



WashU

MAGAZINE

APRIL 2025

INSPIRED *by* NATURE

WashU faculty — whether in business, engineering, art or science — follow the natural world for inspiration and ideas for innovative solutions, pg. 28.

Contents

“My white coat represents the privilege and responsibility I will have to use medicine to serve and care for others. I’m grateful to follow in the footsteps of physician-mentors who embody the commitment to patients that the white coat symbolizes.”

— KATY LAZENBY (BELOW, RIGHT), A FIRST-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT



On the cover: WashU faculty find inspiration in nature. In Fuzhong Zhang’s lab, for example, researchers program bacteria to produce spider-silk fibers — some of the strongest biodegradable fibers on the planet. And to make their microbe-produced fibers stronger, they’ve turned to mussels and their “sticky feet.” The goal is to one day mass produce fiber materials to replace petroleum-derived nylon and polyesters, and to make biocompatible adhesives for surgical applications. (See feature on pg. 28.)

Background photo: On Oct. 18, 2024, 124 medical students, along with their friends and families, gathered in Graham Chapel for the annual White Coat Ceremony. Here, Lisa Moscoso, MD, a professor of pediatrics, congratulates medical student Katy Lazenby.

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Photo: Joe Angeles/WashU

Fueling the future of WashU

At the 2024 Founders Day celebration, Chancellor Andrew D. Martin presents the Robert S. Brookings Award to Roy and Diana Vagelos. Pioneers of scientific discovery, innovation and service-oriented leadership, the Vagelos have been instrumental in strengthening life science research and interdisciplinary education at WashU.

At my inauguration, I shared a vision of WashU as a bridge that connects disciplines, people, socioeconomic and cultural differences, and communities. Our pursuits in teaching, research and patient care might be imagined as vehicles, moving forward with purpose. Our strategic vision, “Here and Next,” acts like a GPS, guiding our direction and helping us navigate complex terrain.

And what keeps this bridge strong? Our philanthropic partnerships. They are both the fuel and the structural support – the gas that powers our journey and the reinforcements that ensure we can continue crossing divides, making progress and reaching new horizons.

To fuel the journey ahead, next month we will publicly launch a comprehensive fundraising campaign called With You: The WashU Campaign. As the name suggests, partnerships with our community will propel us forward as we strive to create a more hopeful, humane and healthy world with you, our alumni, parents and friends. The campaign will energize the implementation of our strategic initiatives, which you can learn more about starting on pg. 20. And it will accelerate our progress in two important aspects of our vision for WashU.

First, we aim to advance global solutions to society’s deepest challenges. We’ve defined four

major areas of impact to drive our campaign: fostering greater access for students, developing future-ready leaders, building flourishing communities and advancing healthier lives. We will meet each of our supporters where their passions lie, offering funding opportunities aligned with these areas of impact as well as opportunities to support specific school priorities and academic units. Our fundamental purpose remains clear: to pursue academic distinction through educational and research excellence. By engaging with our constituents and the issues that matter to them, we will mobilize our strengths in research and teaching to introduce the positive changes they most want to see in the world.

Second, we are investing in an unprecedented level of interdisciplinary collaboration across our entire university community, from our first-year students through the most senior faculty. Through programs like WashU Leads and Dialogue Across Difference (DxD), we teach students to frame problems and conceive solutions by integrating diverse perspectives and embracing different leadership styles. Central to this approach is our commitment to free speech, creating a culture where students can openly share and respectfully explore differing viewpoints.

More than ever, our researchers are reaching across disciplines to tackle the complex challenges of our interconnected society. The Jeffrey T. Fort Neuroscience Research Building and our new Center for the Environment exemplify this approach, bringing together large interdisciplinary teams to address pressing matters for humanity.

Together with WashU’s generous community, we can do amazing, world-changing things. Motivated by a shared sense of purpose and buoyed by a strong tradition of private philanthropy, we will continue to pursue our ideal of equitable access to a WashU education, removing financial barriers for the world’s brightest students to join us. And we will invest in the work of pioneering scholars whose research pushes the edges of our intellectual discourse and potential solutions.

From my vantage point today, I see a world of possibility. It is tremendously exciting to consider where this path might take us and to anticipate all that we might accomplish together. Collectively, our talent and commitment are unrivaled.

Now, it’s go time. Please join me for an extraordinary ride.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew D. Martin'.

Andrew D. Martin, PhD '98
Chancellor

FEEDBACK



THE DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE

“Congratulations on the new ‘WashU’ identity and logo. I love the rebranding and the new refresh of the *WashU Magazine* (December 2024). The design (layout, graphics, cover photo/design) is first rate and extremely attractive.

“Living in New England, I frequently pass by the UCONN medical school’s huge UCONN sign. Over the years, I have often thought that my beloved alma mater could take a cue from ‘UCONN,’ and now we have.

“Maybe we can finally give WashU its own identity. Even today, some of my relatives think I went to school in Washington, D.C., or Seattle.

“I approve of the new WashU identity wholeheartedly. Keep up the good work.”

— MICHAEL DIPASQUALE, MARCH '81

“As I was doing the Sunday *New York Times* crossword puzzle a few weeks ago, I was surprised to see a clue that read ‘University in St. Louis, abbr.’

“That was the first time I had seen ‘WashU’ used as a crossword clue. No doubt, I am not the first alum to have called that to your attention.

“Your campaign to change the ‘moniker’ of the university would seem to be working!”

— ELLEN BARON BLAUSTEIN, AB '61



“My name is Steven C. Roberts, and I’m a fifth-generation Missourian, product of St. Louis Public Schools and graduate of Washington University School of Law with two degrees, JD and LLM.

“Over the holidays, a WashU law school classmate showed me your ‘Lasting Impression’ photo from a previous issue of the magazine. I’m the guy on the floor with the large Afro. I was a dorm director for three years, and we were in a meeting for dorm assistants in the fall of 1975. At WashU, I was also a graduate student representative to the Board of Trustees,

and as a Danforth Foundation fellow, I was very close to Dr. Danforth.

“I later served the St. Louis community on many boards and was elected to the Board of Aldermen, serving for 15 years. I was the youngest ever elected out of law school. I also later served as sheriff. Over the years, my brother, Mike, and I created a vast organization, including hotels, television and radio stations, real estate and more with headquarters in St. Louis.”

— STEVEN C. ROBERTS, JD '77, LLM '77

“I am very disappointed that, to my recollection, there has been no mention of the university’s consideration of the name change to ‘WashU’ in the magazine prior to the December issue. ... Yesterday, I mailed a letter to Chancellor [Andrew D.] Martin with my concerns and belief that this was not a good idea, contrary to the individuals quoted in the story. While certainly not a random sample, fellow alumni I have spoken with, as well as friends who are aware I went to Washington University, had the same reaction. Washington University in St. Louis is one of the country’s top universities and easily distinguished from other schools using the Washington name.

“It’s fine to use WashU as a nickname or shorthand around campus and St. Louis, but it makes little sense to me to use it elsewhere. I can’t imagine faculty or administrative staff making presentations at conferences, testifying before government agencies or receiving awards being introduced as Professor X of WashU.”

— FREDERIC B. SISKIND, AB '66

We want to hear from you!

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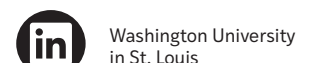
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ST. LOUIS
In



Photo: Carol Green/WashU



Music is the mission

Music filled the hallways and galleries of the Saint Louis Art Museum on Dec. 6, 2024, as WashU music students, including Miranda Holloway, set up in and around the museum as part of its “Festive Friday” series. Holloway is a senior in the McKelvey School of Engineering with a minor in music. Founded in 1946, the Department of Music, in addition to its primary missions of research and education, exists to enrich the cultural life of the St. Louis community.



Photo: Huy Mach/WashU

PUTTING CANCER PATIENTS FIRST

The Gary C. Werths Building at Siteman Cancer Center, a nine-story, state-of-the-art center for cancer outpatient care, welcomed its first patients last September. The new facility was designed to provide an innovative model of care that prioritizes patients' comfort and convenience, and reduces the need to return for multiple appointments. For many patients, this means they can see a multidisciplinary team of WashU Medicine cancer experts, as well as receive chemotherapy and other services in collaboration with BJC HealthCare caregivers, all coordinated during a single visit.

HANDS-ON POLICY

Last fall, students from WashU's Brown School took their classroom lessons to the frontlines of local policy. Senior lecturer **Molly Metzger** and 11 graduate students testified before the St. Louis Board of Aldermen Housing, Urban Development and Zoning Committee about Bill 114, which proposes more flexible housing options to address homelessness and housing insecurity. Mayor Tishaura Jones later signed the bill into law.

Above: The new Gary C. Werths Building exemplifies the collaborative strength of BJC HealthCare and WashU Medicine in providing innovative cancer care.

LEADERS IN THE MAKING

The George and Carol Bauer Leaders Academy offers new opportunities for WashU students to build their skills as leaders. The academy's programs are open to all students regardless of their role on campus or career goals. Opportunities range from individualized leadership coaching to cohort-based workshops to classes that incorporate leadership development into the curriculum. The Bauer Leaders Academy also hosted its inaugural Leadership Week in October. (Read more on pg. 18.)

STARTING ANEW

A war in Ukraine. The return of a repressive regime in Afghanistan. A natural disaster in Turkey. Whatever the reason, refugees from around the world live in St. Louis. Many of these new St. Louis residents hold college degrees and have experience in a range of professional fields, but obstacles like a lack of English-language skills and difficulty transferring credentials can stand between them and good jobs. To fight this so-called brain waste, the new Empower program, offered by WashU's School of Continuing & Professional Studies, fosters skills that refugees need to find jobs that match their talents and training. Funded by the Missouri Office of Refugee Administration and a generous university donor, the 26-week program is free to participants.



A global feast

Members of the McDonnell International Scholars Academy hosted the Global Food Science Experience at Sci-FEAST, an event at the Saint Louis Science Center. The high-energy, interactive showcase highlighted the vibrant cultures and flavors of the scholars' home countries. Teams of WashU students created hands-on activities around themes including "A Global Sugar Rush" and "Herbs Around the World: From Kitchens to Medicine Cabinets."



SOCCER STARS

Closing out a historic, undefeated season, the WashU women's soccer team bested William Smith 3-0 to win the 2024 NCAA Division III national title. The Bears took twice as many shots on goal as the opposing team, with goals scored by first-year student **Olivia Clemons**, senior **Gaelen Clayton** and graduate student **Ally Hackett**. The victory marks the 26th national championship overall for WashU Athletics and the second for women's soccer. The Bears wrapped the season at 23-0-2 with 18 shutouts, setting multiple team records. It was the first time in program history that the Bears finished the season without a loss. (See back cover for photo of the team.)

HELPING VETERANS

Through its new Veterans Law Clinic, WashU Law students assist low- and moderate-income veterans with services like corrections to military records. These kinds of fixes can make veterans eligible for more benefits and support systems such as health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition to providing a needed service in the region, the clinic aims to educate students in an area of law that they might not otherwise study.



DESIGN AGENDAS

Last semester, visitors to the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum discovered the complex, often contradictory story of modern architecture and urban renewal in St. Louis. Nearly 300 architectural drawings, models, photographs, films, digital maps and artworks were on display in the museum's exhibit *Design Agendas: Modern Architecture in St. Louis, 1930s-1970s*. It was the first major exhibition to examine how interlocking civic, cultural and racial histories, as well as conflicting ideological aims, reshaped the city WashU calls home. A scholarly publication linked to the exhibit — created by co-curators **Michael Willis, AB '73, MArch '76, MSW '76**, and **Eric P. Mumford**, the Rebecca and John Voyles Professor of Architecture at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts — will serve as one of a growing number of reference works on modern architecture in St. Louis.



This photograph of an early interior view of Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, 1950-56, was part of *Design Agendas*. (Credit: Hellmuth, Yamasaki + Leinweber, MS 2010-5, Yamasaki Collection, #51-111-5016, Archives of Michigan)

Delivering humanitarian aid digitally

Could the same digital payment platforms used to buy a cup of coffee or make a charitable donation be used to alleviate hunger around the world? **Tarek Ghani**, assistant professor of strategy at Olin Business School, thinks so. Ghani led an experiment in Afghanistan, where researchers partnered with local officials to identify poor, female-headed households to receive digital payments through an account with HesabPay, an Afghan commercial digital payments platform. The women completed a test purchase with a nearby private merchant using the platform to ensure that tech illiteracy would not prevent them from using the aid. The study showed the payments led to substantial improvements in food security for recipients and their families, while households reported skipping fewer meals and eating a more diverse diet during the program. They also used funds to purchase needed medications.



MANAGING THE 'SILVER TSUNAMI'

In the coming years, nearly half of the owners of small and medium-sized businesses are expected to retire. As a result, some \$100 trillion in businesses will be transferred to new owners, inherited or sold. The effects of this “silver tsunami” will ripple throughout communities and the economy. But in a report issued last fall, researchers at Olin Business School and the Brookings Institution say that with thoughtful planning and policy interventions, the impending ownership transitions can create opportunities for expanded employee ownership and greater inclusivity in business leadership. “Fortunately, this silver tsunami does not have to be a man-made disaster,” says **Peter Boumgarden**, the Koch Family Professor of Practice in Family Enterprise at Olin.

BEYOND VISUAL DATA

WashU’s Sensory and Ambient Interfaces Lab (SAIL), under the direction of **Jonathan Hanahan**, associate professor in the Sam Fox School, is exploring new, nonvisual ways to transmit real-time performance feedback within “compromised” environments — ones in which visual screens don’t exist or simply can’t be used. And to do so they’re working with WashU Rowing. Hanahan and his design team are exploring how haptic technology, such as pulses and vibrations, can transmit real-time feedback while the rowers are in action. “What we’re trying to do is build a toolkit of strategies, patterns, frequencies, location on the body, etc., that we can then start to apply to other compromised

environments,” Hanahan says. Such technology could ultimately help those from athletes to first responders.

GROWING FOOD WITHOUT LIGHT

The agriculture industry relies on photosynthesis to grow food to feed the world, but the process can be slow and inefficient. **Feng Jiao**, professor of energy, environmental and chemical engineering in the McKelvey School of Engineering, along with researchers at the University of California, Riverside, are working on a better way. The researchers are working toward optimizing the process of converting carbon dioxide into acetate, which potentially could serve as a feedstock. Plants could be genetically modified to feed off both acetate and photosynthesis, making vertical indoor farming much more energy efficient. The ultimate goal is to eventually engineer plants that can fully rely on acetate as fuel, which could lead to a massive reduction in agricultural land use.

FRUCTOSE AND THE GROWTH OF CANCER CELLS

Fructose consumption has increased over the past five decades, as have cancer rates. Arts & Sciences researchers are studying fructose’s role in the growth of cancer cells and have made a surprising discovery: Fructose doesn’t directly fuel tumors; the liver converts fructose into nutrients for cancer cells. Using metabolomics — a method of profiling small molecules as they move through cells and



For more on university research and faculty achievement, visit source.washu.edu/news.

Vaccine shows promise against aggressive breast cancer

A clinical trial shows promising results for patients with triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive tumor type that grows even in the absence of the hormonal fuel that drives growth of other types of breast cancer. Conducted by WashU Medicine researchers, the trial is the first to report results for an investigational vaccine designed to prevent recurrence of tumors in breast cancer patients. The trial at Siteman Cancer Center involved 18 patients diagnosed with non-metastatic triple-negative breast cancer. Each patient received the standard of care and three doses of a personalized vaccine tailored to home in on key mutations in their specific tumor and train immune cells to recognize and attack any cells bearing these mutations. Following treatment, 14 of 18 patients showed immune responses to the vaccine and, after three years, 16 patients remained cancer-free.



tissues in the body — the researchers found that one way in which fructose promotes tumor growth is by increasing the availability of circulating lipids in the blood. These lipids are building blocks for the cell membrane, and cancer cells need them to grow. The finding could open up new avenues for the prevention, care and treatment of many types of cancer — beginning with watching what you eat.

IMPLANTABLE DEVICE MAY PREVENT DEATH FROM OPIOID OVERDOSE

The opioid epidemic claims more than 70,000 lives each year in the U.S., and lifesaving interventions are urgently needed. Naloxone, sold as an over-the-counter nasal spray or injectable, saves lives by quickly restoring normal breathing during an overdose. But administering the medication requires a knowledgeable bystander, thereby limiting its lifesaving potential. Now, a team from WashU Medicine and Northwestern University has developed a device that may rescue people from overdose without bystander help. Researchers have developed an implantable device that can detect an overdose, rapidly deliver naloxone and alert emergency first responders. In an animal study, devices were implanted in the neck, chest or back of small and large animals, and they were able to detect signs of overdose within a minute of dropping oxygen levels. All animals fully recovered within five minutes of receiving naloxone from the devices.

A HIGH-TECH WAY TO TRACK AN AGE-OLD PROBLEM

Students in Arts & Sciences' "Geospatial Field Methods" course got a rare opportunity thanks to some 12 inches of rain dumped in eastern Missouri last November. As the Meramec River was flooding in real time, students traveled to Tyson Research Center to collect high-resolution images via drone. Skills the class developed in the field included how to make high-precision position measurements; how to collect and analyze light-detection and ranging (lidar) data; and how to fine-tune drone mechanics. "We had to think about the whole process, and not just the small pieces," undergraduate **Margo Crothers** says. The outdoor classroom proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience: The Nov. 8, 2024, flood event was the 10th-largest of the Meramec River on record since 1904.



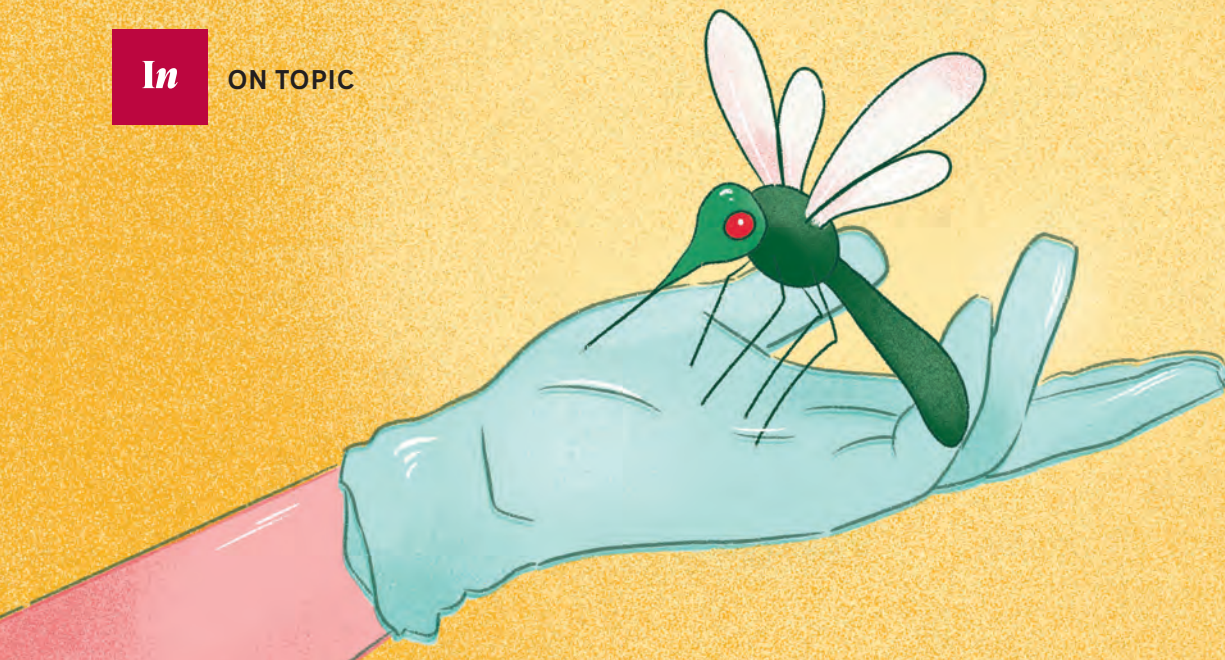


Illustration: Monica Duwel

Preparing for future pandemics

Two new grants support efforts at WashU Medicine to design vaccines, drugs for understudied virus families.

Scientists at WashU Medicine are laying the groundwork to rapidly respond to potential future pandemics caused by viruses from five understudied families. The effort – whose aim is to develop strategies and tools to produce vaccines and antibody-based therapies in advance of future pandemic threats – is supported by two major grants from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which together will add up to more than \$90 million in funding over the next three years.

One grant, totaling about \$15.6 million per year for three years, is focused on the alphavirus and flavivirus families. These mosquito- and tick-borne viruses cause arthritis, brain infections and congenital disease, and the best-known members include dengue, Zika, West Nile and chikungunya viruses. The other grant, for \$14.7 million per year for three years, takes aim at virus families that include respiratory pathogens such as the mumps virus, as well as insect-borne viruses that cause high fevers such as Oropouche and Rift Valley fever viruses. Both grants are part of NIAID's newly established Research and Development of Vaccines and Monoclonal Antibodies for Pandemic Preparedness (ReVAMPP) Network, and WashU Medicine researchers are leading two components of the network.

"If the COVID-19 pandemic taught us anything, it's that being prepared saves lives," says **Michael S. Diamond, MD, PhD**, the Herbert S. Gasser Professor of Medicine at WashU Medicine and the director of the ReVAMPP flavivirus and alphavirus program led by WashU Medicine. Diamond is also a professor of molecular microbiology and of pathology and immunology at WashU Medicine. "We had some

preparation for the COVID-19 pandemic because of previous research on the related SARS and MERS viruses. But there are other viruses with potential to cause pandemics for which we are even less prepared. We don't have specific therapies for any of the flaviviruses or alphaviruses, and we don't know how to quickly make safe and effective vaccines for them, either."

The research programs focus on one or two prototype viruses from each family, using them to develop and evaluate vaccine platforms and antibody-based treatment approaches that can be rapidly adapted to generate safe and effective vaccines and drugs for other members of the families in case of an emerging pandemic.

In addition, the teams are working on optimizing antibody-based treatments. These drugs, commonly used to treat cancer and infections, are a crucial part of the pandemic response toolkit because they can be developed much more quickly than other kinds of drugs for infectious diseases. The challenge is that viruses can develop resistance that undermines their utility, which is why all the antibody-based therapies initially approved for COVID-19 became less useful as the virus evolved and were eventually withdrawn.

"There's no way to predict when and where the next pandemic virus will emerge, so we need to be prepared for all possibilities," says **Sean Whelan, PhD**, the Marvin A. Brennecke Distinguished Professor and head of the molecular microbiology department. Whelan is the director of the ReVAMPP paramyxovirus, peribunyavirus and phlebovirus program led by WashU Medicine. "We're identifying the principles that determine a strong immune response for these virus families, so we can apply those principles to rapidly design and produce protective vaccines as needed."

■ TAMARA SCHNEIDER

QUOTED

WASHU IN THE NEWS

WashU experts weigh in on major topics of the day.

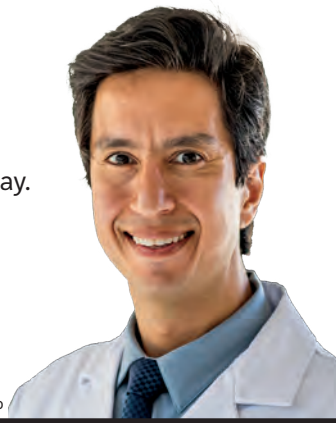


Photo: Sean Garcia/WashU

“In some cases, it can cause painful gut inflammation, ulcers and even certain stomach cancers.

“It is the most vulnerable who experience this, and it can really compound existing issues, like not having access to health care, not having access to nutritious food or clean drinking water.”

THERESA GILDNER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, IN “RAW SEWAGE HAS PLAGUED CAHOKIA HEIGHTS FOR YEARS. AGING WATER SYSTEMS ARE TO BLAME,” ON ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO, OCT. 25, 2024.



Courtesy photo

“Conservatively, obesity as a risk factor for dementia affects at least 1% of American adults, so that means over 2 million individuals could have dementia from Alzheimer’s disease attributable to their obesity.”

CYRUS RAJI, MD/PHD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF RADIOLOGY AND OF NEUROLOGY, IN “BELLY FAT LINKED TO SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER’S 20 YEARS BEFORE SYMPTOMS BEGIN, STUDY SAYS,” ON CNN HEALTH, DEC. 2, 2024.

“In the context of chronic illnesses, the term ‘slide’ stands for school stress, low pressure, illness increase, days darkening and exercise ebbs. This acronym highlights various factors that can contribute to a decline in well-being during certain seasons — and there’s some accuracy to it.”

SARAH BUDAY, A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANESTHESIOLOGY, IN “WHAT PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ‘OCTOBER SLIDE,’” IN HEALTH, OCT. 29, 2024.

“The whole point of this new process is to try to boost the efficiency of photosynthesis. Right now, we are at about 4% efficiency, which is already four times higher than for photosynthesis. And because everything is more efficient with this method, the CO₂ footprint associated with the production of the food becomes much smaller.”

FENG JIAO, PROFESSOR OF ENERGY, ENVIRONMENTAL & CHEMICAL ENGINEERING, IN “SCIENTISTS GROW CROPS IN NEAR-TOTAL DARKNESS THANKS TO NEW ‘ELECTRO-AGRICULTURE’ TECHNIQUE,” ON GIZMONDO, OCT. 23, 2024.



Photo: Kevin Roberts

“Privacy matters because information is power, and information about people means power over those people, regardless of whether we are talking about drone cameras watching us in our homes, social networks sharing sensitive data about us with advertisers, or artificial intelligence algorithms using our data to generate scores about our eligibility for health insurance, jobs or access to loans.”

NEIL RICHARDS, THE KOCH DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF LAW, IN “THE NEW JERSEY DRONE SCARE IS A PRIVACY WAKE-UP CALL,” ON MSNBC, DEC. 15, 2024.

AMCS 378: A Diamond in a Rhinestone World: The Performance and Politics of Dolly Parton

Why we will always love Dolly

Arts & Sciences course offers a deep dive into the transcendent career of Dolly Parton.

Singer and songwriter Dolly Parton has become an American icon over her 60-plus-year career, which also includes acting, business ventures and philanthropy. But beyond her obvious talent and charm, there is something about Parton that transcends cultural barriers.

“What is it about her that connects to everyone?” asks **Will Bonfiglio, MA '23**, lecturer in American culture studies in Arts & Sciences. “The left and the right, blue collar, white collar, young, old, across race, across sexuality ... what is it?”

Bonfiglio’s course, “A Diamond in a Rhinestone World: The Performance and Politics of Dolly Parton,” uses this question as a jumping off point to examine topics such as race, gender, class and sexuality through a Dolly lens. Students from across the university are drawn to the class – hailing from architecture, business, engineering, American culture studies and more – and they bring a wide range of perspectives to class discussions. Along the fandom spectrum, they range from big Dolly fans who have been to Dollywood to those casually familiar with her work.

“It’s a really interesting mix of students,” Bonfiglio says. “And Dolly is the perfect conduit for this type of conversation that is so important, so necessary and so urgent.”

Bonfiglio notes that there are no easy answers as to why Dolly Parton appeals to such a wide range of people. “We might have more questions now than conclusions,” he says. Students have noticed that Parton avoids talking about politics and religion, he says, but instead promotes ideas like love, hope, acceptance, caring, community and belonging. “I think that allows her to be kind of everything to everyone,” Bonfiglio says. “We’re thinking that might be the way she’s the great unifier. She has blazed her own trail.”

Student **Hannah Gallin** agrees that by not alienating portions of her audience, Parton can

make a bigger social impact. “Most of my classes have taught me how politicians and policy have shaped American history and culture,” she says. “But this class revealed how apolitical figures, such as Dolly Parton, have been similarly, if not more, influential.”

In addition to her careful navigation of hot-button topics, Parton draws in diverse audiences through three main avenues: the sheer length of her career, a bevy of popular businesses and her generosity.

“This woman is constantly sharing her wealth,” Bonfiglio says. “Maybe the great unifier is that so many people have benefited from her through things like the Imagination Library or her support of the Moderna COVID vaccine.”

Of course, Parton’s main connection to her fans is her music. Throughout the semester, students give presentations on selected Parton songs, including hits like “Jolene” as well as hidden gems like “Backwoods Barbie.” Each presentation covers a song’s history, commercial and critical success, interpretation of the lyrics, and what was happening in the U.S. when the song was released.

In addition, students write papers on Dolly topics as diverse as the disciplines in the room. “We have an architecture student who’s looking at the postmodernism of Dollywood as an amusement park,” Bonfiglio says. “And we have a business student who’s looking at Parton’s different business models, such as her cookbook line.”

Bonfiglio is proud of the community that has formed among his students, and he hopes he’s passed on a new appreciation for Dolly Parton. “We’re tired as a country,” Bonfiglio says. “But there’s something about the messages she preaches through her music, the hope for the future. I don’t know who doesn’t love that. We all leave class feeling a little better.”

■ JULIE KENNEDY, MA '22

Illustration: Monica Duwel



Dolly Parton's business empire includes:

- Ownership of her song catalog
- Co-ownership of Dollywood Co., which encompasses the Dollywood theme park, the Splash Country water park, Dolly Parton's Stampede dinner theater, and several resorts
- The pet line Doggy Parton
- Fragrances
- Books
- Cosmetics

Noted philanthropy projects include:

- The Imagination Library, which sends free books to young children in five countries
- Aid to victims of Tennessee wildfires in 2016
- Aid to victims of Tennessee flooding in 2021
- Aid to victims of Hurricane Helene in 2024
- \$1 million to Moderna's COVID vaccine research
- \$1 million to pediatric infectious disease research



Writing without fear

Lydia Paar weaves together personal tales of the American workplace while holding up a mirror to class mobility.

Lydia Paar, MFAW '19, has spent the better part of four decades in the American workforce, beginning as a 14-year-old “sandwich artist” at Subway and leading up to her current position teaching writing at the University of Arizona. In between, she worked as a Blockbuster video clerk, bartender, waitress, factory worker, hostel cleaner, funeral home greeter and the human behind a chatbot – to name a few.

In all, she’s held some 30 jobs across eight states, all of which has put her in a unique position to understand what it’s like to live paycheck to paycheck. The jobs also gave her insight into human behavior, from bosses who berated her to coworkers who became friends or romantic partners, to friends who became strangers. In short, her itinerant work life has given her a front-row seat to class mobility (or the lack thereof) in the United States, as well as a goldmine of material.

She began writing her memoir in the form of essays, some of which have been published in literary journals or collections. She deepened her storytelling skills at Prescott College and Northern Arizona University, where she earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in writing, respectively. But it was while she was a student in WashU’s MFA Program that the idea crystallized for *The Exit Is the Entrance: Essays on Escape* (University of Georgia Press, September 2024), a book that traces her life from that Subway shop to teaching. Each essay could stand alone, but taken together they give the reader a road map on how to keep moving forward in the face of tremendous obstacles.

One of the essays, “The Cockroach Prayer,” is about her brief time in the military, which ended with her decision to go AWOL in the middle of basic training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina. Understandable when you learn she was forced to do military drills despite complaining of pain, only to find out later – in a hospital – that



she had a broken femur, two broken ribs and a fractured pelvis. “Joining the Army Reserves,” she writes, “was reminiscent of a feeling that you wanted an adventure, you called it down upon yourself, but maybe you opened the door a little too far.”

“The Cockroach Prayer” was one of the essays she submitted with her application to WashU. As an MFA student, she recalls struggling with how to structure her memoir. “I felt as if I was always writing about violence,” she says. “I figured the book was going to have less ‘me’ and more researched material about military violence, economic violence, class violence, emotional violence.”

But two WashU professors and her classmates helped define the book, through workshopping with a close-knit cohort. “It was a classmate, Gwen Niekamp, who told me, ‘You’ve had so many weird jobs. Why don’t you make this themed around work?’ I loved that inspiration.”

And she cites Kathleen Finneran, senior writer in residence, and Edward McPherson, associate professor of English, both in Arts & Sciences, for pushing the book from pedestrian reporting into art. “They demanded precision,” she says. “They’d say, ‘OK, you’re talking about this character who’s a real person and making a claim about their behavior or what you think their motivation was, but can we see that? Can we see it demonstrated?’”

She has demonstrated that and more with *The Exit Is the Entrance*, becoming a writer without fear. “I have a lot of things in my life that I remember,” she says. “But instead of trying to shift it into fiction – which many writers do so much better than I – if I’m brave enough, I write my own experience how I remember it, and put myself out there on the plate.”

■ LESLIE GIBSON MCCARTHY

FACULTY



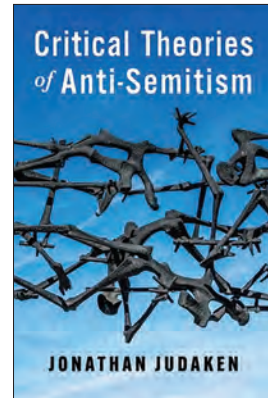
Francofilaments
EILEEN G'SELL

A poetic exploration of the intersections between Francophilia, feminism and cinema, *Francofilaments* moves with a rhythmic quality and invites the reader into a world where the everyday and the extraordinary coalesce. Eileen G'Sell, MFA '06, senior lecturer in the College Writing Program, captures the nuanced interplay of language, identity and the ever-present allure of French culture.



Rebuilding the American Town: Design and Strategy at Small Scale
PATTY HEYDA

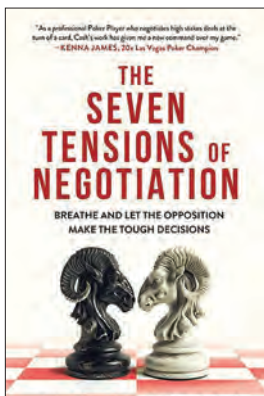
In the scholarship of urbanism, small towns are overlooked and understudied. *Rebuilding the American Town*, co-written by Patty Heyda, professor of urban design in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, and David Gamble of MIT, highlights how smaller municipalities are transforming to serve their communities and meet the future.



Critical Theories of Anti-Semitism
JONATHAN JUDAKEN

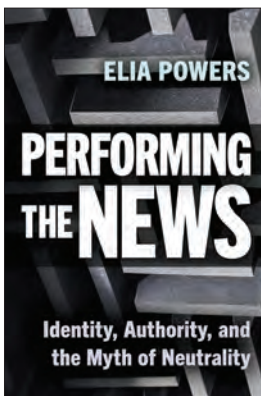
Despite its persistence and viciousness, anti-Semitism remains undertheorized in comparison with other forms of racism and discrimination. Judaken, the Gloria M. Goldstein Professor of Jewish History & Thought in Arts & Sciences, argues against claims about the uniqueness of Judeophobia. The book draws readers into a conversation with a range of modern thinkers whose insights are sorely needed.

ALUMNI



The Seven Tensions of Negotiation: Breathe and Let the Opposition Make the Tough Decisions
CASH NICKERSON

Is negotiation merely a means to secure a "yes"? *The Seven Tensions of Negotiation* challenges that comforting yet flawed belief. Blending elements of law and psychology, Cash Nickerson, JD '85, MBA '93, immerses the reader into the nuanced world of negotiation tensions, challenging your perception of who truly holds the cards.



Performing the News: Identity, Authority, and the Myth of Neutrality
ELIA POWERS

In *Performing the News*, Elia Powers, MA '10, takes aim at performance neutrality — the idea that journalists' presentation must be deemed unobjectionable and not detract from their message. It's a myth that reinforces the status quo, limits on-air diversity and slows efforts to make newsrooms more inclusive. Thoroughly researched, the book also offers solutions.



Everything Flirts: Philosophical Romances
SHARON WAHL

Sharon Wahl, MFA '97, takes life's trickiest questions about love and views them through classic works of philosophy in *Everything Flirts*. For Wittgenstein, whose scholarship focuses on language, Wahl muses about whether there exists an argument that will cause another person to love us. The sublime and the ridiculous come together in this book to playfully examine why love might be a topic too hard for even philosophers.



Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU

Putting the business of health front and center

In collaboration with WashU partners, **Mike Mazzeo**, dean of Olin Business School, seeks to enable the commercialization of medical discoveries.

Transformative solutions to the deepest societal challenges – that’s what WashU’s strategic plan “Here and Next” aims to advance. As a professor of strategy, I find this vision statement to be a compelling one. It articulates the university’s purpose, identity and portfolio. In other words, this vision tells us who we are, why we’re here and what we do. Simple, clear, compelling – just like any good strategy should be.

I also find myself attracted to this vision on a more personal level. And, indeed, it was this vision that brought me from my post at Northwestern’s Kellogg Business School to the deanship here at WashU Olin. You see, each morning, long before the sun comes up, I open up a popular game app and put a set of puzzles before me: word, number and geometric. Like many academics, it’s problems that captivate me. And, like many academics, it’s the methodical process of working toward a solution that energizes me.

Of course, the problems WashU aims to solve go far beyond online puzzles like Wordle. Our sights are set on entrenched, vexing challenges. The puzzles before us are ones with no image on the boxtop and many missing pieces. It’s on us to deduce the full picture and generate the pieces that, when assembled, represent a solution.

Health, climate, economic vitality – I can think of few problems more entrenched nor solutions more needed. These topics require us to work across schools and beyond the walls of the university. It’s these kinds of challenges that require WashU to bring together our disciplines, our community and our world.

Health, in particular, is an area where WashU can play a leading role. WashU Medicine is among the nation’s finest medical schools, and the new School of Public Health represents an opportunity to transform the field. Critical to confronting the multifaceted challenges in health – innovation, cost of care, equity, workforce – is a business lens.

In Olin’s new strategic plan, “All Together Now,” we’ve put the business of health front

and center. The strengths of our university, along with our region and our alumni, represent an unparalleled opportunity for our business school to partner in generating solutions and drive impact. That’s why Olin is expanding our educational programming, investing in our research, and partnering with the medical school around commercialization. We intend to produce more leaders, insights and entrepreneurs in health.

The commercialization of the discovery taking place in our medical school is an area that is particularly ripe for collaboration. Our scientists are creating new knowledge all the time. And yet, most have never sized a market or run a competitive analysis – precisely the things a business school teaches daily. Therefore, we’re working to train principal investigators in the fundamentals of business, develop project teams of MBA students to support entrepreneurial activities, and convene the community of investors and business practitioners.

We’re in the early stages of this work or, to resume my metaphor, we’re just beginning to put the puzzle pieces into place. We’re putting ourselves in a position to create new pieces, too – pieces that, even months ago, no one thought we could help build. I’m finding extraordinary partners in this process like **David Perlmutter, MD**, the George and Carol Bauer Dean of WashU Medicine, and **Sandro Galea, MD, DrPH**, the Margaret C. Ryan Dean of the new School of Public Health. These partnerships testify to the collaborative quality of WashU.

A truly transformative solution requires that we go beyond the walls of WashU. It takes more than one hand to put all the pieces together. Thankfully, in my time at WashU, I’ve found that there are so many who are eager to pitch in, to contribute to this project we call our university. I invite you, too, to reach out to me with a connection or an insight. Together, we can create transformative solutions to the deepest societal challenges.

■ MIKE MAZZEO

WHO

Mike Mazzeo, dean of Olin Business School and Knight Family Professor

EXPERTISE

His work on empirical industrial organization has been cited thousands of times.

PREVIOUS ROLE

Before joining Olin in 2023, Mazzeo spent 25 years at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management, where he earned multiple teaching awards.

ON THE ROAD

His co-authored book *Roadside MBA: Back Road Lessons for Entrepreneurs, Executives and Small Business Owners* was based on visits with more than 250 small and medium-sized businesses over a dozen years.

Redefining leadership

WashU believes every person has a leading role to play in building a better world.

“Anyone can be a leader,” says **Andrew Knight**, professor of organizational behavior at Olin Business School. “It’s not about formal status. Everyone has the potential to have a positive impact – to energize and bring people together.”

Fostering leadership potential is a WashU priority, which was enhanced in 2024 by alumnus **George Bauer** and his wife, **Carol Bauer**, through a \$20 million gift that created the George and Carol Bauer Leaders Academy.

Chancellor Andrew D. Martin says that leadership is not about holding office or positions of power, but about influencing and energizing others to reach a common goal. And the Bauer Leaders Academy is offering students opportunities to build such leadership skills both inside and outside the classroom.

“We have a bold goal to become the nation’s premier university for developing leaders of character and conviction,” Martin says. “Students who participate in Bauer Leaders Academy programs will hone their leadership capabilities, explore their purpose and learn how to lead in service of the greater good. Through its programs, curricular enhancements, training and research, the academy will catalyze our mission to graduate changemakers prepared to better society.”

While many U.S. colleges and universities have leadership centers, the Bauer Leaders Academy is the first such program to engage every undergraduate student. Over time, the program will expand beyond undergraduates to also serve graduate students. Opportunities range from individualized leadership coaching to cohort-based workshops to classes that incorporate leadership development into the curriculum.

Leadership development is one of the six priorities laid out in “Here and Next,” WashU’s strategic plan (learn about Here and Next’s progress on pg. 20). Knight, the executive director of the Bauer Leaders Academy and a senior adviser to the chancellor for leadership, says the academy – with support from **Provost Beverly Wendland** and **Anna Gonzalez**, vice chancellor for student affairs – is committed to providing leadership opportunities throughout a student’s time on campus, starting with Bear Beginnings orientation. Last fall, all first-year students participated in a leadership session, during which they learned about leadership, completed strength assessments and wrote their own purpose statements.

“If you wrote about a real desire to leverage your academic success to have a positive impact on your community and society, how would the pursuit of a career in architecture, for example, enable you to do that?” Knight asks. “During orientation, we emphasize that many students change course over time, but their general purpose statement can be this North Star they are pursuing throughout their life.”

Julia Macias, the Bauer Leaders Academy’s director of student leader development, expects programming to expand as students recognize leadership as a realizable competency, not an inborn trait. During the fall 2024 Bear Beginnings workshops, most students were reluctant to identify themselves as effective leaders. To assess the impact of its programs on students’ sense of identity and efficacy as leaders, the academy regularly surveys students.

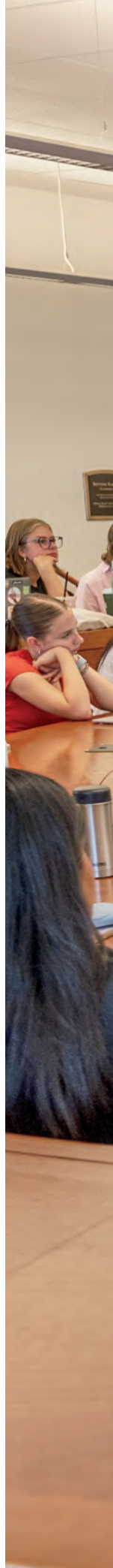
“The process starts with purpose,” Macias says. “For a lot of these high-achieving students, the goal has been to get good grades so they can get to this point. But purpose is something bigger than academic achievements. The students were hungry for that conversation – to think deeply about how their values connect with what they want to do.”

Zain Meer is a first-year student in Arts & Sciences. He liked how the orientation session emphasized that good leaders are honest and trustworthy as well as strong communicators and relationship builders.

“You could go to college for four years and learn all about computer science or biology but not have to think about what it means to be a leader,” Meer says. “Opportunities exist to become a leader of a club or an organization, but it’s entirely dependent on you as the individual to take a step forward. I like that WashU recognizes leadership is for everyone.”

Knight emphasizes how leadership is ubiquitous: “What makes WashU unique is that our programs are not limited to a single domain. And that’s because we’re not interested in just transforming people into leaders in their careers or in their extracurriculars; we are committed to leadership development as an important element of a life well lived. These skills and values permeate every facet of life, whether you’re starting a new business or working in pursuit of a community development goal.”

■ DIANE TOROIAN KEAGGY, AB '90



**BAUER LEADERS ACADEMY
STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- CliftonStrengths, an assessment tool that identifies talents
- One-on-one coaching
- Courses and workshops
- Experiential learning
- Cohort programs
- Leadership journey lunches
- And more



Andrew Knight (standing), executive director of the Bauer Leaders Academy, works with first-year students at a WashU Leads event during Bear Beginnings orientation. The new academy is committed to providing leadership opportunities for students throughout their time at the university.



From Here *to Next*

WashU Magazine checks in with Provost Beverly Wendland two-plus years after launching “Here and Next,” the bold, ambitious strategic plan that’s changing WashU in so many exciting ways.

■ STORY BY LESLIE GIBSON MCCARTHY

Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU



ON OCT. 3, 2022, AS THE WORLD WAS CONTINUING TO EMERGE FROM THE GRIPS OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY UNVEILED A BOLD AND AMBITIOUS STRATEGIC PLAN CALLED “HERE AND NEXT.”

Developed through a process that included 18 months of listening, outreach and work sessions – most of it on Zoom – and incorporating feedback from thousands of students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners, the plan mapped out a path forward for WashU for the next decade. And the chief facilitator, architect and champion was Provost Beverly Wendland, who drove the plan at every turn and beamed at every launch event, sporting a big smile and her signature green embroidered De La Cruz boots, a snappy, stylish pair from designer John Fluevog that she still wears from time to time.

Wendland, who in July 2020 arrived on the Danforth Campus from Johns Hopkins University, was all in for WashU, and she knew one of her first priorities would be to guide the strategic planning process. But no one saw the pandemic coming. Turns out, the lessons learned helping the university navigate COVID-19, combined with Wendland’s roll-up-the-sleeves-and-get-to-work attitude, helped set up the plan for success. Now two-plus years in, WashU is a different place because of Here and Next, and there has been, at times, dizzying progress. Here’s an update on what changes have taken place thus far – and what transformations lie ahead.





Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU

AT THE LAUNCH OF HERE AND NEXT IN OCTOBER 2022, YOU CALLED THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO IT “THE MOST EXHILARATING OF YOUR CAREER.” ARE YOU STILL FEELING THAT WAY?

It’s been exciting to see some of the initiatives bust out and come to life. Giving birth to Here and Next in 2022 was a thrill, and the sort of “mini-births” that are happening now, the actual byproducts of the plan, are giving me a similar degree of satisfaction.

From the beginning, starting with the Board of Trustees meeting where the draft plan was discussed in depth, and the next meeting when the revised plan was approved, it was clear that the trustees were completely on board with supporting this vision that our community had developed together. At that time, it really did feel as if anything was possible. Then there was the outpouring of interest and enthusiasm with all the launch events that October.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM HOW WASHU NAVIGATED THE PANDEMIC THAT HELPED GUIDE PLANNING FOR HERE AND NEXT?

We learned a great deal, starting with the structure we set up to deal with the pandemic. We began with the executive committee and working groups and then added a coordinating committee for the strategic plan layered in between them. This comprised the co-chairs of the working groups and a few of the steering committee to provide some ‘horizontal’ connectivity in between the vertical nature of the committee structure. The coordinating committee helped the committees see what each was doing and identify the areas of overlap, synergies and sharing that allowed for synthesis across the whole plan as it developed. It saved us from redundant or even contradicting efforts.

THE THREE PILLARS THAT HAVE GUIDED CHANCELLOR ANDREW D. MARTIN’S TIME HERE SINCE HIS INAUGURATION IN 2018 ARE ACADEMIC DISTINCTION, EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, AND “IN ST. LOUIS, FOR ST. LOUIS.” HOW DOES HERE AND NEXT SUPPORT THOSE?

I was brought here to help support and enable those areas. So a lot of the strategic plan is in harmony with those priorities. There are three pillars – research, people, community – and within the pillars are also 17 initiatives, all happening at different paces. We’re keeping an eye on the metrics and tracking things all the time. I’m regularly reporting to the trustees, and we’re making sure we communicate to the community about what’s happening.

CREATING THE PLAN TOOK 18 MONTHS OF LISTENING, OUTREACH AND WORKING SESSIONS. CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF AN IDEA THAT CAME FROM A LISTENING SESSION THAT’S BEING DEVELOPED TODAY?

I can name many: the School of Public Health, the Center for the Environment, the successes happening with digital transformation, the Confluence Collaborative. All these things are happening for the WashU community – and then, ultimately, the community at large. Now that we have those structures in place, we’re turning our attention to the “people pillar” of the plan, looking at increasing our research activity on the Danforth Campus in conjunction with WashU Medicine. Each one of these is a little mini-victory. Take them all together, and every day feels invigorating.

Above: Provost Beverly Wendland

COULD YOU TALK ABOUT THE TEAM YOU ASSEMBLED TO HELP YOU CARRY OUT VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PLAN? HOW IMPORTANT HAVE THEY BEEN TO THE SUCCESS OF ITS IMPLEMENTATION?

The initial team doing the intensive planning and early implementation included myself; Joe MacDonald, who at the time was a part of the provost's team; and then-Dean Mary McKay of the Brown School. The three of us worked in close concert, constantly asking ourselves: "Whom do we need to talk to? How do we plan for this? How do we maintain accountability for that?"

Having that tightly integrated group was important in the beginning, and I can't imagine better partners. Joe exhibited skill sets I knew would be effective for helping to develop the strategic planning process from the start. Now, as senior associate dean for strategy and innovation, he has also helped Olin Business School with its new plan. And Mary was the perfect person, with her relational approach and the connectivity she had established guiding the Brown School's strategic plan. She has been so effective in this process. Since that initial phase, the team has grown to include many talented professionals who have each contributed to the overall success of the plan in innumerable ways.

ONE OF THE UNDERLYING COMPONENTS OF HERE AND NEXT IS ITS COLLABORATIVE NATURE. SO MANY OF THE NEW INITIATIVES INVOLVE MULTIPLE SCHOOLS AND GROUPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. WAS THAT BY DESIGN?

In 2024, we underwent our HLC (Higher Learning Commission) accreditation process. And I am super proud of one of the things the committee told us in our closeout meeting: The sense of collaboration on our campus was palpable. That felt awesome.

Collaboration was intentional from the beginning. For example, with the "In St. Louis, For St. Louis" working group, we made sure we had partners from the community. We had parents on committees looking at things that were directly impacting our students. And we were able to expand our vision when needed. The area of campus wellness, for example, was originally going to focus solely on student mental health. But during the pandemic, we recognized that the mental health of our entire community was at risk. So we broadened it from being focused on student mental health to overall campus wellness for our students, faculty and staff.

Another example was in career services. We turned that into being more about professional

development for everybody – students, faculty and staff. We're making sure our managers are well trained so our staff, the backbone of what we do every day, can have the best experience, too. It was important to me that our staff could see themselves in our plan.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SPECIFICS. WASHU IS LAUNCHING ITS FIRST NEW SCHOOL IN A CENTURY WITH THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH. DID THE LESSONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC UNDERSCORE THE NEED TO PRIORITIZE THIS INITIATIVE?

It became clear to me once I arrived from Johns Hopkins that a school of public health was the missing piece, and the pandemic made that more obvious. In the many meetings we had in those early days, Mary McKay was famous for saying that COVID makes everything worse. What she meant was that it made existing public health issues unignorable. Our work in those days helped peel away some of the territoriality that might have occurred in trying to make a universitywide change, such as taking all these disparate pieces that currently existed and finding a way to get them strategically aligned.

Our School of Public Health, at its core, is a strategic realignment aimed at growing our opportunities as an institution to do the work we truly are obligated to do in keeping our community healthy with the strength that we already have in place with WashU Medicine and the Brown School. And yet there are assets in every one of our schools that have something to contribute to this truly interdisciplinary and highly impactful area of public health.

We didn't want to create another school of public health that is like all the others out there. After the pandemic, we wanted to examine where current ways of practicing public health failed us as a country. And so we are setting up a school that has a modern, 21st-century approach to public health. Ultimately, our goal is to make inroads into the challenges that are currently preventing our population from being as healthy as it can and should be – challenges such as providing healthy food, especially in underserved communities. And moving forward, it's going to be more important than ever to be an example for, and train leaders in, public health communications in order to rebuild the public's trust in this important work.

Since its launch in 2022, Here and Next has made some bold strides.

Chief among them has been the launch of the School of Public Health and arrival of Dean Sandro Galea, MD, DrPH.

Top photo, left: Galea speaks with Victoria Fraser, MD, the Adolphus Busch Professor of Medicine and chair of the Department of Medicine, on campus last summer.

Bottom photo: Here and Next also has expanded on existing programs like the Prison Education Project. "It's been exciting to see some of the initiatives bust out and come to life," Provost Beverly Wendland says.



Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU



Photo: Joe Angeles/WashU



Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU

Here and Next was launched to much fanfare after 18 months of listening, outreach and work sessions, and the campus was ready to celebrate. At left, Provost Beverly Wendland (left) speaks with Chancellor Andrew D. Martin and Rebecca Brown, vice chancellor for strategic initiatives and university governance, at a launch event in October 2022. Below left: Students were among the university partners invited to participate in the planning process. Below right: Students celebrate the launch of Here and Next during planned campus events.



Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU



Photo: Sid Hastings/WashU

IT'S AMAZING HOW FAST THIS HAS COME, TOO. YOU ALREADY HAVE ONE OF THE TOP PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOLARS IN DEAN GALEA.

We could not have found a more perfect dean. The fact that we were able to recruit Sandro to join us here in St. Louis, well, I'm still almost in disbelief that we pulled it off. And we are fortunate to have his wife, Margaret Kruk, joining us at WashU as well.

AND WE'RE BUILDING A BRAND-NEW SCHOOL RATHER QUICKLY IN THE WORLD OF ACADEMIA, AREN'T WE?

Yes, we are! It can take seven to 10 years to start up a new school, and we're doing it expeditiously, enabled by the incredible assets WashU already has in place. We already have the most highly ranked Master of Public Health program that's not part of a standalone school of public health. This will be at the heart of our new school. We're hitting the ground running with the collaborative manner in which the plan was developed, with people from across the university, including scholars like Bill Powderly, MD [the J. William Campbell Professor of Medicine and co-director of infectious diseases at WashU Medicine], and Deborah Haire-Joshu [the Joyce and Chauncy Buchheit Professorship in Public Health at the Brown School], who were on the team from the very beginning. And then Brad Evanoff, MD [the Richard A. and Elizabeth Henby Sutter Professor of Occupational, Industrial, and Environmental Medicine], came on board, along with so many others.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HAS EXPLODED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, WHICH MAKES THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT AND PRESCIENT. THIS ONE SEEMS URGENT. IS THAT FAIR?

AI and digital technologies are in the process of transforming pretty much everything that we do as human beings in society: how and what we teach, how we operate as a university, how we're doing our research. All these aspects are going to be touched by digital transformation and enabled by AI. A couple of things are happening here with the establishment of the Digital Intelligence & Innovation (DI2) Accelerator, led by Philip R.O. Payne [director of the Institute for

Informatics at WashU Medicine], who worked for two years to get the initiative off the ground. One of its priorities is a new database that's going to help faculty find new collaborators across disciplines, and it's going to transform the way faculty find each other to collaborate.

Another thing I'm excited about is the Digital Solutions Studio. What they've been able to do is provide support to research faculty groups. The way I like to think about it is, if you've got a research project where you want to compare different databases and information contained within them, and then look for intersections and overlapping information among them, we're going to help expedite that.

THE CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IS TAKING ON CHALLENGES LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE, AIR POLLUTION, ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER, FOOD INSECURITY, BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES. THIS MUST BE EXCITING FOR YOU AS A SCIENTIST.

Dan Giammar [the Walter E. Browne Professor of Environmental Engineering in the McKelvey School of Engineering] has delivered on what the mission and vision and goals were for this year: research and bringing together scholars in new configurations to realize collaborative work that otherwise wouldn't have happened without the center. One amazing example of that is bringing together the aerosols group at McKelvey with faculty from WashU Medicine on a project to study how air pollution is contributing to colorectal cancer. There are going to be so many ways in which environmental health is going to be a linchpin of what the center will be supporting.

WASHU HAS COMMITTED TO BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR "IN ST. LOUIS, FOR ST. LOUIS" THROUGH MYRIAD WAYS, INCLUDING THROUGH THE REVAMPING OF THE SCHOOL OF CONTINUING & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (CAPS). CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW CAPS IS HELPING THE REGION?

First, Dean Sean Armstrong was a fabulous hire. The team he's assembled has been strong in helping develop a new mission and a new purpose. We could not have hired a better leader.

With CAPS, we want to make our WashU-level programming available for modern learners, adults in the community outside the 18-22 age range who have complicated lives and different needs. Developing a program that meets the needs of those who otherwise would have thought WashU was not a place for them was important. We are partnering with our local

workforce to understand what skills St. Louis needs to meet the demand.

CAPS has also built on programs that already were established, like the Prison Education Project. With that, we're looking to do more than just the education part of it; we're looking to support reentry as well, developing programs that will help with education and jobs. And we recently received a grant from the Mellon Foundation to allow us to expand into the Missouri women's prison in Vandalia.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF BEING A GOOD ST. LOUIS PARTNER IS THE ST. LOUIS CONFLUENCE COLLABORATIVE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH. WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THINGS OUR NEIGHBORS WILL SEE THROUGH THIS?

This is a place, under the leadership of Bettina Drake, MD [professor of surgery in public health sciences at WashU Medicine], that will help us be the best partners we can be with our community. There's a science of doing community engagement that begins with community-based research. We're going to be helping our researchers understand how to better conduct this kind of research. We also want to be a front door for a community that might be seeking partnership with WashU but doesn't know where to start. Just like the Digital Solutions Studio is poised to be an accelerator for different types of research, I see the Confluence Collaborative as potentially being a similar kind of accelerator for the St. Louis community.

LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR STUDENTS. HOW WILL HERE AND NEXT AFFECT THEM DIRECTLY?

First, academic distinction and more research activity are going to create more opportunities for our undergrads to learn from and work in labs with some of the world's leading researchers. Another area in which our students will benefit is in leadership training.

We want to train leaders who are focused on making sure that people understand how to work together in teams toward a common goal, one that is rooted in purpose and character and capacity. What's helping drive that is the recent launch of the George and Carol Bauer Leaders Academy, which is already giving students – and faculty and staff – opportunities to develop the critical thinking and collaboration skills to get things done. (For more, see pg. 18.)

THE PLAN IS OFF AND RUNNING, AND IT FEELS AS IF THERE'S A RENEWED ENERGY ON CAMPUS. DO YOU FEEL THAT, TOO?

As WashU's chief academic officer, academic distinction is my guiding North Star. So things like improving our research administration so our faculty can more easily and successfully submit grant applications and updating our tenure and promotion policies are important. But I'm a scientist first. I understand, and will defend for my whole life, the importance of research at a university. Yet in our current culture, some segments of society are starting to question the value and benefit of higher education. We must be able to do work that society feels the impact of – and quickly.

Still, there is energy and momentum with Here and Next. I do feel as if there's pretty good penetration and awareness of our plans within the community. The brand refresh will certainly help get the word out about all the great things about WashU. It's been a wonderful convergence of things that are happening here.

SO LET'S ASK THE SAME QUESTION WE ASKED YOU IN 2021. GIVEN WHAT YOU KNOW, NOT ONLY ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD BUT ALL THE WORK PUT INTO HERE AND NEXT, WHERE DO YOU THINK WASHU WILL BE IN 10 YEARS?

I think that we are going to be recognized for our greatness.



Photo: Whitney Curtis/WashU



INSPIRED *by* NATURE

Faculty at WashU follow the natural world for inspiration and ideas for innovative and ‘wild’ solutions.

BY LEAH SHAFFER

DESPITE BEING IN THE BEATING HEART OF ST. LOUIS, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY HAS LONG BEEN ENTWINED WITH ITS NATURAL SURROUNDINGS. With a diverse mix of 6,500 trees scattered over its Danforth Campus, WashU has been recognized as a “Tree Campus USA” since 2010 and last year earned the rare level-three Arboretum status. And WashU’s grounds serve as a vital green corridor and ecosystem for birds and urban wildlife thanks to its proximity to Forest Park. Campus favorites include two “married” red-tail hawks being tracked through the Forest Park Living Lab and WashU’s Living Earth Collaborative.

“The campus offers green spaces for the benefit of all: not just students and staff but also the many types of wildlife that call WashU home,” says Jonathan Losos, the William H. Danforth Distinguished Professor, professor of biology and director of the Living Earth Collaborative. In recent years, species as diverse as red foxes, skunks, opossums, raccoons, shrews and field mice have been spotted on campus, he adds.

Much of the appeal of WashU’s Danforth Campus includes the natural nooks it affords

visitors. Students regularly carve out spots near the Elizabeth Gray Danforth Butterfly Garden in the spring or sprawl under trees when soft yellow ginkgo leaves carpet the ground in the fall. Near Olin Library, the Japanese flowering crabapple forms a shady dome, the ultimate reading (or napping) spot on hot months.

Green spaces and learning go hand in hand. Indeed, there is growing consensus that access to green space fosters learning through rejuvenation of attention, more active engagement and relief of stress.

But it’s not only students who benefit from embracing nature. WashU’s faculty find inspiration there as well.

It starts with taking on a challenge or recognizing a problem and trying to think outside the box. In this case, the emphasis is on the word “outside.”

No matter if they teach business, engineering, art or science, faculty at WashU find new ideas and innovative solutions by looking to the natural world.

The following pages showcase just a few examples.



Photo: Carol Green/WashU

“

I’m trying to generate more interesting questions about the complex world we live in.”

— PATRICIA OLYNYK

Shifting the cultural narrative

Patricia Olynyk is an artist working with science and technology-related themes, meaning she often works with scientists, humanists and technicians to explore a wide variety of topics, including those that involve mathematical patterns in nature.

She also creates art that “makes you aware of your own presence within the environment,” she says, speaking about her *Sensing Terrains* and *Dark Skies* installations.

Olynyk, the Florence and Frank Bush Professor at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, is often stratifying this space between the mathematical and the “*umwelt*,” our perceptual environment.

In the case of *Sensing Terrains* – Olynyk’s large-scale exhibition at the National Academy of Sciences that included silk prints of massive blown-up images of scanning electron micrographs (SEMs) of human and nonhuman specimens and piped-in sounds from Japanese gardens designed to “tickle the senses” – the idea was to offer “a very specific choreography of nature.”

The point, she says, is “to draw attention to the fact that the state of being sensate is not uniquely human.” Olynyk wants to get people thinking about how their senses experience nature in different forms. “What does that advance in terms of where we are in this precarious time?” she asks.

In *Dark Skies*, released in 2016, she was “inspired by the stunning cinematic moment of the sun going down and my concern about our loss of dark skies globally due in large part to light pollution.” The installation is the color of sunset, but on a very blurry, bumpy surface, with trails of dark colors blending into the reds and yellows. It’s meant to evoke where light meets night, and where human artificial light swallows it.

In another project, *Oculus*, she offers a massive amoeba-like sculpture with red eyes scattered like jewels, imposing a sense of surveillance but also an out-of-scale view of what could be a genetically modified fruit fly.

Olynyk mapped out grid patterns based on mathematics of natural forms, and then she distorted those forms, amplifying certain parts of the grid while reducing others. There are no straight answers about what the viewer should take away from Olynyk’s work. Her goal instead is to get people questioning.

“I’m trying to generate more interesting questions about the complex world we live in,” she says.

Nor does she limit herself to any one medium, type of art or science. Her most recent work, featured at Bruno David Gallery in St. Louis last fall, was a collaboration with cinematographer Adam Hogan. The video, “Black Swan in Three Variations,” explores what individuals can gain from highly improbable “black swan” events, touching on financial collapses, introduction of AI and even the sinking of the Titanic.

Pulling people into new perspectives on major events is another theme to her work. She constantly thinks about climate change and the need to shift the conversation away from just “awareness” and to get people to envision new futures. “Until you imagine a new world, people will be paralyzed,” she says. “We need to shift the cultural imagination over to new narratives that imagine where we’re all going to have to live in 50 years.”

Above left: Artist Patricia Olynyk explores relationships between human culture and the environment, often involving mathematical patterns in nature.

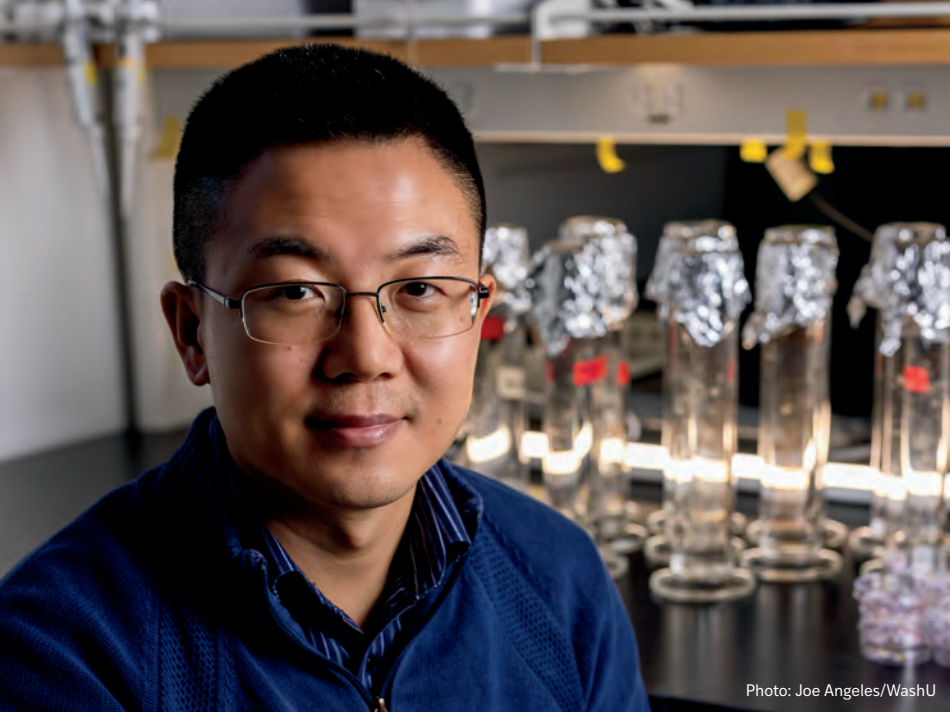


Photo: Joe Angeles/WashU

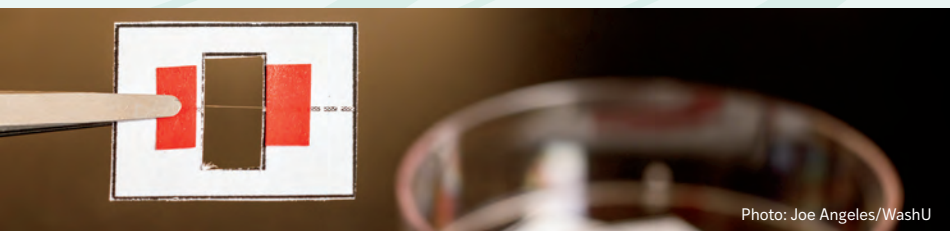


Photo: Joe Angeles/WashU

Using spider silk and mussel's "sticky feet" as inspiration, Fuzhong Zhang uses synthetic biology to produce high-performance materials from engineered microbes.

The modest mussel

Synthetic biology is revolutionizing how we “code” biological systems – enabling engineers to create new proteins, tinker with metabolic pathways, hijack microbes’ biosynthesis power. It’s like trying to set up a biological circuit board. And when it all comes together, scientists can potentially take these biological “switches” and program microbes (fungi, yeast, bacteria, algae) to produce useful materials, food or fuel.

Imagine the process used to brew beer – tanks of yeast biochemically nudged to ferment sugars to produce alcohol – applied to pretty much everything. It sounds like a science fiction dream, but it’s becoming more viable every day thanks to the work of Fuzhong Zhang, the Francis F. Ahmann Professor in the Department of Energy, Environmental & Chemical Engineering in the McKelvey School of Engineering.

Zhang can’t help but take inspiration from nature, because in many cases, “nature” has already solved a problem for him. Take, for instance, the challenge of mass-producing fiber materials to replace petroleum-derived nylon and polyesters. Spiders make some of the strongest and toughest fibers on the planet while being biodegradable, but the solitary and predatory arachnids can’t really be put to work.

Over the past decade, Zhang has been “programming” bacteria to produce fibers that are similar to real spider silk. But to make fibers stronger than spider silk and have far higher yields, he and his team turned to sticky critters: mussels. The proteins extruded by the foot of a mussel are very “sticky,” making them a fantastic molecular tool for material innovation purposes.

Mussels produce small threads at the bottom of their cones, which serve as their sticky “feet.” “We use these sticky ‘feet’ to stick silk proteins together and, ultimately, make our microbe-produced fibers stronger,” Zhang says. Taking the mussel-foot protein and fusing it to spider-silk proteins enabled Zhang and colleagues to finally

“Our mussel-inspired protein adhesives are both strong and biocompatible, potentially suitable for a wide range of medical repair applications.”

– FUZHONG ZHANG

crack the code to high yield and strong threads, which can be used in higher-end protective textiles such as bulletproof vests.

Taking cues from nature means that researchers can often solve more than one problem at a time. Zhang’s team also used the mussel-foot/spider-protein combo to make biocompatible adhesives for surgical glues. Traditional medical adhesives are either too weak for surgical repair or can cause allergic reactions, notes Zhang. “But our mussel-inspired protein adhesives are both strong and biocompatible, potentially suitable for a wide range of medical repair applications,” he says. If all goes well in clinical trials, that mussel-inspired glue could close wounds in various organs, saving time and potentially lives.

Zhang takes his work seriously. Not only is he innovating in synthetic biology, but he is also leading the way to a future where humanity can eventually replace the plastics that are choking the planet. As co-director of the Synthetic Biology Manufacturing of Advanced Materials Research Center (SMARC), he and his engineering colleagues at McKelvey are developing new classes of biologically synthesized, mechanically strong and biodegradable materials that harness themes from nature to replace traditional petroleum-derived plastics.



Photo: Virginia Harold

Christopher Stark is a composer of contemporary classical music rooted in the American West. He evokes emotion through incorporating sounds of natural phenomena, such as rushing water, gusty winds and wildfire.



Do I want to leave the audience feeling uneasy? Or do I want to leave them with wonder and awe and motivation to save nature?"

— CHRISTOPHER STARK

The music of nature

The “Pines of Rome” is a famous work of music from the 1920s by Italian composer Ottorino Respighi. The “Pini di Roma” has a sweeping sound, almost regal in quality, to evoke the stately pines around the city of Rome. When Christopher Stark decided to create a new version of this classical composition, he visited the sites in Italy and found much had changed over the last century. Tragically, the pines are dying because of an invasive parasitic insect.

“Other Pines,” written by Stark nearly 100 years later, replaces regal with ominous sounds to evoke the disjointed feeling of living in a world afflicted by climate change.

Stark, associate professor of music composition in Arts & Sciences, has never stopped thinking about nature and change since he started his career. “Being from the West, it’s just something I think about,” says Stark, who is from Montana. “So much of music is physical and mathematical in the same ways that a lot of natural phenomena are.”

His most recent work uses field recordings of fire, wind and water. Released in 2021, Stark’s “Fire Ecologies” composition resulted from a trip to the West Coast during wildfire season in 2020. He recorded clips of wind in deciduous and coniferous forests to get a sense of how the sounds compare; he recorded the crackle of fire, as close as he could get.

Stark’s work has been about climate change, but he’s also using nature as inspiration in a more general way. He thinks about how to evoke emotion in music, and sounds of nature can most certainly do that in a variety of ways. “Do I want to leave the audience feeling uneasy? Or do I want to leave them with wonder and awe and motivation to save nature?” he asks, while exploring the juxtaposition.

Composers learn classical techniques to help them evoke tension in their work, and Stark creates similar effects with his landscape recordings. In his “Language of Landscapes,” for instance, he used a recording from a lake – the sound of water lapping on the shores – and he slowly removed information from the digital audio file, so the sound starts to feel more uneasy and distorted, to give “the idea that this natural resource is eroding,” he says.

“I really love looking for analogies like that, between musical techniques and emotions, or sociopolitical commentaries,” he says.

Many people hear contemporary classical music and think it’s “difficult” or “noisy,” but Stark notes that “the context of noise can change so radically from upsetting to pacifying.” The sounds of fire, wind and water are complex and “noisy,” but just as equally have the potential to calm.

“It’s fun to try to create those sounds with instruments to evoke those same sounds coming from natural phenomena,” he says. “That dichotomy of what is synthetic and what is natural is really interesting.”



Photo: Carol Green/WashU



Understanding [the ‘why’ behind shifting rivers] is the underlying thrust of a lot of the work we do.”

— CLAIRE MASTELLER

Scientists understand the behavior of stable river systems. In today’s climate, however, Claire Masteller (left) is trying to determine how hard weather can push a river system before it moves away from the average, to understand why rivers shift and how rules change under extreme conditions.

The messy meandering

One lesson from Hurricane Helene that flooded North Carolina last fall is that weather events will be increasingly unpredictable and extreme as the world feels the heat from climate change. That’s why Claire Masteller’s approach to studying river systems is about “embracing the variability and messiness of the natural world,” she says.

The more humanity tries to tighten its grip on natural forces, the more unforeseen consequences can arise downstream (quite literally in this case). So Masteller, assistant professor of earth, environmental, and planetary sciences in Arts & Sciences, is studying the rules governing rivers: what makes some stay narrow, while others lose all cohesion and flood.

Her own journey into “geomorphology” meanders like a river. Masteller was a “Jersey Shore” girl, growing up on barrier islands that dot the lower coast of New Jersey. She was a first-generation college student when she attended University of Pennsylvania, dabbling in subjects from fine arts to international relations until she found her place in the geosciences. She went on to earn a doctorate on the opposite coast, at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and then traveled overseas for postdoc opportunities in Germany. Finally, Masteller landed in St. Louis, the ultimate river region, featuring the confluence of two major North American rivers: the Mississippi and Missouri.

She couldn’t have picked a better place to get down to the “nitty-gritty detail” of how rivers work, right down to how a single piece of sediment moves. She can do that thanks to the “mini river” in her lab, a room-length plexiglass flume that she uses to run experiments on erosion in gravel riverbeds. Her experiments are informed by real-world data and sampling, including satellite data from major events like Helene or local occurrences such as urban flooding in Southern Illinois.

Scientists have a good handle on understanding the average behavior of stable river systems, but under extreme conditions, the rules change. Therefore, in her lab, Masteller is trying to determine how hard weather can push a river system before it moves away from the average.

In the case of Helene, all the rivers in North Carolina experienced the “flood of record.” Basically, it was “the biggest flood the gauge has seen since the gauge was installed,” she says. Some of the rivers completely changed their paths following the flooding in North Carolina, but others showed far less widespread change.

Masteller wants to understand why some rivers are resilient, keeping their deep channels and sticking to their original paths after a major flood, while others end up widening and redirecting.

How to accurately predict which rivers will respond to these environmental extremes is more of an emerging field in the science, she says. She has a few explanations still under peer review. When it comes to the resiliency of rivers, she is evaluating whether the frequency of flooding matters, because the more a riverbed is constantly jumbled, the less chance it gets to stabilize between flood events. Mudslides may also be a factor “that might compound to make the river more sensitive,” she says. Research by Masteller and colleagues on these mechanisms of geomorphology will be the next step in the coming years.

Studying the “why” behind shifting rivers and other “earth surface hazards” humans experience means embracing the messy, meandering ways the earth moves and delving into the mechanisms behind that movement. “Understanding that is the underlying thrust of a lot of the work we do.”



Photo: Carol Green/WashU



Photo: Carol Green/WashU

In Guy Genin's lab, researchers are looking to curved python teeth as they develop new, stronger sutures to assist in rotator cuff surgery, which today has a high fail rate due to suture tearing.



Even if the force is distributed, the maximum force that each point can take is higher if you have a curved tooth than if you have a straight tooth.”

— GUY GENIN

Making sutures out of snake teeth

As is often the way with a group of scientists, the researchers and students in Guy Genin's biomedical engineering lab started talking one day about how a velociraptor might kill its prey, which led to another remarkable discussion of the ways modern predators kill their prey, which then led to something even more surprising: a new way to help people recover from tendon surgery.

You wouldn't think an image of a dinosaur ripping into flesh would inspire biomedical design. But Genin, the Harold and Kathleen Faught Professor of Mechanical Engineering in the McKelvey School of Engineering, can find surprising inspiration from the natural world.

Rotator cuff surgery is notorious for its failure rate; anywhere between 20%–94% of surgeries fail, most commonly because sutures tear through tendons at “grasping points.” Those grasping points are important, and with the current medical design, they resemble straight-backed shark teeth. That brings us back to the discussion of predators, not all of which “tear” the flesh of prey. During the dinosaur talk in Genin's lab, a postdoc named Lester Smith (now a professor at Indiana University) noted that pythons grasp and drag their prey but don't tear the flesh.

“Pythons actually grip onto their prey; they suffocate the prey and then ingest them,” Genin cheerfully intones. Cheerful because the result of this chatter is a new device using python-teeth-style hooks as the backboard to the sutures.

Those teeth are curved in such a way that redirects the force downward, pulling that tasty mouse flesh toward the gum instead of ripping it out. Just like a snake can pull, *really* pull its prey away and into its mouth without tearing, this new design of “python-tooth sutures” can handle the constant pull of tendon as the shoulder is engaged. “Even if the force is distributed, the maximum force that each point can take is higher if you have a curved tooth than if you have a straight tooth,” Genin says.

Genin and colleagues will be fostering python-tooth sutures through a long commercialization process that looms ahead. And that's only the start of his many endeavors. Genin, who is endlessly fascinated by the mechanical forces that affect the human body – down to the movements of cells and how those forces affect a cell's function – is a principal investigator in a new international consortium of researchers looking at whether cells can transmit information to each other through tiny vibrations in the scaffold of proteins surrounding them. Good vibes all around.



Photo: Carol Green/WashU

The garden as studio

Artist Juan William Chávez has a simple idea that can greatly improve a person's emotional health: Think of a garden as an art studio.

"The garden is one of the most unique spots where you can activate all the senses," says Chávez, a lecturer at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts.

Chávez runs a nonprofit called Northside Workshop, where he and collaborators use art, a chemical-free teaching garden and bee sanctuary as a vehicle for community building, self-expression and conservation. His work is being featured this spring as part of the Kemper Art Museum's exhibit *Seeds: Containers of the World to Come*.

"Our garden in particular is trying to replicate what is happening through nature," he says. In that informal, sometimes scruffy locale, people will often emotionally open up and think about their own place in the natural world. "They're going to tell their story with what they're growing and their relationship with nature," Chávez says.

The Northside Workshop has an art studio inside and an acre surrounding the building that serves as an example of permaculture gardening, a type of gardening that replicates more natural conditions. For the past few years, the group has been holding workshops that highlight the importance of native bees, which account for some 80% of all pollination of flowering plants in the wild.

The more local gardeners can offer a comfy home for those bees, the healthier regional ecosystems can become. But Chávez emphasizes that many people will need to rethink how they imagine gardening. "Everyone has some type of access to green space, and usually when we look at green space, we associate it with chores or something to manicure," he says.

Chávez proposes letting go of that need to control and embracing what's happening in the garden. He has personally seen the benefits. "My back appreciates it," he says, noting that his previous studio involved a lot of desk work. "The desk warrior is de-stressing, stretching the legs."

Along with physical benefits, he appreciates the opportunity for self-reflection the gardening provides. "I feel connected to my ancestors," says Chávez, whose family is from Peru.

The Northside Workshop offers another benefit: an internship program at WashU, where students are taught about permaculture gardening. The interns tend the garden in amiable silence, as gardening forces them off the phone, puts them in the present tense and grounds them.

"All of a sudden, nature starts unfolding, and nature is medicine," Chávez says.

“
They’re going to tell
their story with what
they’re growing and their
relationship with nature.”

— JUAN WILLIAM CHÁVEZ

Above left: Juan William Chávez is director of the Northside Workshop, where he helps build community, self-expression and conservation. The Sam Fox School teacher also helps students develop relationships with nature in the workshop's garden.

what
is
**DESIGN
TODAY?**

Graduate students studying human-computer interaction begin courses this fall – with help from prominent alumni.

BY LIAM OTTEN, BFA '93

“In the classroom, you are rewarded for proving that you are correct,” says Aaron Zemach. “In the lab, you’re equally rewarded for proving that you were wrong – because that lets you move on to the next thing.”

Zemach, BS ’14, MS ’15, is discussing WashU’s new Master of Design for Human-Computer Interaction and Emerging Technology (MDes). The two-year, 60-credit professional program – the first STEM-designated degree administered by the College of Art in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts – will include traditional design courses and a multiyear, lab-like studio experience. Announced last summer, the program will welcome its first cohort in the fall.

But the planning process stretches back years. And in critical ways, that planning has been shaped by a trio of alumni advisers. Like Zemach, Molly Needelman, BFA ’08, and Will Bates, BFA ’09, have spent their careers working in user experience, or UX, for some of today’s most prominent tech companies. Now all three are using their expertise to benefit the next generation of UX designers.

“The three of us often talk about how we learned to think at WashU,” says Bates, a senior staff UX manager at YouTube, where he oversees the YouTube on TV team. “It was never about using the latest tools, because the reality is in a year many of those tools will be out of date. Tech companies want people who can question, who can pose interesting provocations, and who can put together unexpected combinations.”

Needelman, a UX strategist at Google who co-founded YouTube’s GenAI Lab, nods in agreement. “The ability to think and the ability to collaborate,” she adds, “are two places where WashU really shines – and prepares its students for the future.”

DEFINING DESIGN

The new MDes program features connections with the McKelvey School of Engineering and Arts & Sciences. In many ways, it grew out of WashU’s popular minor in human-computer interaction, launched in 2018 by the Sam Fox School and McKelvey Engineering.

The field, variously known as UX, HCI and interaction design, dates to the 1980s. Home computing created millions of users who were neither academic researchers nor information technologists. This generated tremendous opportunity but also highlighted a gap between programming capacity and intuitive usability. In 1986, when the “MS-DOS Power User’s Guide”

ran 397 pages, Apple’s Human Interface Group included just seven people.

But as smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices turbocharged the digital realm, the need for, and competitive advantages of, intuitive usability grew clear. At WashU, HCI became part of the computer science and communication design curricula. Still, their respective approaches remained rooted in disciplinary traditions.

“We all use the term ‘design,’ but it doesn’t always carry the same meaning,” says Jonathan Hanahan, associate professor in the Sam Fox School and founding chair of the new MDes program. Hanahan also co-founded the HCI minor with Caitlin Kelleher, professor of computer science and engineering at McKelvey Engineering.

“In engineering, design is about finding *quantitative solutions*,” Hanahan continues. “‘This is the problem; let’s go solve it.’ But in communication design, we’re focused on *qualitative questions*: ‘Why is this the problem? Whom is that solution for? How is it going to be experienced?’”

“So in a collaborative sense, the two groups really benefit from one another,” Hanahan adds. “Can we make a solution that is efficient and effective but also easy, delightful and fun?”

OLD FRIENDS

Bates and Needelman both recently served on the Sam Fox School’s Interaction Design working group, as part of its “Shaping the Future” strategic plan. They have the relaxed camaraderie of old friends and former classmates. “Molly is the reason I ended up in art school,” Bates says with a laugh.

Arriving at WashU, Bates intended to study psychology and film but by sophomore year was contemplating a switch. “So I went to talk to Molly, who was an RA in my building,” Bates says. “She was sitting cross-legged on the floor, surrounded by a series of beautiful watercolor paintings of a jazz funeral in New Orleans. And I thought, ‘You know what? I think I should go to art school.’”

In 2014, when YouTube had an opening for a UX strategist, Bates, who’d joined the company two years earlier, insisted that Needelman apply. “‘This role is made for you,’” Bates remembers telling her. “It felt very full circle.”

Like Bates, Needelman had chosen WashU for its emphasis on cross-disciplinary collaboration. “The opportunity I saw here

AARON ZEMACH, BS '14, MS '15



Photo: Loren Wohl

was to be fluid amongst my interests,” she says. “I was able to study world religion and design and printmaking and children’s literature. All these things are part of me.”

Before joining YouTube, Needelman had worked in the nonprofit sector and as an independent consultant. She had also been in the inaugural class of a new dual degree program, earning both an MBA from Johns Hopkins University and a master’s in design leadership from the Maryland Institute College of Art.

“It was exciting,” she says. “I was in that first cohort, and as students, we were at the ground level. We could help to shape the future of the program.” The experience crystallized her thoughts on best practices in professional design education, readying her to provide her earlier alma mater guidance on its own new MDes program.

A HYBRID FIELD

In spring 2019, just a few months after the launch of WashU’s HCI minor, Hanahan reached out to Bates – who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area – with a request. Would Bates take a trip back to St. Louis and help review current students’ final projects?

“I had a visceral memory of presenting in that same room as a student,” Bates says. “It was surreal to be on the other side.” Longer conversations ensued: How might WashU’s growing HCI curriculum instill user-centered

principles? What’s the right balance between HCI and foundational design skills?

Later that year, Needelman joined Zemach, then a UX designer and prototyper for Google Docs, Sheets and Slides, for a lecture and a series of HCI workshops with McKelvey and Sam Fox students. “It covered all the things that we’re still really passionate about,” Zemach remembers. “Talk to people. Do research. Measure impact.”

That was the first time Zemach, who is based in New York, met Needelman, who is based in Chicago. But Zemach and Bates had known one another for a few years. In 2014, as a WashU senior, Zemach interned at Google, where Bates was leading intern programming.

Their biographies, they eventually learned, were almost comically similar. Raised in the Chicago suburb of Deerfield, Illinois, both had attended the same middle school, the same high school, the same summer camp and, of course, the same university. They’d even won some of the same awards.

“Aaron and I have lived the exact same life,” Bates quips. Zemach shoots back. “You were my role model. I just didn’t know it.”

Yet their different academic paths – Bates through Sam Fox, Zemach through McKelvey – speak to the field’s hybrid, and quickly evolving, nature. What is the right background for UX professionals? What should HCI training encompass? Indeed, when first applying to Google, Zemach worried about his portfolio.

“I was panicking!” he recalls with a laugh. “I thought the expectation was that you’d submit all the beautiful visual designs that you’d created. What I had were applications I’d built. But it’s interesting: The hiring manager went through the application pools for interaction design and for software engineering. Who had experience with both? Because that’s who they were really looking for.”

Adds Needelman: “I came into this career as a Sam Fox alumna with an MBA. Will came

“DESIGN IS
INHERENTLY ABOUT
MAKING SOMETHING
IN SERVICE TO
SOMEONE ELSE.”

– Will Bates

from Sam Fox with a BFA. Aaron comes from engineering. And now we're all collaborative teammates."

SUPERPOWER

Since announcing the new MDes, Hanahan has spent a lot of time on the road. He's visited more than a dozen colleges and universities. He's spoken with scores of prospective students. He is often asked about the ideal background for applicants.

Hanahan responds with an analogy. Imagine a neighborhood. There are a bunch of different houses. "We want people who are experts in their own backyards," he says. "But they're also interested in dialogue across the fence."

"You might have technical skills," Hanahan continues, "but you're never going to have all the technical skills. Learning to embrace that, learning that you don't have to solve every problem by yourself – it's kind of a superpower."

That perspective is echoed in the program's structure. Studios will focus on research, design and engineering principles. Seminars will explore the history, ethics and moral positioning of technology. One intriguing, required seminar – "What Could Go Wrong?" – will investigate social impact and the nature of unintended consequences.

But the heart of the MDes program will be what organizers have dubbed the Ix3 Studio, a collaborative, lab-like research space that, critically, will continue across all four semesters. "That continuous element is unique," Hanahan says. "Most design programs chunk curricula into semester-based projects. But industry has taught us that you cannot develop, test and refine a solution in a single semester."

"We think of technology as fast," Hanahan adds. "And, yes, we can do some things very fast. But working with complex systems takes time. The Ix3 Studio is where design thinking, technical skills and leadership will all get synthesized."

THE AUDIENCE PIECE

Short for "interaction, innovation and impact," the Ix3 Studio represents a convergence of design, engineering and business cultures. For all their differences, the fields do share many values: the importance of research, the processes of ideation and prototyping, the need for testing and clear-eyed critique.


"Design is inherently about making something in service to someone else," Bates says. Fashion designers create clothing for others to wear, he explains. Communication designers impart information for others to consider. "Interaction design is about making a digital product that is functional, is usable and addresses the specific needs of a user. A lot of students, especially at the undergraduate level, totally skip over that audience piece."

The new MDes program will be housed in the Sam Fox School's planned Design Futures Hub, which will be constructed within Anabeth and John Weil Hall.

Photo: James Byard/WashU



Photo: Taylor Glascock

A photograph of two men in a studio setting. In the foreground, Jonathan Hanahan, a man with short brown hair wearing a black t-shirt, is looking intently at a screen (partially visible on the right) and pointing at it with his right hand. He has a small tattoo on his right forearm. In the background, another man with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue polo shirt, is looking at the same screen with a thoughtful expression, his hand resting on his chin. The background is a bright, modern interior with vertical light fixtures. A large teal graphic element is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing text and a quote.

Jonathan Hanahan (left) will serve as chair of WashU's new Master of Design for Human-Computer Interaction and Emerging Technology.

“THE IX3 STUDIO IS WHERE DESIGN THINKING, TECHNICAL SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP WILL ALL GET SYNTHESIZED.”

– Jonathan Hanahan

Photo: Audrey Westcott/WashU

WILL BATES, BFA '09



Photo: Christie Hemm Klok

Needelman recalls her own senior thesis project. She created a resource book for elementary school teachers who had students with more severe cases of spina bifida. “I did a lot of work,” she says. “I learned from kids who were thriving. I interviewed doctors. From a design perspective it was clever. It was self-illustrated. It’s a project I’m still proud of.

“But I never talked to an actual elementary school teacher,” she adds ruefully. “I never had the understanding, or frankly the courage, to go out and work with them.”

Zemach nods. “That’s a big part of HCI,” he says. “If I have an idea in my head, I want to put it in front of colleagues and users as soon as possible and have them pull it apart – so that we can learn and continue to iterate.

“If we do that enough, if we go through enough cycles, eventually we get to the point where we’ve found something that’s true and useful and impactful,” Zemach adds. “And ‘failure’ – in quotes, because it’s not really failure – is just a step in the process.”

A DESIGN PROBLEM

Launching a new academic program is never a small endeavor. In a hybrid discipline involving multiple schools and departments, the to-do list is particularly daunting: Recruit faculty and students. Design curricula. Determine research parameters. Establish criteria for promotion and advancement. Secure physical space and equipment. Communicate with stakeholders. Respond to developments in the field.

“Building this program is itself a complex design problem,” Hanahan says, noting that throughout the process, Bates, Needelman and Zemach served as trusted industry advisers. “In a way, it’s an argument for why designers should be in leadership positions within complex organizations.

“Designers tackle problems through both analytical and speculative processes,” Hanahan continues. “Technology is only as valuable as its use case. If it just sits on a shelf, what’s the point? We’re building a program where design, tech, craft and criticality are all baked in from the beginning.”

Zemach, recalling his own path from computer science to HCI, makes a similar point:

“I discovered that my passion wasn’t solving problems that computers were having. It was solving problems that people were having, with computers.”

“That’s the foundation of what we do,” Needelman agrees. “All the research and design, all the products that we’re working on – it’s all built on a foundation of responsibility.

“There are so many possible futures we could be walking into,” she adds. “How do you, as a designer, understand the human implications? How do you understand the social, technological, economic, environmental and ethical implications? Design is all of that.”

“I do a lot of hiring for my team,” Bates says. “I’m always looking for that nontraditional background. I want people who can demonstrate a depth of self. What are you really interested in? What are you passionate about? Can you think through the bigger picture? I’m always going to be drawn to candidates who can demonstrate their thought processes over those who only show that they can make something pixel-perfect.

“One of the reasons I love the MDes program is that it doubles down on the strengths of WashU,” Bates concludes. “Let’s get people who are passionate about ideas and concepts, who have their own interests and their own ways of combining things – and let’s go make something real.”

Next



(Top photo) Courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum; (Bottom photo) Courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum/Stephen Ironside



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'Crystal' clear

Last fall, **Jen Padgett, MA '12, PhD '18**, was named the first Wingate Curator of Craft at the world-renowned Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. Now in her seventh year at Crystal Bridges, Padgett has made numerous contributions to its modern collection and the exhibition program. Read more at source.washu.edu/2025/04/crystal-clear.

A compassionate leader unties the knots of health care

As a health-care executive, KMarie King, MD, follows a set of principles: ‘Be kind, have integrity and the patient comes first.’

More than 25 years ago, **KMarie King, MD ’98**, observed **Steven Strasberg, MD**, now professor emeritus of surgery at WashU Medicine, carefully lay out sutures during a bile duct reconstruction surgery. A third-year medical student at the time, King was mesmerized.

“I knew in that moment that I wanted to work on the liver and the pancreas, just like he did,” King says. “Here I was, part of a team helping a patient with a complex problem in this complex structure. It just spoke to me.”

King followed that instinct. After graduating from WashU Medicine and completing multiple fellowships, she joined the faculty at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine as a hepatobiliary and pancreas surgeon. There, she conducted NIH-funded research, maintained a surgical practice and taught medical students and residents. She also continued her own education, earning a master’s degree in biomedical sciences. Then came another moment of inspiration.

“As I evolved, I remember one of the administrators saying, ‘You really need to focus on what you like most, because you’re doing everything,’” King recalls. “I started to peel back the layers one by one and think about what I loved most out of all my academic interests, and I realized it was the opportunity to impact more than a single patient at a time.”

A first-born child who regularly looked after her younger siblings, King was always comfortable guiding others. Before medical school, she honed her leadership skills in the U.S. Army, serving in Operation Desert Storm. In hospital administration, she saw a new opportunity to lead – as well as to learn. She decided to pursue yet another master’s degree, this time in business administration.

“Just like surgeons, administrators have their own language. I wanted to learn that language,” King says. “I lean heavily into formal learning because I always want to be well prepared. I feel as if I’m here on this planet to learn as much as I can.”

Armed with this wide array of expertise, King took on leadership roles at Morehouse School of Medicine and Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. In 2021, she accepted her current positions, department chair of surgery and chief of surgery at Albany Medical Center. With the appointment, King became the first Black female chair of surgery at an academic health science center in the United States.

She has made fast progress at Albany, implementing a surgical quality infrastructure that built on her work at Grady. Her team has established role-based guidelines outlining best practices for everything from pre-op patient optimization to improved chart documentation. The result? Albany Medical Center Hospital has achieved a steep decline in colorectal surgical site infection rates, as well as improved outcomes in cardiac and vascular surgeries.

King sees parallels between performing a surgery and leading an organization. Each part of her job requires deep knowledge of the current situation, a clear vision of the end goal, and the ability to break down procedures into their component parts. At each step, King sees herself as a “knot-untier,” fully devoted to process improvement.

“Patients may have the same diagnosis, but how the tumor is growing or how it presented is unique, so it requires real thoughtfulness about the surgical approach,” King says. “Is it better for a patient to undergo treatment A or B before surgery, or should surgery come first? It’s important to manage the potential roadblocks that may be faced when working backward from the desired outcome, which is to rid the patient of disease. Administratively, you do the same when you determine the desired outcomes and work backward to get to the desired goal.”

As department chair, King takes pride in her successes in personnel development and recruitment. “Health-care leadership is a team sport, and it’s hard to do any of it by yourself,” she says. At Albany, she has hired more than 45 faculty and set up leadership coaching for division chiefs and medical directors. In the spirit of continuous learning, she also has a leadership coach.

King recently accepted two new leadership roles on the global stage, becoming both president of the Society of Surgical Chairs and president-elect of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons. With each new appointment, she remains committed to the principles that led her to medicine.

“I lean into the authenticity of who I am and the credos that I live by: Be kind, have integrity and the patient comes first,” King says.

“It’s so important that I impact those around me with kindness, that I’m a compassionate leader and that I’m leading in a way that makes long-lasting change.”

■ CLAIRE GAUEN





WHO

KMarie King, MD '98

A LEADER IN HER FIELD

- Henry and Sally Schaffer Chair of Surgery and Chief of Surgery, Albany Medical Center
- President, Society of Surgical Chairs
- President-elect, Society of Black Academic Surgeons

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF WASHU MEDICINE

“I remember walking into my medical school interview and how the late Dr. Richard Brand, who was then assistant dean for students and former dean of the Dental School, made me feel like I belonged there — how he was excited for my candidacy and wanted me to be a part of WashU. That permeated all the way through my time there. It was such a culture of support.”



Courtesy photo

Competition and freedom

As head of antitrust at the U.S. Department of Justice, Jonathan Kanter brought cases challenging the power of some of the world's biggest companies.

WHO

Jonathan Kanter, JD '98

BEST GIFT FROM WASHU

"My family. I met my wife at WashU Law, and we have a beautiful life together. That's the biggest gift one could ever receive from anywhere."

ANIMAL LOVER

Kanter's dog, Murray, was an honorary member of his management team. The division's annual awards were dubbed "The Murrays."

NO STRANGER TO ST. LOUIS

He comes back to WashU at least once a year to join Professor John Drobak's antitrust course.

"We knew at every step that the work we were doing was historic," says **Jonathan Kanter, JD '98**. As assistant attorney general for the DOJ's antitrust division under President Joe Biden, Kanter spearheaded headline-drawing cases against corporate giants Google, Apple, Live Nation-Ticketmaster and others, earning the moniker "The Trustbuster" from *The New York Times*. In doing so, he's helped define what it means to be a monopoly in the digital age — and what it takes to fight against them.

"These cases are not unlike the large antitrust cases I studied at WashU," Kanter says. "Whether it was against Standard Oil or AT&T or Microsoft, a small number of seminal cases have become defining moments in the

history of antitrust law and economic policy in our country. It was thrilling to be a part of that, bringing the next generation of cases that will define this area of law and policy for generations to come."

By the time Kanter started his second year at WashU Law, he knew that he wanted to pursue antitrust as a career. **John Drobak**, the George Alexander Madill Professor of Real Property & Equity Jurisprudence, encouraged Kanter to pursue his first internship with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Kanter ended up working at the FTC for two years before joining several large law firms and eventually opening his own firm, focusing on antitrust enforcement.

Drobak also taught Kanter's favorite class at WashU, a course on property rights offered jointly by the law school and the Department of Economics in Arts & Sciences. Co-taught by the late Nobel laureate **Douglass North**, the course's interdisciplinary approach influenced how Kanter would go on to run the antitrust division at the DOJ.

"In addition to having top-flight lawyers and economists, we brought in data scientists and strategy experts," Kanter says. "We really encouraged and built an interdisciplinary team, and that was a key ingredient of our success."

That team landed major wins, such as a determination by a judge last August that Google's online search engine is an illegal monopoly. Kanter also takes pride in lesser-known cases that he believes can lead to improvements in the daily lives of Americans.

One such case alleged that Agri Stats, Inc., illegally shared competitively sensitive information among meat processors, potentially leading to higher grocery prices. Whether in agriculture, housing, travel or a host of other industries, Kanter believes competition is essential to economic freedom.

"Competition and freedom go hand in hand," he says. "The real essence of our country is freedom from tyranny, whether that's tyranny by the government or tyranny by a company with as much power as a government."

■ CLAIRE GAUEN

Room to grow

Laurie Phillips is committed to serving homeless families in the St. Louis region.

In a quiet office park in Bridgeton, Missouri, the noise of construction fills the air. **Laurie Phillips, MBA '99, MSW '09**, is thrilled. As executive director of Room at the Inn, a nonprofit serving homeless families, Phillips knows what this project will mean for her clients.

After renovations are completed, Room at the Inn will be equipped to house up to 35 children and adults at a time, a substantial increase from the current capacity of 20. The updated space will provide a refuge where families can rest, reset, access needed services and connect with stable housing. New sets of adjoining bedrooms will provide a comfortable space for families of all sizes. An expanded kitchen will allow for cooking classes and shared meals.

The need is great, Phillips says, especially following the lapse of COVID-era eviction moratoriums. "Family homelessness increased 13% from 2023 to 2024 in St. Louis County," she says. "There are not enough shelter beds in the St. Louis metro, not even close, to accommodate the need."

Room at the Inn clients include children and their caretakers, whether couples, single parents or grandparents. These families may be escaping a violent situation, be overwhelmed by medical debt, be no longer welcome living with family members, or have lost their housing due to a host of other reasons.

"There's no cookie-cutter reason why people fall into homelessness, and there's no perfect solution to get everybody out of it," Phillips says. "We provide a very individual and holistic approach for each client."

With both an MBA and an MSW from WashU, Phillips is uniquely able to tackle the challenges of running an agency that provides social services. She attended Olin Business School during an earlier phase of her career, while working full time as an accountant at what was then the Monsanto Company.

Years later, while she was still at Monsanto, a volunteer experience through the United Way opened Phillips' eyes to the work of nonprofits. In her late 30s at the time and with two young children at home, she was deeply affected by a conversation with a woman similar in age whose life had drastically changed following a stroke. She committed to a career shift, enrolling full time at the Brown School.

"Going back to school to study social work is the best decision I ever made," she says. "It was broadening for me in a lot of different ways."

Phillips' financial skills and nuanced understanding of social issues led to a variety of nonprofit roles, including a nearly five-year stint as CEO of St. Patrick Center in downtown St. Louis. In fall 2023, she accepted her current role at Room at the Inn. She made strides during her first year on the job, shepherding an ongoing capital campaign and securing a temporary home for the organization during the current renovations.

"It's been a year of immense change for everybody, me included," Phillips says. "I'm really looking forward to what comes next."

■ CLAIRE GAUEN

WHO

Laurie Phillips, MBA '99, MSW '09

SPREADING KNOWLEDGE

Since 2019, Phillips has returned to the Brown School every semester to teach a night class in financial management. "As a student, I told administration: 'If you want us to go out and run agencies, you need to teach us how to understand financial statements,'" Phillips says. "Ten years later, they agreed!"

INTERFAITH CONNECTIONS

Room at the Inn has longtime partnerships with nearly 50 St. Louis-area congregations. Before the pandemic, churches of many faiths provided overnight services to clients, and they continue to provide meals and other assistance.

Photo: Joe Angeles/WashU



Photo: Courtesy Pittsburgh Steelers

The drive

Rob King, an English literature major at WashU, has reached the pinnacle of Pittsburgh broadcasting as play-by-play announcer for the Steelers.

WHO

Rob King, AB '89

FOOTBALL AT WASHU

King started at quarterback for the Bears in 1988. "I majored in English literature but minored in throwing interceptions for the football team," he says.

HE WRITES ON THE SIDE

He's published his first book, a fantasy novel for young readers called *The Door in the Stone*, with illustrations by his daughter, Cooper King. "It took me nine years," he says, "and I made every mistake in the writing process. But I wanted to write the type of book that had appealed to me as a young reader."

The Pittsburgh Steelers were down by six to the Washington Commanders with 2:27 left in an early November game when quarterback Russell Wilson took the snap from center.

Describing the action was play-by-play announcer **Rob King, AB '89**, his staccato voice steady as play began: "*Wilson settles back. Raises the foot. Gets the snap. Back to pass. Lookiing ...*" King's voice rises: "*Gonna float it up left for Williams...*" Then it reaches a crescendo of unabashed glee: "*And Williams makes the grab! In the end zone! What a throw! What a catch!*"

The touchdown sealed the win while King's call sealed another Steelers memory for a legion of fans listening in. Not bad for a guy in his first season as an NFL announcer, the pinnacle of a broadcasting career that began while King was studying English literature at WashU.

It was about midway through his junior year when King figured he'd better start thinking about life beyond graduation. Taking the advice of a roommate who said, "You like sports. Go do that," he took a broadcasting class at nearby Forest Park Community College and secured an internship at St. Louis' KPLR-TV. "That changed the trajectory of my career," he says. "I learned the whole industry on the go."

One thing led to another, as it typically does when hard work meets opportunity. He was hired as a producer at KPLR and then later became an on-air personality. At every step, he was doing every task required of a broadcast, from reporting to writing to editing to making it look easy in front of a camera.

From there, he had stints in Utica and Syracuse in New York, returned to KPLR and then eventually landed in Pittsburgh, where he has worked since 2000 covering the Pirates and the Penguins. Along the way, he picked up a gig being a studio reporter of the Steelers' broadcasts. Last spring, he was tapped to replace Pittsburgh broadcasting legend Bill Hillgrove. He was ready for his moment, because he'd spent a lifetime preparing for it.

"When I was in St. Louis, I did play-by-play for every sport you can think of, even polo matches," he says. "And I prepared for every broadcast like it was the seventh game of the World Series. That's what the job demands."

But for King, that's not work. "I love memorizing rosters and statistics. I love watching practice," he says. "There's no part of it that feels like an endurance test. It's all fun. Then that three hours in the broadcast booth doesn't feel like pressure at all."

He learned the value of digging deep from his liberal arts courses. "I learned that at WashU. I really did," he says. "I had a teacher who pulled me aside and said, 'You're glib, and that's not necessarily a good thing.' What she meant was that I could probably bounce along on the surface of life and be just fine. Or I could dig in and do it right. It made me reexamine what was important to me."

For now, that's his family, the city of Pittsburgh and a job broadcasting an NFL team that he will never take for granted. "I'm back to my broadcasting roots," he says. "And I just love football."

■ LESLIE GIBSON MCCARTHY

FIRST PERSON

A magical creative outlet

During his work hours, **Justin Chavez, JD '18**, spends his time in the Atlanta office of a large national law firm, focusing on health-care privacy, technology, telehealth and regulatory law. But in his off hours, he transforms into “The Disney World Dad,” helping new Disney-goers with young children navigate the theme parks with ease. His blog, newsletter and social media accounts provide travel tips and news about all things Disney, like upcoming park improvements and movie releases.

Disney theme parks draw millions of visitors annually, and Disney influencers have become trusted sources of information for legions of families. By joining this cultural trend, Chavez finds a way to connect with his three young kids and spark his creativity.

► **I've always been a theme park enthusiast.** But growing up, I was unable to go for financial reasons. Before we got married, my wife and I decided to take a “mini-moon.” A co-worker who was a big Disney-head recommended we go to Disney World in Orlando. He said there was plenty to do without kids. That was the trip that changed it all for me. In the airport on the way home, I created an Instagram account and posted a picture of Cinderella Castle. It took off from there. The Disney World Dad blog was born.

► **There's always been a creative side within me, and that manifests in writing.** In addition to writing the Disney World Dad blog, I'm working on lots of fiction. I finished my first novel recently, and I have a few other works in progress. I feel like I'm flourishing creatively right now. Working on the blog lets me write and be creative and

be part of a larger community. It's important to have creative endeavors along with your paid work. Everyone needs a hobby or a creative outlet.

► **The blog is about successfully managing Disney World with kids.** It's difficult, but it certainly can be done. Even though Disney parks feature kids' movies and characters, some parents worry these places aren't truly family friendly and may not be an enjoyable vacation. But I think those worries are overblown. Kids' wants and needs are considered in a way that they aren't in other places.

► **My best advice to someone going to Disney World with kids for the first time is to do the research and make a plan.** Make your plan be a framework that's flexible, and you'll have a good time. People go in not doing the work because it takes a long time to do all the research. They give it a cursory glance. Then they get to the park, and they want to do everything they've seen on TV or Instagram. And they get upset when that doesn't happen. You need a good mix between planning and flexibility. That's the key to having a good trip.

■ NEIL SCHOENHERR

WHO

Justin Chavez, JD '18

VISITS TO DISNEY WORLD

14 (only once without kids)

CHILDREN'S AGES

5, 3 and 1

WHICH DISNEY CHARACTER WOULD MAKE THE BEST LAWYER?

“I would say Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*. She's driven and a noted bibliophile, which would come in handy during her studies and into legal practice.”



@thedisneyworlddad

Photo: Nicole Craine



WHO

Jay Kaiser, MD '72, and Ronnie Kaiser

STUDENT SUPPORT

The endowed scholarship they established in 2004 has been awarded to 20 medical students to date. The current recipient hails from a small town in Illinois about 40 miles from where Jay grew up. "He's getting the same advantage that I got, and we're helping him," Kaiser says.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Son Scott and his wife, Suni, both MD '08, and their two children live in the house next door to Jay and Ronnie in San Anselmo, California. Scott is a pediatric orthopedic surgeon with Kaiser Permanente, and Suni is a professor of pediatrics at the University of California San Francisco. Jay and Ronnie's daughter, Kristin, also lives in the Bay Area.

Photo: Christie Herin Klok

Passionate about supporting WashU

Great medical school mentors shaped Jay Kaiser's career as a radiologist. Now, he and his wife make sure other aspiring physicians can have the same experience.

One visit was all it took for **Jay Kaiser, MD '72**, to choose WashU's School of Medicine.

"I was accepted at three medical schools, but once I saw WashU, I didn't care about the others," he says. "I knew I wanted to be at a place that offered such a high level of teaching and patient care. And they made it clear that economics were not going to prevent me from going there."

Scholarships and loans made it possible for Kaiser to attend and helped pave the way for a distinguished career as a radiologist.

After a residency and fellowship in diagnostic imaging at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), he founded and grew California Advanced Imaging Medical Associates (CAIMA), now one of the largest private practice radiology groups in the Bay Area. He also spent part of his early career traveling around the world teaching radiologists how to use new CT scanning technology.

In 1989, Kaiser launched National Orthopedic Imaging Associates, one of the first teleradiology networks created at the beginning of the broadband era, within CAIMA. Through the nationwide network, which specializes in orthopedic and spine imaging, he jumped into the world of professional sports by consulting with the San Francisco 49ers and other teams.

Though now retired from day-to-day practice, Kaiser still serves as a consulting radiologist and works with two startup companies on AI research projects. He also gives back to WashU as an adviser for the School of Medicine's National Council, a role

he has held since 2006. And he and his wife, **Ronnie**, are longtime supporters of medical school scholarships.

HOW DID YOU END UP AT WASHU?

I grew up in a small town in Southern Illinois. My father worked in the coal mines. He was forced to retire at age 65 when I was still an undergraduate at the University of Illinois. I was very lucky to go to a medical school of WashU's quality. I couldn't have done it without support from the school and from Ronnie, who was a painting major. She took an extra year of courses so she could become an art teacher. When I was in medical school, she taught art.

WHAT WAS YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE LIKE?

Maybe I'm looking back at it through rose-colored glasses, but everything was great. There were so many incredible professors. **Phil Needleman**, who became head of the Department of Pharmacology, was a brilliant basic science teacher. I was able to reconnect with him years after I graduated when we both served on the medical school's national council.

I took a radiology clerkship with **Hyman Senturia**, a clinical faculty member at the old Jewish Hospital, who was the ultimate clinician. He examined every woman who had a complicated mammogram to correlate the finding. Everyone came to him for second opinions. He played an instrumental role in my decision to go into diagnostic radiology.

And then **Carl Moore** was the head of medicine when I was there. He was

like a Greek god to us students. He was so gracious when I turned down his offer to stay on as an intern after I graduated. I told him I was going to Los Angeles because my wife was from California, and I wanted to go west. He shook his head very calmly and said, "Well, I'll let you go, but you're going to UCSF." And that's how I ended up in San Francisco.

WHY HAVE YOU STAYED INVOLVED WITH THE MEDICAL SCHOOL?

Everything I learned at WashU held me up throughout my career. That's true for my son, **Scott**, too. I was off-the-charts proud when he got into the medical school. He met his wife, **Suni**, there on his first day. Later, when I was invited to sit on the national council, I said, "Absolutely, I'd like to contribute in any way I can."

WHY DO YOU SUPPORT SCHOLARSHIPS?

With the changing economics of medical care, the ability of future students to pay back educational loans will be problematic at best. Also, I know what the medical school did for my life, and my son and daughter-in-law's lives. So why wouldn't Ronnie and I do our best to make sure every young person with ability, but possibly not the finances, has the same chance? Scholarships enable you to help future doctors, to give back to a place that helped you get where you are — and to serve society by helping one of the best medical schools in the world train tomorrow's leaders. All of that gives us a passion to support WashU.

■ MARY LEE

Lights, camera, connection

The WashU Entertainment Network helps alumni set the stage for success.



When **Alex Waters, AB '14**, moved to Los Angeles eight months after earning a bachelor's degree in film and media studies from WashU, she knew almost no one in the area.

The City of Angels felt alien and overwhelming to the New Jersey native who had just spent the past four years in the Midwest. So, to find her footing, she leaned on a place that felt more like home: her alma mater.

Waters could not have scripted her timing any better. WashU's Alumni Association had recently launched HollyWU, a professional network for Los Angeles-based alumni working in the entertainment industry, and the group hosted a kickoff party in April 2015.

"I had just landed my first job and was so excited to meet people," Waters recalls. A pair of familiar faces stood out to her at the bustling event. Waters realized she had previously met two of HollyWU's co-founders, **Laura Harbron, AB '10**, and **Merigan Mulhern, BS '10**, when she traveled to Los Angeles with the Center for Career Engagement's Bear Treks program as an undergrad. They immediately welcomed her back to the city and encouraged her to help them grow the fledgling network as a member of the executive committee.

Waters was all in, and HollyWU became a lifeline during her first year in Los Angeles. "It was pretty much my entire social calendar," she says. She and other group leaders organized monthly get-togethers like happy hours, trivia nights and outdoor film screenings.

Their initial ambitions were modest but essential. They wanted to become a resource and a source of community for WashU grads in the city's entertainment industry, particularly younger alumni and recent transplants. "This town can be very lonely," Waters says. "Not everyone can help you secure a job or an internship. But it's important to know there are people who are willing to assist in small ways that matter both professionally and personally, from making introductions to reading your résumé or script to finding a place to live."

The network has flourished over the years and so has Waters, who wrapped up a three-year stint as a music supervisor for CBS' *The Talk* in December.

No longer the newcomer, she is now a relative industry veteran eager to mentor WashU grads looking to break into film, television or music.

As HollyWU approaches its second decade, Waters hopes even more alumni will lend their industry connections, experience and talents to uplift the next generation. She would eventually like to see the network rival those at peer institutions with bigger entertainment footprints. In the wake of devastating fires that affected much of Los Angeles, the sense of community offered by the network will be especially invaluable to many in the entertainment industry as they regroup and recover.

"I believe there is a future in which HollyWU's members are just as successful as any big-ticket writers, directors, producers or studio executives working today," Waters says. "And I hope they use their success to give back."

AN EMPIRE CITY EXPANSION



Nivedita Kulkarni, BSBA '07, was in a different professional phase when she crossed paths with the entertainment network and blazed a new trail for it. After graduating from WashU with a bachelor's degree in marketing, Kulkarni landed her dream role as

an advertising account executive in the New York office of Saatchi & Saatchi. A year into the post, however, she quit to pursue her childhood dream of becoming an actor.

Kulkarni began working steadily as a performer, writer and producer. She quickly learned that keeping her dream alive required perseverance — and people. "The entertainment industry is incredibly murky," she says. "There are no clear career paths, so you really need to form connections to make it."

A natural networker, the Chicago native built a solid support system of her own. After attending an Alumni Association-sponsored gathering in 2017, she saw an opportunity to channel her experience and help bring together other WashU grads navigating entertainment careers in New York. Kulkarni pitched her idea to **Suzanne Wagstaff**, now senior director of alumni networks, and the entertainment network's New York chapter was a go.

HOLLYWOOD

a Broadway

“In the beginning, we didn’t really realize how many people in New York’s entertainment industry have ties to WashU, whether as alumni or parents,” Kulkarni says. “But once we started organizing events, they came out of the woodwork!”

The chapter has hosted a diverse range of in-person and virtual programs. Some, like the “State of the Entertainment Industry” conference in September 2023, are more formal. The daylong event featured substantive panel discussions on ongoing industry strikes, women in entertainment and future trends. Other outings place greater emphasis on fostering social and professional connections.

“I recommend spending at least 50% of your time networking,” Kulkarni says. “If you want to make it in this difficult, cutthroat business, it’s critical to have a network of allies like this one.”

Kulkarni, who plans to stay active in the network after her tenure as chapter chair concludes in June, remains grateful for what she considers WashU’s greatest strength: generosity. “There’s a true Midwestern quality to this community,” she says. “Regardless of their success, our alumni and friends are down-to-earth and willing to give their time and expertise. By choosing WashU, you opt in to that sensibility.”

IT ONLY TAKES ONE



Esther Merczynski, AB '24, has already seen the WashU spirit in action. After earning a bachelor’s degree in film and media studies last May, she returned to her hometown of New York hoping to secure an entry-level position in movies or television. The job hunt is a

full-time gig, but Merczynski is making headway with the help of the WashU community.

Last September, she received an invitation from **Carina Greenberg, AB '21**, to intern as a production assistant on an independent short film. The two first connected on LinkedIn, and Greenberg thought of her when it came time to hire crew members. “It was an amazing learning experience,” Merczynski says.

“Now that I’m part of Carina’s network, I’m confident she’ll think of me again when opportunities arise. And I know I can turn to her if I ever have questions.”

Then in November, Merczynski made several new connections while attending “The Business of Talent: Casting and Representation” talk organized by WashU’s entertainment network. Armed with her résumé and a stack of homemade business cards, she spoke one-on-one with Kulkarni and the chapter’s incoming chair, **Erica Tuchman, AB '02**, a talent manager.

During her presentation at the event, Tuchman relayed a story about a pivotal mentor who changed the arc of her career. Her anecdote resonated with Merczynski. “It only takes one person to take you under her wing and help you find your place,” she says. And with any luck, that person might just be a WashU alum.

■ EMMA DENT, AB '09



Next

Class Notes

ON THE VIRTUES OF SHARING

In 1991, former President Jimmy Carter, who passed away Dec. 29, 2024, visited Washington University and spoke to an audience of more than 4,000 in the WashU Field House. William H. Danforth, who was the university's chancellor at the time, listened intently to Carter's Assembly Series message, in which he relayed the following: "That is what will determine the excellence of our lives ... What we are able to share with others and make their lives free of suffering and let them enjoy the liberty and the gratification, the security, that we enjoy. So in helping others, we help ourselves."

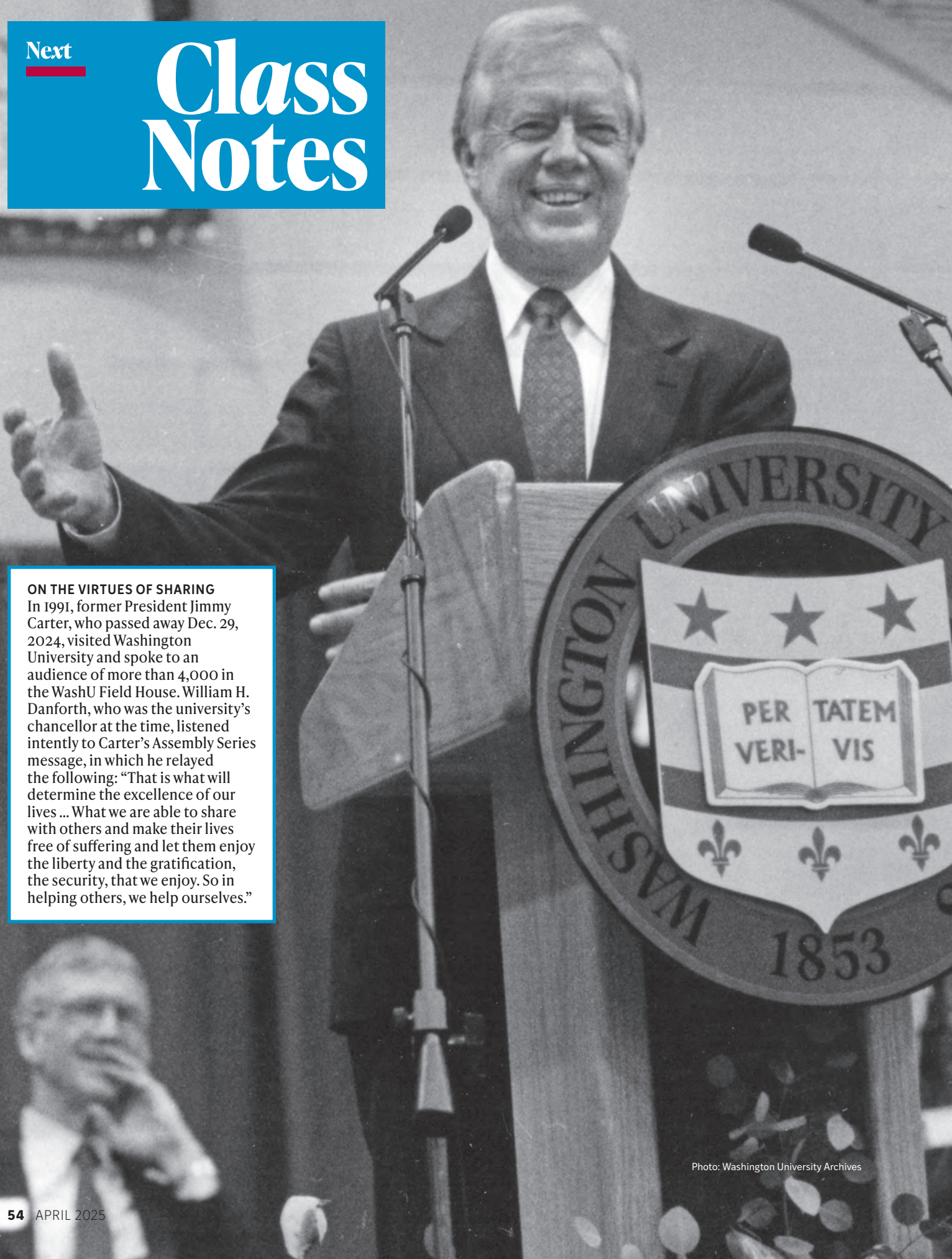


Photo: Washington University Archives

What's New?

Let us know about recent honors, promotions, appointments, travels, marriages and births, so we can keep your classmates informed of important changes in your lives.



SEND NEWS:

Class Notes, *WashU Magazine*
Washington University in St. Louis
MSC 1070-0390-03
1 Brookings Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63130-4899



EMAIL:

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Entries may take up to three issues after submission to appear in the magazine; they are published in the order received.

1955

Jerry Young, AB '55, DMD '58, spent the past 10 years building a one-of-a-kind passive solar house. Its design, construction and thermal properties have been documented on his blog, diygreenbuildingwithjerry.blogspot.com. Having occupied the home for three years, he recently posted on its favorable thermal performance. Consistent with his commitment to sustainability, Young tore down several buildings to accumulate repurposed building materials for the interior woodwork. He hopes the project will turn a few minds toward sustainability.

1968

Daniel Freeman, AB '68, donated materials from his career on Capitol Hill and the American University — The Daniel M. Freeman Papers — to Washington University Libraries. The material includes books and photographs of public figures inscribed to him and images of guest speakers from the Washington Semester Program he taught at American University, as well as a copy of his book about his career: *The House Was My Home, My Life On Capitol Hill and Other Tales*. WashU Libraries website: <https://aspace.wustl.edu/repositories/4/resources/1064>

Jane Goldberg, AB '68, penned her ninth book, *Our Revolutionary Brain* (self-published). Goldberg is a practicing psychoanalyst in New York City, continuing to do so digitally since the COVID-19 pandemic. Her previous books include *My Mother, My Daughter, My Self*; *The Hormesis Effect*; *The*

Dark Side of Love; and *Psychotherapeutic Treatment of Cancer Patients*.

William F. Siedhoff, BS '68, MSW '73, was honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award from the WashU Alumni Association at Founders Day in 2024. Siedhoff previously received Distinguished Alumni awards from Arts & Sciences and the Brown School. Although retired, he chairs and serves on several boards and committees in the St. Louis area.

1971

Gail Ellis Meltzner, AB '71, MBA '73, sold her interest in her CPA firm after 50 years in public accounting and is semiretired. She plans to spend time traveling with her partner, enjoying her two grandchildren and preparing the occasional tax return.

1972

Jerry Puce, BFA '72, MFA '74, had a retrospective of his abstract art at the Morris Graves Museum of Art in Eureka, California, which ran August through October 2024.

1973

Larry Altman, BS '73, had his article discussing the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling upholding the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 published in the *Journal of the Missouri Bar* in its November–December 2024 edition.

Kenneth Haugk, PhD '73, founder and executive director of Stephen Ministries, co-authored with two colleagues the organization's newest book, *Caring Assertiveness: Relating Directly, Honestly, and with Respect* (2024). The book explores the essence of assertiveness, showing how this powerful but often misunderstood relational skill can be used to communicate with confidence and care in everyday encounters and challenging situations alike.

1975

Scott P. Bartlett, MD '75, received the Clinician of the Year Award from the American Association of Plastic Surgeons, April 30, 2023. The award is given by the society to an individual recognizing a lifetime of exemplary clinical work in plastic and reconstructive surgery. Bartlett specializes in facial surgery, both reconstructive and esthetic. He served as the president of the International Society of Craniofacial Surgeons from 2011–13 and has been on the editorial board for numerous journals, publishing over 300 articles in the field.

Michael L. Millenson, AB '75, was appointed to the National Advisory Council of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Previously, he was profiled by the agency for his work in patient safety.

Fred Nelson, MFA '75, had his exhibition *The Poetry of Vision* on display at the Atrium Gallery in St. Louis, September through October 2024. The show served as a celebration of Nelson's 50 years as

an exhibiting artist and featured his most recent works as well as many references to his earlier themes.

1976

Ellen Barker, AB '76, published her second novel, *Still Needs Work* (She Writes Press, June 2024). A follow-up to her first novel, *East of Troost*, the book continues the story of a fictional narrator living in her childhood neighborhood, which she left to attend WashU in 1972. In the second book, Marianne's house still needs work, and her life still needs work. In addition to writing, Barker and her husband, **Tom Shoup**, MA '77, PhD '81, spent a week hiking in the Dolomites, proving to themselves that they aren't really all that old.

1977

Ann Friedman Calandro, MA '77, had a short story collection, *Lost in Words*, published (Serving House Press, February 2025). Her stories, some of which have been published in literary journals, were written between 1979 and 2023. A retired medical editor and writer, Calandro is working on a nonfiction collection and a poetry collection as well as creating mixed-media collages that have been exhibited, published and awarded prizes.

Robert Kulesher, MHA '77, retired after 21 years at East Carolina University. It was announced at the College of Allied Health Sciences Recognition Ceremony on May 3, 2024, to be effective Aug. 1. Kulesher was elevated to professor emeritus at the university.

1980

John L. Hammond Jr., AB '80, BS '80, retired on April 14, 2024, after a fulfilling career in various petrochemical and polymeric fields. He served in various positions including design engineer, senior projects engineer and management positions. Hammond and his wife, Betty, have two children and four grandchildren. He looks forward to dedicating more time as a docent on the newly refurbished memorial battleship *USS Texas*. Hammond feels the combined engineering and arts and science background he received at WashU put him in the position to be successful in his career.

1982

Mark Brostoff, MHA '82, was named director of career advising at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University on Aug. 1, 2024.

Mark Feldman, MS '82, PhD '86, writes a blog, www.inside-higher-ed.com.

Craig McKown, BS '82, retired to the California Central Coast after more than 34 years building large commercial geosynchronous satellites in Silicon Valley. He will continue to coach cross country at Nipomo High School.

Brian S. Zachariah, AB '82, was named professor of emergency medicine at the new Baptist University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Memphis, Tennessee. The college took its first class of 81 future physicians in August 2024. Previously, Zachariah was associate professor at the William Carey College of Osteopathic Medicine in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

1983

Tim Olsen, BM '83, released the Tim Olsen Big Band digital album/compact disc *Obsidian*. It features nine original works and one arrangement. Inspired by the work of Duke Ellington, the pieces span five decades and showcase Olsen's collaboration with a host of talented musicians. Olsen is professor of music at Union College in Schenectady, New York, and directs the Union College Jazz Ensemble. He also performs as a soloist, with the Tim Olsen Quartet and the 17-piece Tim Olsen Big Band.

Gabriel Spalding, AB '83, took up the gavel in January 2025 as the incoming president of the American Association of Physics Teachers.

1984

Ken Shiffman, AB '84, who has spent 35 years at the Cable News Network (CNN) producing investigative stories and documentaries, is the senior broadcast producer of CNN's Sunday night documentary show, "The Whole Story with Anderson Cooper."

1985

Eddie W. Runde, AB '85, has written two novels in his sci-fi trilogy, *The Genesis Trust* (December 2023) and *Trust and Obey: The Genesis Trust Book II* (April 2025), both published by Christian Faith Publishing. The books, which he wrote under his pen name, Wayne Runde, are available at Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com.

Tracy L. Wise, AB '85, wrote her first novel, *Madame Sorel's Lodger* (Type Eighteen Books, February 2025). The book is about a tormented artist who arrives in a village in southern France to begin painting again. No one understands the artist — what he sees, how he paints or why he stays — and their confusion increases as he becomes increasingly erratic, plagued by forces growing out of his control.

1986

Alexander S. Douglas II, AB '86, was named 2025 Elder Law "Lawyer of the Year" in Orlando, Florida. He is a partner with the law firm of Shuffield Lowman.

1987

Robert Berlin, JD '87, was reelected to a fourth term as state's attorney of DuPage County, the second-largest county in Illinois.

A career prosecutor since 1987, Berlin's mission is to protect the public and defend the rights of crime victims.

1989

James Bailey, MA '89, PhD '91, the Hochberg Professor of Leadership at the George Washington University, has received many accolades. They include the following: the Outstanding Contribution Award from the GWU Executive MBA program, the Distinguished Service Award from the American Law Association and the Best Practitioner Article Award from the American Philosophical Society. He has been named the GWU Outstanding Educator of the Year 10 times, and he published articles in *Harvard Business Review* in 2023.

Jennifer Boylan, MA '89, was reelected to the Rhode Island House of Representatives in 2024 for a second term to represent House District 66 (Riverside, Barrington). Boylan has been a strong advocate for protecting the environment; mitigating the effects of climate change; and supporting common-sense gun laws, reproductive freedom and small businesses.

Edward Schwarzschild, AM '89, PhD '94, co-authored *Job/Security: A Composite Portrait of the Expanding American Security Industry* (MIT Press, August 2024). The book is a collection of candid interviews with and photographs of workers in America's burgeoning security state, featuring workers in homeland security, border patrol and the secret service. The book led to a full-scale museum exhibition at the University Art Museum at the University at Albany. Schwarzschild is currently the director of creative writing and a fellow of the New York State Writers Institute at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

1990

Allison Harris, AB '90, is executive director of the Institute of Judicial Administration as well as the Center for Labor and Employment Law, both at New York University School of Law where she earned a JD. She previously practiced law in the aviation and real estate fields. She is also a mom and a wife.

1991

John Kelley, AB '91, assumed command of the 620th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in December 2023 as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. His battalion is in historic Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, and he manages approximately 500 soldiers assigned to Army reserve units stationed across the area. Kelley is honored to serve alongside two other WashU alumni, second lieutenants **Sarah Xie**, AB '24, and **Richard Sims**, AB '23.

Thomas Velek, MA '91, JD '91, was recently named deputy director, programs and facilities chief for Lowndes County Recreation in Columbus, Mississippi. He oversees two athletics complexes and the recreational/athletics programs of the

department. Velek coached soccer in the community for more than 20 years at the youth, competitive and high school levels before stepping down in 2022 to focus on administrative roles. He continues to serve as director of coaching for Columbus United Soccer Club, a club he helped found in 2010.

1992

Benjamin S. Abella, AB '92, was appointed the Mount Sinai Professor and System Chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. In this role, he has oversight responsibility for the seven emergency medicine clinical sites and two emergency medicine residency programs in the Mount Sinai Health System in New York City.

Edya Kalev, AB '92, is currently living in New York City and teaching gentle self-care called The MELT Method. The care involves gentle massaging techniques along with soft tools that increases fluid flow through the body's connective tissue, reducing pain, stiffness, stress and tension. She also taught MELT classes in Nicaragua in a retreat center designed by **Wyly Brown**, assistant professor of architecture at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at WashU.

1994

Andrew Lyons, AB '94, published his latest novel, a young adult thriller, *Furies Rising* (Book One: Hollow Valley, October 2024). His other novels include *2020* and *Darkness in Him*, which was set at a St. Louis-area university.

Heather Mefford, BS '94, was awarded the American Epilepsy Society 2024 Basic Science Research Award in December 2024. It is the highest research award given by the society. Mefford, a physician-scientist at the Center for Pediatric Neurological Disease Research at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, has significantly advanced the understanding of the genetic causes of epilepsy, particularly in children with rare and complex forms.

1996

Jeffrey S. Siegel, BSBA '96, was named "Lawyer of the Year" and "Best Lawyer" by *The Best Lawyers in America 2025* in the employment law, labor law and litigation areas. Siegel is an attorney with Morgan, Brown & Joy.

1997

Sharon Wahl, MFAW '97, wrote *Everything Flirts: Philosophical Romances* (University of Iowa Press, November 2024). At the heart of the stories in *Everything Flirts* are some of life's trickiest questions: Why is it so hard to make the first move on a date? How do we find the person we will love? Wahl is a writer and documentary film producer. Her stories, poems and essays have appeared in the *Iowa Review*, *Chicago Tribune* and *Harvard Review* among other publications.

SL STAFF MEETING

A special meeting of the SL Staff will be held today at 4 p. m. in the SAB.

Student Life

IN OUR 81st YEAR

Vol. 81

WASHINGTON U., ST. LOUIS, TUESDAY, MAY 17, 1960

No. 58

NO PAPER FRIDAY

Due to the resignation in protest of the members of the SL Staff there will be no Friday issue.



Part of the Kappa Alpha Theta chorus line consisting of, left to right, Bonnie Barton, LA Jr., Linda Fowler, LA soph., Sharon Anderson, LA Jr., and Rochelle Albert, Rec. sr., perform in front of their Thurtene Carnival Grand Prize winning Theta-Sigma Chi booth.

20's Roar Again At Winning Booth

By CAROLE ANN HUGHES
City Editor

Kappa Alpha Theta and Sigma Chi joined forces to capture the trophy for the best over-all booth and to win first place in the combined division at Thurtene Carnival held last Friday and Saturday.

First places in the other divisions went to Pi Beta Phi, sorority, Tau Kappa Epsilon, fraternity and Fine Arts School Council, independent. Kappa Kappa Gamma and Phi Delta Theta took second place in their respective divisions.

CUSTOMERS WERE invited to return to the 20's and to "celebrate" prohibition with the Sigma Chi's and Thetas in "Club 1300." While "flappers" served patrons near-beer and root beer, Dale Rollins, Arch. soph and Patty Knackstedt, LA soph. provided a medley of songs of the 1920's for banjo and piano.

The stage show opened as the Master of Ceremonies leaped to the stage to introduce the chorus of "flappers" and gay blades singing the "Riviera"; next a duet

Late to Fall In Love." The audience was then invited to join the chorus in singing "Bye Bye Blackbird"; and for a grand finale, the chorus told about "The Boy-friend."

FUNCTIONING with alternate sets of casts, the Sig Chi's and Thetas performed approximately every 15 minutes having 41 shows in all.

The Pi Phi Medicine Show starred Carol Tucker, LA sr., as Dr. Pinkham discoverer of the "powerful, powerful potion." Inside the broken down medicine wagon, the Pi Phi's performed skits and a melodrama.

THE BEER GARDEN was a masterpiece of masonry; inside the brick structure, there was a large bar across one end and a stage for the German Band in the corner. The Fine Arts School Council

Chimes Donates \$450

The 1959-60 membership of Chimes, junior women's leadership honorary, has given \$450 to the University general scholarship fund, announced Joan Zeffren, LA Jr., and past president. The recipient of the funds will

To Scholarship Fund

be chosen by the scholarship office under the direction of Arno J. Haack, Dean of Students. The organization stipulated that the office attempt to choose a woman in the liberal or fine arts schools

Only
7
Days Until Finals

Student Life photo: Dan Donovan

SISTERS FOR FOUR YEARS; FRIENDS FOR A LIFETIME

The 1920s roared, some 40 years later, at Thurtene Carnival in 1960, as *Student Life* captured members of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority dancing in front of their award-winning booth that year. This past January – almost 65 years later – three of the four flappers featured in this front-page photo gathered at the home of Bonnie Barton Wolfarth (pictured at left), AB '60, telling tales of Thurtene and other escapades at WashU in the late 1950s-early 1960s. Wolfarth, along with Sharon Anderson Croissant (second from right), AB '61, and Rochelle Albert Hicks (right), BSBA '60, are among a group of sorority sisters and WashU alumnae who have met at least once a month for nearly 65 years. A story about their lifelong friendships ran in the February 2025 digital edition of *WashU Magazine* and can be read at source.washu.edu/2024/02/the-divine-secrets-of-the-washu-theta-sisterhood.

1998

Raylene DeWitte Grischow, JD '98, was unanimously voted by the Illinois Supreme Court to the Illinois 4th District Appellate Court bench. She was sworn in July 8, 2024, and immediately commenced her new position. Grischow was previously a circuit court judge in the 7th Judicial Circuit Court in Springfield, Illinois. She was elected to the circuit position in 2020.

2000

Marc A. Hertzman, AB '00, wrote *After Palmares: Diaspora, Inheritance, and the Afterlives of Zumbi* (Duke University Press, September 2024). The book tells the rise, fall and afterlives of Palmares, one of history's largest and longest-lasting maroon societies that existed during the 17th century in what would become northeast Brazil. Hertzman is associate professor of history at the

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and author of *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil*.

John McCurdy, MA '00, PhD '04, penned *Vicious and Immoral: Homosexuality, the American Revolution, and the Trials of Robert Newburgh* (Johns Hopkins University Press, June 2024). The book tells the compelling story of male intimacy and provides an unparalleled glimpse inside 18th-century perceptions of queerness. McCurdy is professor of history at Eastern Michigan University.

2001

Gowri J. Krishna, AB '01, joined the faculty of Fordham University School of Law in New York City as clinical professor of law. Krishna directs the Community and Economic Development Clinic and is in her 11th year of teaching.

2003

Eric Coonrod, BSBA '03, a veteran and innovator of the investment banking industry, was appointed managing director and senior vice president of Iconic, where he will lead its sales efforts. Coonrod was managing partner and owner of Integral Capital Advisors, which was acquired by Iconic. In his new role, Coonrod will transition Integral's growing mergers and acquisitions activities to Iconic and develop a firm-wide business development program.

2004

Sam Hirst, AB '04, wrote *Against the Liberal Order: The Soviet Union, Turkey, and Statist Internationalism, 1919-1939* (Oxford University Press, June 2024). The book grew directly out of his studies in history and Russian at WashU. Hirst is an assistant professor of international relations at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey.

Florencia (Smith) Robertson, MSOT '04, penned *Unexpected: A Novel of Change and Friendship* (Writeway Publishing, September 2024). The fictional novel finds a 40-plus-year-old woman at the door of a career-changing promotion, but an unexpected pregnancy shatters her confidence. A poor start to nursing her baby lands her in a lactation support group where she acquires unexpected friends — and a foe — in her totally changed life. The book is available on Amazon and the ebook through Kindle.

2005

Shannon Puopolo, AB '05, a stockholder and hiring chairperson at Henderson Franklin, was recently sworn in as president of the Southwest Florida Bankruptcy Professionals Association. The appointment highlights her dedication to bankruptcy law, creditor's rights and business litigation, as well as her leadership within the Southwest Florida legal community. She was also named to *Florida Trend Magazine's* Notable Women Leaders in Law for 2024.

2006

Tyler Survant, AB '06, received a 2024–25 Fulbright U.S. Scholar award to conduct applied architectural research in Nepal. Rapid development in the Himalayas risks being environmentally unsustainable and culturally erosive. Survant's research, "Conscientious Construction in Urbanizing Nepal," aims to compare the methods of the country's contemporary construction sector with its rich architectural traditions and proposes models for merging local knowledge with principles of modern building science. Survant is an assistant teaching professor in the College of Arts & Architecture at Montana State University.

2007

Greg Knott, PhD '07, was named associate vice president for development and alumni affairs at Quinnipiac University. Knott previously served as associate vice president of advancement at the University of Connecticut Foundation, where he led significant fundraising efforts and managed major gift activities. He also has worked in advancement at Bradley University and Saint Louis University.

2009

AJ Ford, BS '09, was appointed chief executive officer at Engineered Tissue Solutions, a medical device company dedicated to advancing wound healing with its innovative bioactive glass technology. Ford previously held senior leadership roles in sales management and product management at Medline Industries in advanced wound care and tissue regeneration.

Cole Randle, AB '09, joined Heart Aerospace, the Swedish electric commercial aircraft startup, as head of strategic engagement. A corporate affairs professional and lawyer,

Randle previously served on President Joe Biden's advance team, traveling globally to execute the president's official external affairs. Randle will be based between Heart's U.S. headquarters in Los Angeles and corporate offices in Stockholm and New York. The company's first prototype, the HX-1, debuted in September 2024 and is scheduled to fly in the second quarter of this year.

Thom Wall, AB '09, received the American Youth Circus Organization's Innovation in Education Award in October 2024. The award is for his contribution to publishing, documentation and critique within the circus community through his company Modern Vaudeville Press (MVP) and its publications. The small company adheres to academic standards, and MVP's titles are being used as course materials at professional circus schools internationally. When not performing his show on cruise ships, Wall gives lectures on circus history, consults for nonprofits and writes books on juggling.

Katherine Rainbolt Woller, AB '09, wrote *Calling It Off, Memoir of an Almost Bride* (Landon Hail Press, January 2025). An "almost bride" herself, Woller, uses her hard-fought growth, honest reflection and ultimately flawed human experience to highlight the realities of what it's like to not just call off a wedding, but to choose yourself when you've reached a daunting crossroads. Woller is a marketing consultant who specializes in helping mission-driven businesses and nonprofits enhance success and expand community impact.

2010

Mark I. Haynes Jr., MBA '10, was engaged to Paige Lundy in November 2024. Haynes is a senior assistant vice president at Wells Fargo.

2011

Daniel R. Fishman, AB '11, was named to "Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch" by *The Best Lawyers in America 2025* in the litigation and labor law areas. Fishman is an attorney with Morgan, Brown & Joy.

Karan Johar, Res/Fel '11, specializes in pain management and minimally invasive spine care. He draws on experiences from his grandmother's surgery that shape his patient-centric approach as a physician, on his tenure as assistant professor at NYU Langone, and on his roles across prestigious hospitals and dual board certifications. His pain medicine and surgery practice has earned accolades and trust from diverse and high-profile patients worldwide, and he has received recognitions including Castle Connolly Top Doctor.

Hwan Yi, MSW '11, was named executive director of Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads, a senior living community located in the metropolitan area surrounding Washington, D.C. He most recently served as the health-care center administrator for The Fairfax at Belvoir Woods, a senior continuing-care retirement community located in Virginia.

2012

Catie Gainor, AB '12, opened a culinary bookstore, Binding Agents, in Philadelphia's historic Italian Market. The shop combines her lifelong passion for food with her love of the written word, cultivated in the English department at WashU.

2013

Traci Krasne, AB '13, has joined Fox Rothschild in New York as an associate in the labor and employment department. She defends clients in employment disputes and provides strategies to mitigate workplace litigation.

Sara Potter, PhD '13, wrote *Technified Muses: Reconfiguring National Bodies in the Mexican Avant-Garde* (University of Florida Press, October 2024). The book uses the idea of the muse from Greek mythology and the cyborg from posthuman theory to consider the portrayal of female characters and their bodies in Mexican art and literature from the 1920s to the present. She is an associate professor of Spanish at the University of Texas in El Paso.

2015

Christine Cronin, MSW '15, MPH '15, penned *Nature Is Our Nurture: A Picture Book of Empowering Life Lessons for the Child in All of Us* (Archway Publishing, August 2024). The book seeks to spread hope and healing to the world. It encompasses more than 50 empowering life lessons through analogies in nature and integrates beautiful artwork in each lesson.

2016

Kahan Chavda, BS '16, had his INVERSA Ethical Exotics leather materials debut at Paris Fashion Week in September 2024 in designer Gabriella Hearst's products. INVERSA creates its products from non-native, invasive species that are ruining ecosystems in Florida, the Mississippi River basin and the Caribbean coral reefs. Backed by leading conservation and government organizations, the company works only with suppliers that use ethical and humane supply chain methods.

2017

Puji Anur, AB '17, married **Bobby Kahlon**, AB '17, on June 1, 2024, in Sonoma, California. Both grew up in the Bay Area and met at WashU as biology majors. Anur works at Maven, a women's and family health company, and Kahlon is completing a gastroenterology fellowship program at California Pacific Medical Center. The couple resides in San Francisco.

2019

Erin Egan, AB '19, earned her medical degree from the University of Illinois College of Medicine in May 2024 and started residency



Photo: Washington University Archives

DIVING IN WITH AN OLYMPIC LEGEND

Greg Louganis – an American Olympic diver who won gold medals at the 1984 and 1988 Summer Olympics on the springboard and platform – spoke with WashU students and presented an Assembly Series lecture, “Beyond Breaking the Surface,” in February 2000. Louganis is the only man and second diver in Olympic history to sweep the diving events in consecutive Olympic Games. After retiring from diving, he went on to become a best-selling author, writing an autobiography, *Breaking the Surface*, and a book of advice on dog ownership, *For the Life of Your Dog: A Complete Guide to Having a Dog in Your Life, From Adoption and Birth Through Sickness and Health*. He appeared at WashU with his beloved Jack Russell terrier. **Editor’s note:** Were you among the students who were able to meet Louganis? If so, we want to hear from you: wustlimgeditor@wustl.edu.

training as a family medicine physician at the University of Maryland Medical Center.

Lydia Paar, MFAW '19, published her debut essay collection, *The Exit Is the Entrance: Essays on Escape* (University of Georgia Press, September 2024). The essays explore her attempts to evade or transform the lower-middle-class American experience across varied cityscapes, towns and in-between places. *Poets & Writer’s Magazine* featured it as one of five books in its annual New Nonfiction roundup of 2024 (September/October issue). (See “Writing without fear” on pg. 14 for more.)

2020

Scott Hershberger, AB '20, completed a master’s degree in science communication at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in summer 2024 with a focus on climate change communication. He is now the forestry

communications specialist at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Extension, where he works to empower individual and family forest owners to manage their woodlands sustainably. In addition to developing educational materials and programming to help owners address the changing climate, he is involved in multistate efforts to better integrate climate change into the work of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Allison Scoggin, JD '20, has joined Caplin & Drysdale as an associate in the firm’s bankruptcy and complex litigation practice groups.

2024

Carlos Cepeda Gómez, BArch '24, is the first recipient of the Eugene J. Mackey III Travel Scholarship. This scholarship honors the legacy of Mackey Mitchell Architects founder **Eugene J. Mackey III**, BSAS '60, BArch '62,

and his belief in the transformative power of architectural travel and drawing. The scholarship allows deserving students of architecture, particularly those who might not otherwise have the opportunity, to pursue their passions and expand their knowledge through travel.

Zoe Mercado, AB '24, was selected to be part of Carnegie Mellon University’s inaugural cohort for the Rales Fellows Program. Launched in 2023, the program is dedicated to cultivating the next generation of STEM leaders and driving innovation by increasing access to a life-changing graduate education. Rales fellows receive a comprehensive, cohort-based experience, faculty mentorship, exclusive professional development, networking event opportunities and a financial award that covers tuition, as well as a monthly stipend for living expenses.



Sam Fox (left) and Carmon Colangelo, inaugural dean of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, pause outside the newly constructed Anabeth and John Weil Hall in 2021.

Sam Fox, BSBA '51, Hon LLD '02, former U.S. ambassador to Belgium and a long-serving member of the Washington University Board of Trustees, died Dec. 2, 2024. He was 95.

The businessman and civic leader was also a philanthropist who established numerous fellowships, scholarship programs and endowed professorships at WashU, and in 1998, he was appointed chair of the \$1.5 billion *Campaign for Washington University*. In recognition of his service and generosity, the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts bears his name.

"Sam was one of WashU's most loyal alumni," Chancellor Andrew D. Martin said. "We benefited greatly from his savvy leadership and decades of transformational support. His legacy will endure through the profound impact he has had on St. Louis, WashU and especially the Sam Fox School. I am so grateful for the privilege of having known him."

Born and raised in Desloge, Missouri, Fox described WashU as "the place where the whole world came alive for me." He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Olin Business School in 1951 and soon joined a brother in Fox Industries Inc., which manufactured powders for the chemical industry. He married Marilyn Fox, Hon DH '13, a native of University City, Missouri, in 1953.

In 1976, Fox founded Harbour Group Ltd., a privately owned operating company that specializes in the acquisition and long-term development of manufacturing companies. Olin established the Sam & Marilyn Fox Scholarship in the couple's honor in 1980. Fox also received WashU's Distinguished Alumni Award in 1986 and Olin's Distinguished Business Alumni Award in 1988.

Fox joined the WashU Board of Trustees in 1989, later serving on the executive committee and a term as vice chair. In 2001, he was named emeritus trustee and, in a rare honor, was elected a lifetime voting trustee in 2004. The Sam Fox School, which combined WashU's nationally ranked programs in art, architecture and design with its renowned Kemper Art Museum, was dedicated in 2006.

From 2007-09, Fox served as ambassador to Belgium. In 2012, he became only the third American to receive Belgium's highest award for public service, the Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown. He earlier received the Marco Polo Award from the People's Republic of China, in 2002.

He also served on the boards of many prominent St. Louis institutions, including the Arts & Education Council, Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Opera Theatre, the Science Center, the Saint Louis Zoo and Civic Progress. In 2003, Fox was named the St. Louis Citizen of the Year, and he received the national Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship, among many other honors.

With Marilyn, Fox established the Fox Family Foundation, which has supported hundreds of organizations addressing basic human needs such as food and shelter. The couple jointly received the Jane and Whitney Harris Saint Louis Community Service Award in 2004.

Fox is survived by his daughter Pamela Fox Claman and by sons Jeff Fox and Steven Fox. Marilyn, his wife of seven decades, died in 2024, as did their daughter Cheri. Their son Greg died in 2016. Other survivors include 15 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Clarence ("Cedge") Barksdale, renowned civic leader and trustee emeritus of the Washington University Board of Trustees, died Dec. 25, 2024, at his home in St. Louis. He was 92.

Born and raised in St. Louis and a lifetime resident of the city that he loved, Barksdale was known as a tireless civic promoter, generous philanthropist and dedicated family man.

Following graduation from Brown University and three years of service with the U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps in Germany, Barksdale joined First National Bank in St. Louis in 1958. He was named president of First National 16 years later at age 42, the youngest person ever to hold that title at the longtime St. Louis institution.

By the early '80s, the bank had become the largest bank holding company in Missouri, with 60 domestic and three international offices. Barksdale also orchestrated the name change to Centerre Bancorporation, to better reflect the bank's increasingly regional focus, and, as chairman of the board and chief executive officer, he built the Centerre Bank building at 800 Market Street (now Bank of America Plaza).

Following his retirement from banking in 1989, Barksdale became vice chairman of WashU's Board of Trustees, a volunteer position he held until 2004. Barksdale worked with multiple university chancellors to grow the school's endowment and help it become the national powerhouse that it is today.

During his career, Barksdale served on many corporate boards, including AT&T, Universal Match, Steak 'n Shake, Dillard's Department Stores, Wetterau Inc., and Pet Inc., and was a director of the American Bankers Association and Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

He was even more active as a volunteer with civic organizations, serving as a trustee/board director for Boy Scouts of Greater St. Louis, Missouri Botanical Garden, Muncy Opera, Saint Louis Zoo, Girls Inc., St. Louis Country Day School (Class of 1950) and the VP Fair, among many others. He was named one of *TIME* magazine's "Top 200 Young Leaders in the Country" in 1974 and *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* "Man of the Year" in 1982.

Despite all the professional and community commitments, Barksdale managed to live a life centered on family, anchored by his cherished wife, Emily Keyes ("Nini") Barksdale. Married in 1959, the two remained inseparable until Nini's death in 2017. He is survived by son John (Paula) and daughter Lee Bryant (Keith); grandchildren Ellie and Ethan Barksdale and Will Bryant; and brother Henry C. Barksdale.

Mark Alan Black, JD '77, died Sept. 22, 2024, in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was 72. Black attended the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and in 1974 enrolled in WashU's School of Law. He spent the majority of his career in Roanoke, Virginia, where he raised his family and worked tirelessly as an attorney helping many clients through difficult situations. He and his wife, Sheila Rodenhizer Black, retired to Raleigh in 2022 to be closer to family.

Ardan Carlisle, a first-year student studying mathematics in Arts & Sciences, died Dec. 19, 2024, of an undiagnosed medical condition. He was 18. Carlisle is remembered as a brilliant polymath, warm friend and gifted pianist. He was often featured in WashU Jazz Combo performances across campus and in the St. Louis community. He is survived by his parents, Mike and Lada Carlisle, and his brother, Evan.

Torrey N. Foster, JD '61, died Oct. 14, 2024, of complications from pulmonary disease. He was 90.

After graduating from Yale University in 1956 with a bachelor's degree, he joined the U.S. Navy as a lieutenant (junior grade), with service on a destroyer. Upon completion of his naval service, he entered WashU's School of Law, served on the law review and was elected to the Order of the Coif.

Foster joined the law firm of Armstrong, Teasdale, to which he was selected for partner. In 1968, he became associate general counsel for The Sherwin-Williams Co., and four years later transferred to the international division. After two years of managing the company's Brazilian subsidiary in São Paulo, he managed the international division as group executive. Foster's international career also included positions of managing the international divisions of Jotul of Oslo, Norway, and The Ceilcote Co., a unit of General Signal Corp.

C. Marshall Friedman, AB '63, JD '65, a renowned trial attorney and community leader, died Sept. 30, 2024, at 84 from Alzheimer's.

Known for his tireless legal advocacy, integrity, energy and warmth, Friedman left an indelible mark on both the St. Louis legal community and Jewish community. After serving on active duty with the U.S. Coast Guard, he attended Washington University, where he earned both an undergraduate and a law degree.

His commitment to zealous advocacy of the injured and downtrodden laid the foundation for a legal career spanning over five decades, during which he became one of the most respected trial attorneys in the Midwest. Friedman specialized in and was passionate about railroad labor law, and he was actively engaged in the railway labor movement and in the representation of injured railway employees for over 40 years. He also served as an adjunct professor at the School of Law, sharing his expertise in "Trial Practice and Procedure" with law students for over 30 years.

Christopher Gianoulakis, BS '66, MA '69, former football, wrestling and golf coach at WashU, died Aug. 24, 2024. He was 80.

Gianoulakis earned his bachelor's degree in physical education and spent four years as an offensive lineman on the Bears' football team, earning four varsity letters. He began his WashU football coaching career as a graduate assistant in 1967 under Dave Puddington and then was appointed offensive line coach in 1969 by Dick Martin, serving as an assistant for eight seasons under Martin and Don McCright. In 1977, he was appointed head coach, the first WashU alum in 40 years to head the football program. In three seasons,

from 1977–79, he compiled a 12–15 record. He also coached wrestling and golf at WashU and continued to do so, spending a total of 25 years in service to WashU athletes.

After his WashU experience, Gianoulakis coached and taught in the Affton School District for 18 years. He also coached at Lutheran South High School, leaving his mark on many young athletes.

Dallas C. Long III, MD '72, a three-time NCAA shot put champion who won a gold medal at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, died Nov. 10, 2024. He was 84.

Long ruled the shot put in the early 1960s, winning three consecutive NCAA titles from 1960–62. His gold-medal performance in Tokyo included a then-Olympic record throw of 66 feet, 8.50 inches.

After his athletic career, he earned both a bachelor's degree and a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the University of Southern California. He did not remain a dentist, though. After graduating from the Washington University School of Medicine in 1972, he became an emergency room physician.

Byron J. Masterson, MD '58, died Nov. 11, 2024, at his home in Sarasota, Florida. He was 91.

A renowned surgeon and educator, he had a long and distinguished career as a gynecologist and in gynecologic oncology, including service in the U.S. Air Force where he rose to the rank of captain. After private practice in Kansas City, Missouri, Masterson began his academic teaching career at the medical schools of the University of Kansas and then the University of Missouri, rising to professor of gynecology at both institutions. In 1981, he became chairman of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Louisville School of Medicine and, in 1987, became the J. Wayne Reitz Professor and Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Florida College of Medicine.

He was author of the internationally published *Manual of Gynecologic Surgery* (Springer-Verlag), 1st and 2nd ed., and was author or co-author of six other books, 20 book chapters and more than 350 other publications and presentations. He held patents on three inventions, including the Masterson Surgical Clamp, which arose from his great interest in improving surgical wound healing.

Hylarie McMahon, a professor emerita of art in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, died Oct. 1, 2024. She was 94.

Known for large, richly painted fabric hangings inspired by kites, parachutes, sails and migratory butterflies, McMahon exhibited widely throughout the Midwest. Born in Bournemouth, England, McMahon earned a diploma in fine arts in 1951 from University College London's Slade School of Fine Arts and a master's degree in 1957 from Cornell University.

She joined WashU in 1960 as a graduate assistant in art history and archaeology in Arts & Sciences and then later served as a part-time painting instructor. She taught for four years at Forest Park Community College but returned to WashU in 1972 as an assistant professor of painting. McMahon served as acting dean of fine arts from 1976–77. She became a full professor



Courtesy photo

FORMER DEAN OF ARCHITECTURE

Jerome J. Sincoff, BArch '56, a former dean of architecture, died Dec. 18, 2024. He was 91.

Sincoff spent most of his career with St. Louis–based HOK, rising from draftsman to design and production architect to president and CEO. He served as project executive for many large-scale developments, including the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Sincoff returned to Washington University as dean of architecture from 2005–06. It was a critical period that saw the formal launching of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, the hiring of inaugural Dean Carmon Colangelo and the opening of two new buildings: Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum and Earl E. and Myrtle E. Walker Hall.

Born and raised in St. Louis, Sincoff graduated in 1951 from University City High School, where he was known for drawing buildings and rocket ships. At WashU, he was influenced by the legendary Buckminster Fuller, then a visiting professor of architecture, and by Dean Joseph Passonneau, who arrived at the start of Sincoff's senior year. After graduation, Sincoff completed a tour of duty with the U.S. Army's Air Defense Command. He joined HOK, then a small local firm, in 1962.

With HOK, he worked on major projects across the country, including Bristol-Myers Squibb headquarters in Lawrenceville, New Jersey; Mobil Corp. headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia; One Civic Center Plaza in Denver; and the Nestlé Purina headquarters in St. Louis.

A fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Sincoff also served on the research council of the National Academy of Sciences.

WashU named him a Distinguished Architecture Alumnus in 1997 and a Distinguished University Alumnus in 2004. He was awarded the architecture Dean's Medal in 1999 and the Sam Fox School's Dean's Medal in 2010. He and his wife, Suzanne, were life members of the William Greenleaf Eliot Society and provided a fund to support the Jerome J. and Suzanne M. Sincoff Endowed Scholarship.

Sincoff is survived by his wife, Suzanne Sincoff; children Julie Jampel, Robert Sincoff and Steven Sincoff; stepchildren Biron Valier and Jennifer Drury; and nine grandchildren and step-grandchildren.

in 1985 and served as director of graduate studies from 1989–93. She was named emerita in 1995.

McMahon served in executive roles for the Women's Caucus for Art, the Community of Women Artists and the Women's Art Center, and in 1979 she won a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. Her later works, produced after her retirement to Tilghman Island on the Chesapeake Bay, included oil triptychs and quadriptychs that incorporated ideas from Bauhaus principles, Japanese design and classical mathematics.

Sean McWilliams, MA '98, PhD '05, a 21-year employee of WashU, died Jan. 9, 2025. He was 55.

McWilliams served as a senior change manager for the Student Sunrise Project, a once-in-a-generation plan to replace and update a variety of student information systems with Workday Student. In this role, he supported Arts & Sciences, Beyond Boundaries, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the project's outreach to students. His natural ability to support and advise others was evident in his various student-facing roles at WashU.

He previously served as assistant dean and director for academic success in Arts & Sciences, receiving the Arts & Sciences Outstanding Staff Award for his work with students navigating academic and personal difficulties. Prior to that role, he was a four-year adviser in Arts & Sciences, directing academic success programs such as academic progress and academic integrity.

Tae Sung (T.S.) Park, MD, a renowned neurosurgeon who pioneered a surgical technique that improved the lives of thousands of children worldwide, died Aug. 31, 2024, while on vacation with his family in Mexico. He was 77.

After a remarkable career devoted to performing life-changing surgeries for children with cerebral palsy, Park, the Margery Campbell Fort Professor of Neurological Surgery, retired from the School of Medicine in June 2024. Park joined the faculty in 1989 and over 35 years helped build the Division of Pediatric Neurosurgery into one of the best in the nation. Families traveled from around the world seeking his care for their children as Park was renowned as a pioneer and, arguably, the foremost practitioner of selective dorsal rhizotomy (SDR). This surgical procedure reduces the muscle spasticity characteristic of cerebral palsy, a condition that can cause loss of muscle control and coordination. He performed the procedure 5,323 times, with the last taken in May 2024, the month before he retired. SDR surgeries enhance mobility for children who might otherwise require a wheelchair for the rest of their lives.

Kenneth Rupert Smith Jr., MD '57, died May 16, 2024, at age 91.

Smith, a native of Greenville, Illinois, attended Greenville College from 1950–53, then attended the School of Medicine on a full scholarship. In 1966, he helped establish and became the first chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Saint Louis University Hospital, retiring as chairman of neurosurgery in 2002, and from surgery in 2004.

Over his career he taught as professor of neurosurgery and trained over 40 residents. He held leadership roles in organizations including as president of The Society of Neurological Surgeons (1995–96) and president of the Society of University Neurosurgeons (1986), for which he served as historian until his death. Smith was a lifelong advocate for the poor, traveling Missouri and Illinois to treat patients in free clinics until his death.

Shirley Ann (Phend) Webber, BS '88, died Oct. 8, 2024, in Rockville, Maryland. She was 90. Webber was a longtime employee of WashU, first in the School of Engineering and then as an administrative assistant to Anne Hetlage, assistant dean of University College, retiring in 1999. "She considered WashU her second family," her daughter, Carol Van Ryzin, AB '93, wrote, and she was well known within UCollege as she helped make the schedule for classes. Webber also helped graduate students from foreign countries learn English and invited numerous work-study students to her home for meals, Van Ryzin remembered.

The following death notices were submitted from Sept. 1, 2024–Dec. 31, 2024. Please contact Advancement Services at WUADDataChange@wustl.edu to report the death of an alumnus or alumna. Please submit full obituaries for consideration to wustlimgclassnotes@wustl.edu.

1940-1949

Rita Levreault, AB '45; Nov. '24
Mildred (Mecker) Acton, BS '46, MA '47; Sept. '24
Paul F. Brown, MD '47; Oct. '24
Carl L. Hermann, BFA '49; Sept. '24
Harold H. Schreimann, BS '49; Oct. '24

1950-1959

Sam Fox, BSBA '51, Hon LLD '02; Dec. '24
James P. Gray, AB '51, JD '53; Sept. '24
Lester S. Page, DDS '51; Sept. '24
David E. Perkins, AB '51, MD '55, Res/Fel '56; Oct. '24
Louis B. Loebner, BSBA '52; Nov. '24
James E. Schiele, AB '52, MLA '85, AM '11, DLA '15; Dec. '24
Dean W. Ubben, BS '52; Nov. '24
Sanford W. Rudman, AB '53, PhD '61; Dec. '23
Robert H. Lauer, BS '54, PhD '70; Nov. '24
Lewis R. Mills, LLB '54; Dec. '24
Doris A. (Weaver) Brydon, BSPT '55; Nov. '24
Richard R. Dewey, MD '55; Dec. '24
David G. Murray, MD '55; Oct. '24
Jerome J. Sincoff, BArch '56; Dec. '24
Joan M. Dellbringge, AB '57, MA '63; Sept. '24
Rose Anne (Mazzocco) Lawson, AB '57; Sept. '24
Arlo E. Moehlenpah, BS '57, DSC '70; Sept. '24
Robert H. Mohlenbrock, PhD '57; Nov. '24
Aleene (Schneider) Zawada, AB '57; Nov. '24
T. Eugene Dahlgren, MHA '58; Sept. '24
M. Allan Kays, MA '58, PhD '61; Nov. '24
Raymond R. Maas, MD '58; Oct. '24
Byron J. Masterson, MD '58; Nov. '24
Thomas C. Hullverson, AB '59, JD '59; Nov. '24
Robert C. Sievers, BS '59; Nov. '24

1960-1969

Robert E. Fechner, MD '60; Oct. '24
John L. Gianoulakis, AB '60; Sept. '24
Melvyn W. Wiesman, AB '60; Sept. '24
Torrey N. Foster, JD '61; Oct. '24
Laurie (Singer) Pakula, MSW '61; Dec. '24
Dusko W. Doder, AB '62; Sept. '24
Jack W. Debolt, AB '63; Dec. '24
C. Marshall Friedman, AB '63, JD '65; Sept. '24
Jean K. (Jackson) Thouvenot, AB '63; Sept. '24
Don Panhorst, BS '64; Sept. '24
Richard C. Budde, BS '65; Dec. '24
Philip G. George, MD '66, Res/Fel '73; Nov. '24
Charles Richard Meyer, AB '66, MA '67, PhD '73; Sep. '24
Jeffrey G. Wombolt, DMD '66; Sept. '24
Emil H. Henning, AB '67, MArch '74; Oct. '24
Alan J. Nuta, AB '67; Dec. '24
Patrick J. Blakemore, BFA '68; Oct. '24
Ednette L. Chandler, MA '68; Sept. '24
Patricia (Schultze) Edenburn, MA '68; April '24
Phoebe C. Pomeroy, MM '68; Oct. '24
Jack Wides, BSBA '68; Nov. '24

1970-1979

Richard O. Bell, MA '70; Aug. '24
Leslie (Newman) Reby, BFA '70; Dec. '24
Sheridan R. Skeen, MSW '71; Nov. '24
Thomas R. Sluberski, MA '71; MArch '74
Sharon (Frost) Tiefenbrunn, AB '71, MD '75, Res/Fel '80; Sept. '24
Thomas L. Farquhar, MBA '72; Oct. '24
Dallas C. Long III, MD '72; Nov. '24
Richard Simon Lavenstein, AB '73, MArch '79; Oct. '24
Patricia S. (Sommerville) Peterson, MS '73; Nov. '24
Robert Henry Greenfield, MS '74, DSC '76; Nov. '24
Mark Alan Black, JD '77; Sept. '24
John Adelbert Maksem, MD '77; Sept. '24
Cary David Radcliffe, AB '77; Sept. '24
Udell B. Levy, AB '78; June '24

1980-1989

James Hayes Keene, MDP '84; Oct. '24
Michael Howard Izsak, JD '86; Dec. '24
Shirley A. Webber, BS '88; Oct. '24
Rachel Miriam Spector, AB '89; Oct. '24

1990-1999

Julie (Webb) Phillips, MSPT '91; Oct. '24
Ann (Callahan) Mandelstamm, MLA '97; Nov. '24

2000-2009

Jeremiah James Wille, BS '01, DSC '06; Dec. '24
Felix Yichung Feng, MD '02; Dec. '24

2010-2019

Katherine Tanya Peter, BS '13; Nov. '24
Amanda Carolyn Spencer, BS '14, BS '14, MS '14; Oct. '24



WashU

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WashU

Making the case

In 1975, then-Georgia Gov. **Jimmy Carter** visited WashU for the first time, speaking to law students in Mudd Hall and making his case as a candidate for president. Arts & Sciences' Peter Kastor says that Carter, who died Dec. 29, 2024, was an unknown at the time, but this unfamiliarity made him an ideal candidate. Carter would serve just one term as president, yet he'll be remembered, Kastor says, as "a man of modesty and service, thoughtful writing and general good humor." Read more from Kastor: https://source.washu.edu/news_clip/how-jimmy-carter-became-a-great-president/.



Photo: Washington University Archives



The thrill of victory

The WashU women's soccer team celebrated both a national title and an undefeated season after a 3-0 victory over William Smith College, Dec. 8. The 2024 NCAA Division III women's soccer champions finished their extraordinary season with a 23-0-2 record.