirt. And when the rest of the city is asleep, she might be surrounded by yellow police tape and swirling squad car lights as she searches for fingerprints in a murder investigation.

Working in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Di Palma has investigated over 200 major crime scenes in the last seven years. Her jurisdiction is vast—stretching from downtown L.A. to the San Gabriel Mountains—and there's no such thing as a quiet day on the job. "In some cities, you see one or two homicides a year," said Di Palma. "We get that every day."

It was following a particularly demanding week, one in which she inspected a high number of homicides, that Di Palma stumbled upon a way to channel her stress and professional knowledge into a cottage industry. With fingerprints relentlessly dancing in her head, she walked by a pair of runners in track suits. "I thought to myself, what if you could put your fingerprints on your clothes? Now that would make a statement."

Di Palma went on to launch My Own Fingerprint, an apparel and accessories collection featuring customers' fingerprints imprinted on items like t-shirts and art pieces. Her business model combined her love of forensics with her passion for creativity—and resulted in a product that is, literally, one of a kind. "No two sets are alike so wearing your print truly allows you to show off your individuality," said Di Palma. "They are, in essence, our physiological autographs."

Di Palma's business took off when she auditioned for the ABC show *Shark Tank*. Her presentation piqued entrepreneur Mark Cuban's interest and resulted in Di Palma securing a $75,000 investment from the billionaire.

She now sells about 35,000 items a year and donates a portion of each sale to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Her customers include forensic professionals in search of an imaginative retirement gift and teenagers looking for a unique style. But while she enjoys her foray into the fashion world, she has no intention of quitting her day job. "I realized at GW that forensics is my passion," Di Palma said. "And my motto is: If you find your passion, make it your life."

GUIDING TROUBLED TEENS

In a career that has taken him from counseling inside prisons to appearing in front of TV cameras, clinical psychologist Isaiah Pickens, BA '05, has learned how to listen to young people.

At a juvenile detention center inside New York's notorious Rikers Island prison, **Isaiah Pickens**, BA '05, faced what would turn into a pivotal moment in his young career.

A PhD student with aspirations to become a clinical psychologist, the former Columbian College psychology major volunteered as a counselor for young people caught up in the juvenile justice system. Within the prison walls, he sat among a semi-circle of folding chairs, talking to a group of African American teenagers about the traumas in their lives.

Pickens listened as the teens told stories about how they ended up in Rikers—from run-ins with the police to violence in their homes. He nodded empathetically and encouraged them to stay positive. This place, he told them, didn't have to be their final destination.

But not all the teens bought Pickens' message. "Come on," one young man challenged him. "You don't really believe that."

Pickens instantly understood the young man's meaning: "From one black male to another, he was saying he saw right through me," he said. "I must have convinced him that I believed what I was saying, because then he called me out as not really being black."

That moment—a young man behind bars challenging his identity as an African American—stayed with Pickens, who went on to become a renowned psychologist, frequent advocate and media voice for the underserved and underprivileged and host of a TLC reality show. But after the showdown in Rikers, he seriously doubted whether he should continue on his professional path. Could he really look young black men in the eye, surrounded by prison guards, and tell them not to lose hope?

"I knew if I was going to choose this career and remain true to my cultural heritage, I'd have to find a way to be a bridge," he said. "I'd have to find a way to show young people that I wasn't giving up on them—and provide them with a reason not to give up on themselves."

Perseverance and passion are two qualities Pickens has never lacked. A gifted high school student, he earned a full-tuition Stephen Joel Trachtenberg Scholarship and enrolled at GW as a 16-year-old freshman. Soon after, he landed a spot on GW's varsity basketball team and, as a theatre minor, began a role on the HBO series *The Wire* while still an undergraduate. His academic focus garnered him a Gamow Research Fellowship and a research assistant position in Associate Professor of Clinical/Community Psychology **Christina Gee**'s lab.

"Isaiah is fearless, naturally curious and has a sense of openness to new experiences," Gee said. "If there is a challenge out there, he's willing to take it."

After graduating from GW, Pickens initially planned to pursue careers as both an actor and a psychologist. But it didn't take long, he said, to learn that "you can't go on auditions and get your PhD at same time." After earning his doctoral degree at Fordham University, Pickens was determined to combine psychology and entertainment as a means of reaching a broad audience. He created iOpening Enterprises, a multi-media company that promotes accessible health messages to young people through books, film and life-skills workshops. He is a regular contributor to *Psychology Today*, *HuffPost* and BlackDoctor.org, and he has appeared in national media outlets to discuss the psychological implications of current events as they relate to trauma and mental health issues.

Isaiah Pickens

"My life's mission is to help develop the healthiest versions of people. But I also like to think outside the box."

~Isaiah Pickens

Recently Pickens became the co-host of a new TLC reality show called *The Spouse House*, which pairs seven single men and seven single women in one house to find long-term relationships. Pickens counsels the couples as they face the weekly prospect of either accepting a proposal or being evicted from the house.

"It's not what I ever pictured myself doing," Pickens laughed. "My life's mission is to help develop the healthiest versions of people. But I also like to think outside the box."

VOICES TO HONOR

As a D.C. native attending the School Without Walls High School, Pickens jokes that he grew up literally across the street from the GW Psychology Department. The son of educators—his father was a vice principal, his mother a social worker—his parents' example fostered a passion to help young people meet their goals. For Gee, Pickens' enthusiasm in the lab and the classroom was nothing short of infectious. "Isaiah stood out immediately," said Gee. "He was truly inquisitive, and I saw a great deal of potential in him."

Through his varied professional roles—Pickens is also affiliated with UCLA-Duke National Center for Child Traumatic Stress and the coordinator of the online National Child Traumatic Stress Network—he's traveled across the country to schools, jails and foster care agencies, working with young people on understanding the impact of life stress and trauma. The author of a book on understanding the pressures on young people (*The Dawn of Generation Why*), Pickens says he frequently hears teens express concerns about social justice, cyber bullying and suicide. And he is struck by the fact that these young people are often more willing than adults to admit racial and cultural biases—and talk about ways to confront them.

"One of the things that's difficult for people to come to terms with is that we're all biased in some way," Pickens said. "The way to deal with biases is to bring them to light and deal with them in the light of day."

But too often, he said, teens' opinions are brushed aside by even well-meaning adults—a generational bias that Pickens advises parents and teachers to address. "So many adults are so intent on showing they are in charge that they don't fully listen to what young people have to say," he noted. "And, believe me, young people are saying things that are worth honoring."

SNAPSHOTS

BASH, GARGASH RECOGNIZED FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Columbian College graduates **Dana Bash**, BA '93, and **Anwar Mohammed Gargash**, BA '81, MA '84, were among the eight alumni honored this year with the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award, the highest form of recognition given annually by the university and the George Washington Alumni Association to a graduates. Bash is CNN's chief political correspondent and the network's lead reporter covering Capitol Hill. Gargash is a member of the Federal Cabinet of the United Arab Emirates and has served as minister of state for foreign affairs since 2008. From 2006 to 2016, he was the minister of state for federal national council affairs.

TOPPING FORBES' 30 UNDER 30 LIST

Two Columbian College alumni topped Forbes' list of "30 Under 30" leaders and innovator. Political science major **Hardy Farrow**, BA '13, transformed his vision to promote leadership and business skills among minority youth through education into LITE Memphis (Let's Innovate Through Education), a nonprofit that equips minority students to be future entrepreneurs. With a focus on developing business expertise, LITE Memphis also provides seed funding to enable students to launch businesses in their own community. As Farrow tells the young people in the program: "If you dream big, you will achieve big."

Anthropology major **Shanyn Ronis**, BA '09, is the founder of Education Global Access Program (E-GAP), which works with nonprofits and community groups in the rural United States, Africa and South America to train teachers and volunteer educators. "We believe that teachers save lives—especially in conflict zones, refugee camps and areas of extreme poverty," said Ronis, who was awarded the 2015 Gifted Citizen Award for her dedication to international education.

ALUMNA'S SUGAR & SPICE

With a passion for fashion, fitness and beauty, **Lisa Sugar**, BA '98, grew her pop culture blog from a handful of online followers to an enthusiastic fan base of one million readers. Building on the blog's popularity, the psychology major launched POPSUGAR, a well-known lifestyle media brand for women, and published a book on the secrets of her success, *Power Your Happy: Work Hard, Play Nice, and Build Your Dream Life.* "[GW] equipped me well to go out into the world," said Sugar about her degree. A liberal arts major can start companies."

IHEARTMEDIA PRESIDENT HAS GW SOFT SPOT

As a student DJ at GW, **Darren Davis**, BA '95, spent late nights spinning records on the graveyard shift as he penned papers for his journalism major. Those long evenings ignited a passion for radio—an experience that he parlayed into a student internship at iHeartMedia and eventually led to his current position as president of the mega-media outlet, which now boasts 850 radio stations and a 270 million listening audience. A recipient of a full academic scholarship, Davis credits GW for his success and gives back through service and mentorship support.

HOMEE IS WHERE THE HEART IS

For three Interior Architecture & Design alumni, a chance meeting in a GW drafting class led to an enduring friendship and a business venture. The trio are the sharp minds behind Homee, an app that makes interior design easy and fun. After downloading the free app, Homee users are connected with a stylist that prepares a design board based on their interests—all without stepping into the user's home. Homee creators **Beatrice Fischel-Bock**, BFA '13, **Elizabeth (Lizzie) Grover,** BFA '13, and **Madeline Fraser**, BFA '14, launched their first interior design idea while still students at GW and pitched it on TV's *Shark Tank*.

HAS CAMERA, WILL TRAVEL

Joe Van Eeckhout

From Washington, D.C., to Africa and Asia, Corcoran alumnus **Joe Van Eeckhout**, MA '15, is developing a career as an international visual journalist. A freelance photojournalist and filmmaker, he has completed projects in Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. An assignment he's particularly proud of was a documentary he filmed about a wrestling tournament in South Sudan begun by one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan." The film was produced to counter the predominant narratives of tribal violence and strife. "It an alternate view of South Sudan," he explained.

AUTHOR! AUTHOR!

Jill (Pincus) and Amanda Madenberg

When psychology major **Jill (Pincus) Madenberg**, BA '91, set out to write an advice book for college-bound students, the guidance counselor turned to the co-author whose opinion she valued the most: her daughter, Amanda. Together, the mother-daughter literary team penned *Love the Journey to College, Guidance from an Admissions Consultant and Her Daughter*. Madenberg often advises families on coping with the stressful college application process. Her expertise—combined with her daughter's viewpoint as a student going through the process—results in a lively book that turns the college search into a fun journey of self-exploration and growth.

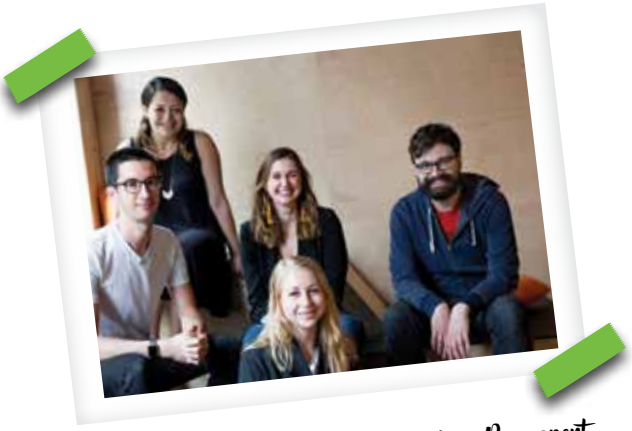
MAINE ARTISTS SALUTE GW, CORCORAN

Steve Wyman

Works by Maine artists—alumni and faculty from the Corcoran—were displayed at an alumnus-curated exhibit celebrating the state's natural beauty. Organized by **Steve Wyman**, BA '85, the exhibit was inspired by the schools' merger and shared history, which dates back to the late 19th Century when William Wilson Corcoran founded a museum to celebrate art while serving as president of Columbian College's Board of Trustees. The exhibit also celebrates the Corcoran-GW connection in a more tangible way: 25 percent of sales will fund processing more than 2,000 boxes of historic Corcoran records.

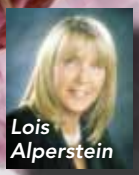
RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Whether you're craving pita or falafel, you'll find a special Mediterranean treat on the menu at CAVA, a hot new D.C. eatery founded by a team of GW alumni. A popular spot for fast-casual cuisine, CAVA is home to several Columbian College graduates, including Director of Brand and Marketing **Nikki Rappaport**, BA '09, Copywriter **Tyler Calder**, BA '13, and Corporate Infrastructure Specialist **Eric Breese**, BA '15. Their involvement, from the kitchen to the boardroom, is helping to make the new eatery a culinary success.



Eric Breese, Tyler Calder, Nikki Rappaport, Josh Patchus and Lizzie Anderson


Pam Lawrence


Lois Alperstein


Scott Jackson Dantley


Paul Kendrick

Memories

"The GW experience has so many layers that a collage of memories is what makes GW so very, very special to me: Professor French and those fabulous internships; Professor Morgan imparting the understanding that Supreme Court cases are not really about the subjects but about the long-term precedents; the friends I made who are still my friends today; and experiencing history by walking through the [Capitol] Rotunda while a president was lying- in-state and attending the State of the Union Address."

Pam Lawrence, BA '76, Political Science
Board of Directors Chair, Care Dimensions; Senior Vice President, North Shore Medical Center (Retired)

"One of my favorite GW memories was meeting my Thurston Hall RA, Jerry Bloom. His experience with college life and life in general was very helpful to me. Coming from a small town in central New Jersey, Washington, D.C., was really the big city. I fell madly in love with the city and university life. Another student from Jersey fell in love with me and literally wanted to sweep me off my feet and elope. Jerry convinced me that waiting until after graduation was the appropriate way to handle this romance. How right he was! Jerry taught me important life lessons and today we have been reunited as members of Columbian College's National Council for Arts and Sciences. More than 40 years after graduating, we are serving the university as a way to give back."

Lois Alperstein, BA '77, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
Proprietor, Country Shoppes of Culpeper

"I have two wonderful memories of my educational journey: pledging Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity—the same fraternity as Dr. Martin Luther King—and the unique experience of being taught by great minds such as Professor Theodore Peter Perros. In his History of Chemistry class, Professor Perros highlighted the contributions of diverse alchemists and scientists from different cultures who made meaningful impacts in the sciences. As an African American student matriculating in chemistry, this was a positive experience that made a lasting impression on me."

Scott Jackson Dantley, BS '92, Chemistry
Educational Consultant in Quality Assurance, Assessment and Accreditation

"I lived in a university theme house—The George Washington Williams House of African American History and Culture. There we learned history and shared it with fellow students. I remember a fall day when we made our way down U Street studying everything from the African American Civil War Memorial and Museum to Ben's Chili Bowl. Then we welcomed speakers to the house, including a D.C. civil rights hero and a historian on black Civil War soldiers. We grew into the leaders we are today through the bond of creating this place that my friend Stephan Harris envisioned—where students could draw on the past to be inspired to shape the future."

Paul Kendrick, BA '05, MPA '07, American Studies
Former White House Climate and Domestic Director

"To fulfill a writing requirement my sophomore year, I found myself enrolled in an 8 a.m. introductory-level journalism course taught by Larry Lipman. I walked in with minimal interest in journalism, but by the end of the semester I was hooked! Professor Lipman brought his real-world experience into the classroom, making reporting accessible and engaging. It was one of my most challenging classes at GW, but it was indisputably the most rewarding. I ended up declaring journalism as my minor and, while at GW, interned at news organizations including NPR and *USA Today*."

Beth Furtwangler, BA '08, Communications
Internal Communications Manager, National Geographic

"My time at GW was undoubtedly one of the most pleasurable and formative periods of my life. Not only did I immensely enjoy living in Washington D.C., but the diversity of the campus and the surrounding city exposed me to a variety of cultures and people who I otherwise would have never met. I made my closest and most enduring friendships while at school—the vast majority of which are still actively involved in my life on a daily basis."

Elissa Wernick, BA '85, Psychology
Interior Designer, Owners Advocate; licensed podiatrist and foot surgeon

STAY CONNECTED!

Alumni are an important part of the Columbian College and GW community. Stay connected and get involved in these ways:

"The first day of my senior year, one of my roommates and I decided to get some groceries for our room in Ivory Tower. We headed to the Safeway at the Watergate. As we rode the escalator down, I saw an older gentleman going up. His face was familiar but I couldn't quite place it. I thought he might have been a professor. He noticed that I was staring, so I nodded and said "Sup?" He smiled awkwardly and shook his head—while my roommate called me an idiot for trying to be funny around [former senator and presidential candidate] Bob Dole! That story reminds me of how lucky I was to be in the middle of D.C. You never knew who you'd see!"

Jason Sterlacci, BA '06, Psychology
English Teacher, Union Township Public Schools

"I am proud to have been one of the founding members of the GW Troubadours in 1981. At the time, a cappella groups were not as common as they are today. Our small band worked tirelessly, rehearsing for hours every week. These singers are still some of my best friends. Our trip to Portugal, where we performed at dozens of venues and traveled by bus, was a highlight of my college experience. Today, 36 years later, the Troubs are still going strong and are all student run!"

Melissa Maxman, BA '84, Music
Managing Partner, Cohen & Gresser LLP

"My freshman year coincided with the culmination of the 2012 presidential election. On election night, my friends and I went to the GW Democrats watch party in the Marvin Center. When the race was called and President Obama won reelection, much of the room started running out the doors and heading for the White House. I don't think I've ever run that fast! We met up with hundreds of people hugging and celebrating. The crowd blasted music, shouted chants and celebrated through the night. That is a day I'll tell my kids about."

Lincoln Mondy, BA '16, Political Science
Associate Account Executive, BerlinRosen

"My telecommunications degree classes required us to complete research at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) headquarters—my introduction to FCC regulations. I was later hired to be the agency's first professional telecommunications manager, one of the most satisfying and busiest jobs of my career. I recommended GW to my son who immediately felt that it was the right school for him. After completing his undergraduate degree at Columbian College, he found two internship jobs through GW's career network, which led to his present position as a web developer at the U.S. Government Accounting Office."

Debbie Wheeler, MS '84, Telecommunications Operations
Telecommunications Analyst, Department of Justice

"The best part of my GW experience was my cohort. After a stressful week of papers, assignments, exams and all-nighters, we would all head to Lindy's Red Lion for cheap drinks, bar food and an outdoor patio. That became our space to debate random topics, vent about class assignments, laugh at crude jokes and, most importantly, take a break. In those moments, we somehow mitigated the pressure of work, school and life, and we were reminded to not take ourselves too seriously. It was a significant part of how I survived grad school!"

Priya Dhanani, MA '14, Sociology
Technical Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Together for Girls

"When I was a freshman in 2000, I took Introduction to Physics with Professor Gerard Garino. I failed the first exam; I had never failed anything in my life! Professor Garino offered to tutor me and other students in the class if we showed up in his office in Corcoran Hall every morning at 8 a.m. I dutifully reported every morning and met my future husband, Andy Wurtzel, during those sessions. Through the years, we have stayed in touch with Professor Garino and he even came to our wedding in 2007."

Lauren Epstein, BS '03, Biology
Physician, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Join an industry-based alumni network and connect with fellow alumni through both in-person and virtual networking opportunities. (alumni.gwu.edu/industry-networks)

Connect with alumni, faculty, and students at one of our 300+ events around the world! (alumni.gwu.edu/calendar)

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Update your contact information to receive event invitations, read our newsletters and learn about benefits and services. (alumni.gwu.edu/update-your-contact-information)

Support our students, enhance our programs and break new ground in research through a philanthropic gift to an area that is most meaningful to you. (alumni.gwu.edu/ways-give)

Want to get learn more or get involved? Contact **Anita Ponchione**, Executive Director of School Alumni Programs, at ccasalum@gwu.edu.

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CCAS graduate Tom Curtis supports the Power & Promise scholarship fund through his IRA. By doing so, his estate will receive a significant tax deduction and GW will receive a portion of his IRA tax-free.

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