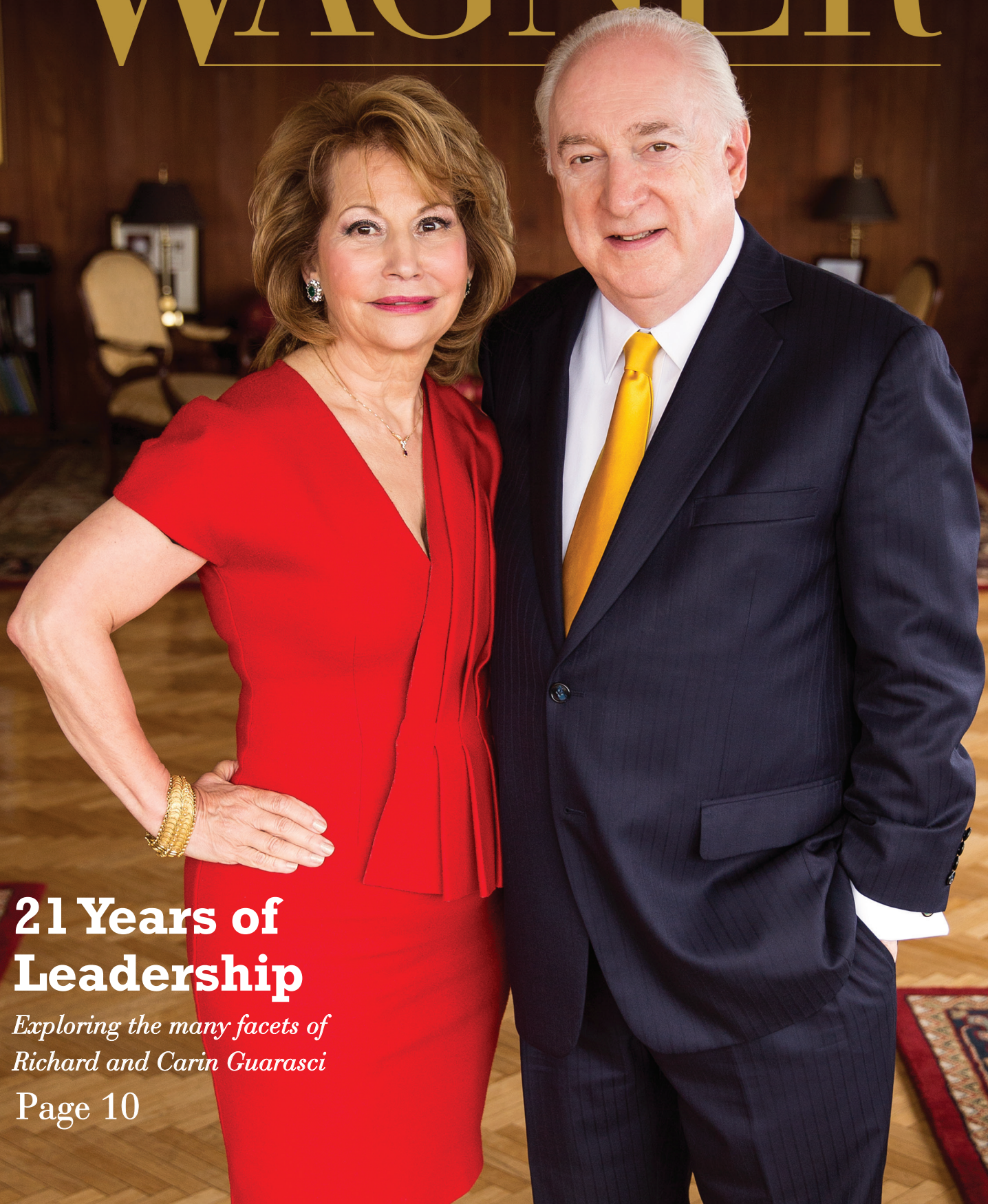


SUMMER 2018

THE LINK FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

# WAGNER



## 21 Years of Leadership

*Exploring the many facets of  
Richard and Carin Guarasci*

Page 10

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Wagner Magazine | Summer 2018

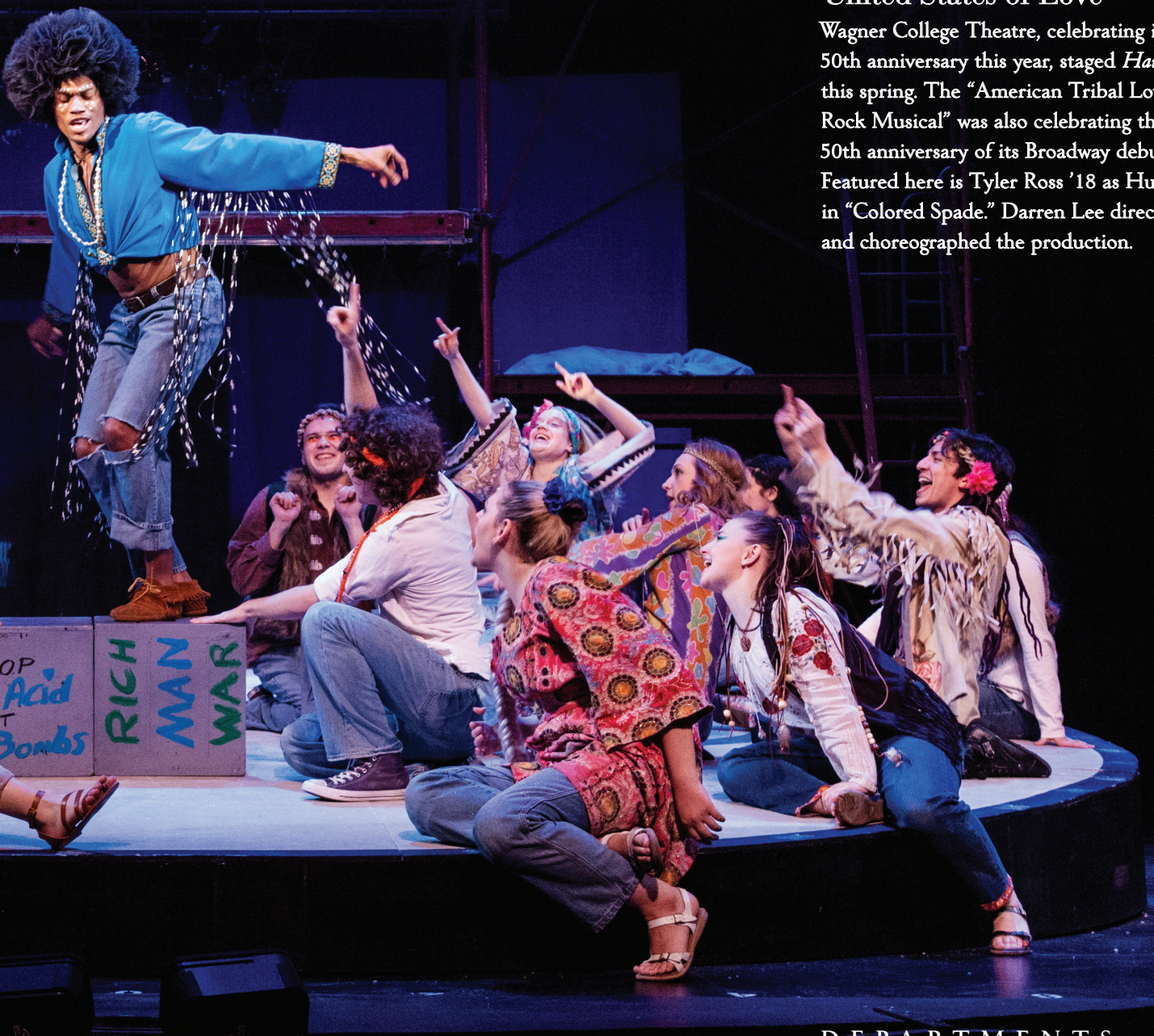
VOL. 15, NO. 2



## FEATURES

**10** **Five Facets of Leadership**  
We look at emblematic moments of President Guarasci's 21 years of leadership, and Carin Guarasci's "gentleness and grit."

**18** **Searching for Truth in 'The Land of Contradictions'**  
Glen MacDonald '18 brings us stories of Cuba, from a trip with fellow Wagner students and professors



## 'United States of Love'

Wagner College Theatre, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, staged *Hair* this spring. The "American Tribal Love-Rock Musical" was also celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Broadway debut. Featured here is Tyler Ross '18 as Hud in "Colored Spade." Darren Lee directed and choreographed the production.

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## Still Having Fun at 50

The Wagner College Theatre family celebrated the supportive, nurturing, high-achieving community they've made at a Golden Jubilee Gala

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# From the President

## *Ready to Rise to Democracy's Challenge*



AT COMMENCEMENT 2018, we celebrated the academic, athletic, civic, and campus achievements of the newest Wagner alumni. I am so proud of their openness to new ideas and diverse cultures, and

their intellectual and leadership skills. They are well prepared for the next steps in building their personal and professional lives.

Like every generation before them, this generation faces its own special advantages and challenges. We are living during a time of remarkable technological change, where virtually everything ever written or performed sits on a smartphone in your pocket; a time of unprecedented medical breakthroughs; a time of many other exciting advances providing this generation with dramatic emerging opportunities.

But there are also very dark clouds looming. Intolerance, bigotry, and human cruelty are on the rise. Deep social divisions threaten the very foundation of our human advances. We are seeing a sustained attack on scientific thinking, with assertions and accusations substituted for sound, evidenced-based arguments. (I hope you will read Donald Stearns and Utteyo Dasgupta's essay addressing this problem in "Reflections" on pages 44–45.)

Unless we regain our individual and collective sense of empathy and respect for others, our hard-earned progress around human rights and the rule of law will slip from our grasp. The generational challenge of the class of 2018 is to restore social confidence in this republic's founding values. As Dr. Martin Luther King said so eloquently 55 years ago, our national aspiration remains to "live in a nation where [each of us] will not be judged not by the color of [our] skin, but by the content of [our] character."

How has Wagner College prepared the class of 2018 for this challenge? They have been engaged in

**"Unless we regain our sense of empathy and respect for others,** our hard-earned progress around human rights and the rule of law will slip from our grasp."

an innovative model of liberal education, the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts. Harkening back to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, liberal education *liberates* you as you transcend your own experiences to see the world wide and deep and become cosmopolitan citizens of the world.

At Wagner, we have joined this classic form of learning to "learning by doing," joining liberal-arts assets to real-world contexts. Through the Wagner Plan, these students' Wagner biographies are rich with examples of a full education, where they have learned to marry the habits of their hearts with the power of their hands and intellects.

The class of 2018 has acquired the arts of democracy — namely, cultivating empathy for others, building reciprocity with others, forging cooperative teams in solving problems, using new technologies to build coalitions across the ethnic, racial, and personal identities that make up our diverse communities. In short, they

have learned to move into action in making meaningful and sustainable change.

I have so much faith in them to advance all the innovations in human progress that I have enumerated. They are part of a new generation capable of healing our social divides and building a fair and just social order.

Congratulations and best wishes, class of 2018!

Richard Guarasci  
PRESIDENT



## From the Editor

### *How the Wagner Plan Works for Students*

In 2018, the College celebrates 20 years of the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts, a groundbreaking undergraduate curriculum that has influenced the direction of college education throughout the United States.

But, more importantly, has the Wagner Plan influenced Wagner students? Starting with the class of 2002, Wagner students have spent their college years engaged in interdisciplinary learning communities and real-world problem-solving. What difference has this educational approach made in their lives?

I have started to reach out to that group of alumni and gather their stories. A full report is planned for the fall 2018 issue of *Wagner Magazine*.

Here, I'll give you a preview of what I'm hearing from them.

In 2007, *Wagner Magazine* featured four seniors, asking them to reflect on their educational experiences.

One of them was Molly Judge '07, an English major and journalism minor from Green Bay, Wisconsin.

In 2007, she told us, "The thrill of being an English major is that, although many people presume I would want to teach, I have no intention of teaching at all, but rather the door is wide open. I can venture into public relations, journalism, media, and even law school. The possibilities are endless!"

Her first job was as an account coordinator for Coyne Public Relations in Manhattan.

Today, she oversees project management for Lytx Inc. in San Diego, using the cutting-edge technology of video telematics to promote safety in transportation. She is married to Steve Dixon '06, a Marine Corps pilot, and they have two daughters, Charlotte and Nina.

After working in public relations and marketing, Molly Dixon (as she's now known) decided to try project management about eight years ago. The communications and people skills she honed at Wagner, starting in her First-Year Learning Community, are key to her success in this field, she says.

"I didn't know at the time I entered college what I wanted to do, and I wasn't one hundred percent sure when I left college, either," she says. "I just knew what I was capable of and what my skill sets were, and I wanted to find something that would leverage those."

Well-prepared by the Wagner Plan, and assisted by the Wagner alumni network, she has found a niche where she feels happy and fulfilled.

*Laura Barlament*  
EDITOR, WAGNER MAGAZINE



The Dixon family.

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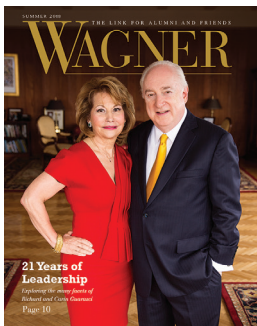
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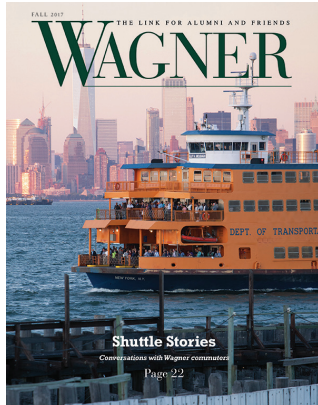


### On the Cover

*President Richard Guarasci has announced that he will retire in June 2019. In this issue, we consider his leadership and that of his wife, Carin Guarasci, and what they have meant to Wagner College.*

PHOTOGRAPH: DEBORAH FEINGOLD

# From Our Readers



“The ferry shuttle is a great idea.”

## Shuttle Reactions

That is a great idea (“Shuttle Stories: A Day on the Wagner College Ferry Shuttle,” fall 2017). When I went to school there, as a freshman, I felt as if I were in a prison. You were not allowed to have a car (ridiculous rule), and there was no dependable way to get to the ferry.



*Michele Sloboda '78*  
VIA FACEBOOK

## The Right Decision

In 1956, Paul West (featured in fall 2017, “The Right Notes at the Right Time”) took an opinion poll. I advised him to finish his degree. Now I laugh

every time I hear his name on WBGO Jazz 88. (My advice was so wrong.)

*Harriet Lee Hempel Weening '57*  
BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY

## Salute from an Emeritus Professor

I was a full-time faculty member from fall 1961 through spring 1965, and fall 1970 through fall 1994. I look forward to receiving the magazine, following the success of the College, noting the contributions and achievements of its graduates, and, unfortunately, the passing of former students and colleagues. Thank you, and best wishes for your continued success.

*Robert Paul Volyn, Ph.D.*  
PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ECONOMICS  
WAYNE, NEW JERSEY



## Wagner Plan Grads: We Want to Hear From You

In 2018, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts, the groundbreaking curriculum that has defined the undergraduate academic experience since 1998. Graduates of 2002–2017, we want to hear from you! What are you up to today? How has the Wagner Plan influenced your life? Please write to [laura.barlament@wagner.edu](mailto:laura.barlament@wagner.edu) or call 718-390-3147. Interviews conducted by the end of September may be included in the fall issue of *Wagner Magazine*.

**WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU** We welcome letters from readers. Letters should refer to material published in the magazine and include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to determine the suitability of letters for publication and to edit them for accuracy and length.

Laura Barlament, Editor  
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# Upon the Hill

*Learning, teaching, giving and achieving on Grymes Hill and beyond*



in 1997 as provost and established the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts in 1998. President since 2002, he has increased the Wagner endowment from \$4 million to \$100 million, built the first new residence hall on campus in 40 years, oversaw a major renovation of Main Hall, and helped to found the Port Richmond Partnership, among many other accomplishments.

Read much more about Richard and Carin Guarasci's leadership on pages 10–17.

“Thank you, Richard, for your creative vision, your leadership and above all your collaborative friendship with us,” said Board Chair Warren Procci '68 H'17. “You have secured an unforgettable spot in Wagner’s history. You have been ‘beautiful upon a hill.’”

## Lead In

### Guarasci announces retirement, launching the search for Wagner president No. 19

IN JANUARY, President Guarasci announced that he will retire next June, setting in motion a search for the 19th president of Wagner College.


“Having just celebrated my 72nd birthday, I strongly believe it is time to turn over the reins to the next leader of Wagner College,” Guarasci said in a message to the College community on January 30. “After carefully conferring with our trustees on an orderly succession plan, and with the support of my best friend and cherished partner Dr. Carin Guarasci, I am announcing today that I will step down as president effective June 30, 2019.”

In February, the Board of Trustees appointed a presidential search committee that includes representatives from the trustees, faculty, administration, and students. The board also selected the firm Academic Search to consult on the search process.

In June, a national search was launched. The search committee plans

to begin reviewing applications shortly after September 15, with the goal of naming the new president by the late fall of this year. Names of candidates will not be made public. A search process that guarantees confidentiality is necessary to ensure that candidates who hold key positions at other institutions will apply.

Richard Guarasci holds the record as Wagner’s longest-serving president, and his tenure has been groundbreaking. He came to Wagner

 [More information about the presidential search and the nomination process: wagner.edu/about/presidential-search](http://wagner.edu/about/presidential-search)

## Season of Change

**TWO KEY ADMINISTRATORS** who have significantly influenced Wagner students in recent years took on new roles this summer – both at prominent historically black colleges and universities.

Lily D. McNair, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, was named Tuskegee University’s eighth president as of July 1. She is the first female president in the institution’s 136-year history. McNair had served as Wagner’s provost since 2011. Jeffrey Kraus, vice provost and dean of graduate studies, has been appointed to serve as provost and vice president for academic affairs for 2018–19.

Curtis Wright, chief diversity officer and dean of campus life, was named vice president of student affairs at Xavier University of Louisiana as of August 1. Wright began working at Wagner in 2006 as the director of co-curricular programs. Wagner will launch a search for the new dean of campus life.



**NEW ROLES** Curtis Wright and Lily McNair say “aloha” at the luau-themed Reunion dinner.



**First the  
Facts . . .**

340

NUMBER OF SEATS IN THE MAIN HALL THEATER

1,293.5

SQUARE FOOTAGE OF THE STAGE



## ‘Define Who You Are’

### Graduates and families celebrate a new step in life

AT COMMENCEMENT on May 11, 689 new faces were added to the count of Wagner alumni.

They included the Spiro Award recipient, Charlton J. Boyd '18, a double major in government and politics and in history who was a campus leader in student government and athletics. He was also president of the Wagner College Republicans and chair of the New York City Federation of College Republicans.

Two students won the privilege of speaking for their class: Eman Metwally '18, a childhood education and English major; and Glen MacDonald '18, an English and film studies major and writing minor. (Read his story about visiting Cuba on pages 18–23.)

Wagner awarded honorary degrees to two distinguished educators, L. Lee Knepfelp, a pioneering scholar in the area of intellectual and ethical development; and Freeman A. Hrabowski III, a national leader in science and math education, especially in minority participation and performance.

They both shared their encouragement, wisdom, and stories for the class of 2018.

“Your families, Wagner College, and the experience of your own precious life have all taught you to be of use,” Knepfelp said. “That is what a practical liberal education is all about. You have developed the intellectual,

**PROUD MOMENT** Friends and family surround Letty Romero '18, office manager for campus life, who completed her Bachelor of Arts in sociology. Below, Freeman Hrabowski delivers the commencement address.

interpersonal, and intercultural capacities to be of use in a complex and diverse society. And do we need you now! We need your commitment and courage, your excellence and empathy, your talent and tenaciousness.”

Hrabowski, the president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, talked about his mother's growing up as a black girl in rural Alabama. She learned to love reading by borrowing books from her wealthy white employer.

She became a teacher, and Hrabowski became, in his words, “a math nerd.” He was inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. and marched with him in a peaceful civil rights protest.

Connecting the civil rights movement to the diversity and inclusiveness of college graduates today, he said, “My students say, ‘But there are all these divisions.’ And I say, ‘But go back to the '60s. The 1960s or the 1860s.’ There have been divisions before. And it's taken people like you to say to the world, ‘We can be better than this.’ I challenge you to use this fine liberal arts education to analyze what you can do, and to ask yourself, ‘Who am I?’”

“Today you are celebrating your dreams, students, and the dreams of your parents and your grandparents,” Hrabowski said. “I want you first to know your story. Know your story, and don't let anyone else define who you are.”





# 1930

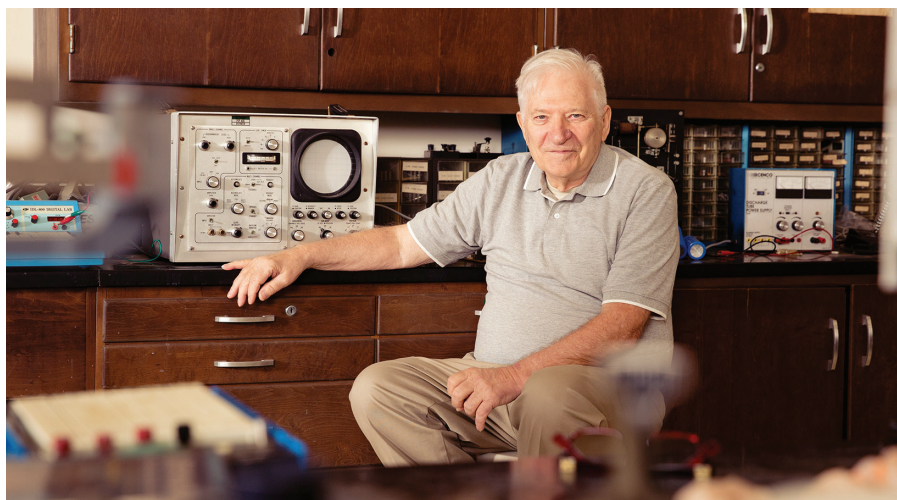
FIRST YEAR A PLAY WAS STAGED THERE

...Then  
the Quiz!



What was the first play ever staged in Main Hall?

ANSWER ON PAGE 9



**ON CALL** Professor Otto Raths in his lab, an experimental physicist's playground.

## Time for Students

**For Professor Raths, that time never ends, even in retirement**

FUN FACTS about Otto Raths, professor of physics, who is retiring this year: He has been a part of more than half of Wagner's 100-year history on Grymes Hill. Eighty-five percent of Wagner's living alumni have overlapped with his tenure.

When Raths first came to teach at Wagner, in the fall of 1964, things were different than today. The dress code, for example, required male faculty to wear ties and jackets. (Raths says he took his off as soon as he got to his classroom.) Football games were played behind Main Hall. There was no Union, no Harborview, and no science building.

There were 2,197 students, however, who needed instructors. Raths had a friend, Harvey Logan, who taught physics at Wagner. He connected Raths with Wagner when Raths had grown dissatisfied with his job in industry.

In 1968, Raths left Wagner for a couple of years to complete his Ph.D. at the Stevens Institute of Technology; but he had found his niche, and he returned to influence generations of Wagner students. Not only serious students of physics and math have loved him, but also students in all majors who took his classes in entry-level science.

Spending time with students has always been of utmost importance to Raths. As he said in a 2013 video, "People can find themselves [at Wagner]. That's important. If you go to a very large campus, sometimes the faculty doesn't want to spend time with students. We do. We think it's important."

He will continue to do so, as he intends to keep coming back to his office in Megerle 112 daily — or whenever his wife, biology professor Linda Raths, needs a ride to work. He's

made himself available as a tutor and substitute lecturer.

Also retiring this year are Marilyn Kiss, professor of Spanish since 1989; and Miles Groth, professor of psychology since 1994.

Kiss's joy in Spanish language, literature, and culture has been her gift to Wagner students. Her pedagogical skills earned widespread recognition, most recently by the Metropolitan New York Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, who named her Teacher of the Year for 2018. She also served as Wagner's study abroad advisor for 17 years. In retirement, she plans to continue her passions for poetry, photography, and reading. She also wants to travel to Hawaii and Alaska — the only two U.S. states she has not yet visited.



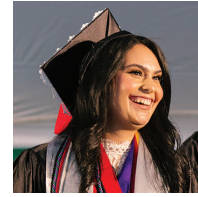
A psychoanalyst as well as a prolific scholar, Groth is well-known for his focus on the psychology of men and boys. With a grant from the Lilly Endowment, he started the Wagner College Men's Project, which continued as a research center. He is the editor of the journal *New Male Studies*.

Groth directed Wagner's Honors Program for eight years, leading five study abroad trips to Venice. In his retirement, he is co-authoring a book called *(Human) Psychology* (Rowman & Littlefield/Lexington, 2019), speaking internationally on psychotherapy, as well as playing the piano.



## Quote Unquote

“The Wagner community made me feel comfortable enough to change.”



Eman Metwally '18  
COMMENCEMENT,  
MAY 11

## Occasions to Celebrate

Let's remember a few great events in Wagner history

The fall of 2018 marks the start of some very significant events in Wagner history:

★ **The first classes were held on the Grymes Hill campus 100 years ago, in the fall of 1918.** ★ Wagner had been founded in 1883 in Rochester, New York. Needing space to expand, the College had purchased the 38-acre former Cunard family property in Staten Island in 1917.

We'll mark this occasion in the fall issue of *Wagner Magazine* with photographs showing the campus's evolution over the past 100 years. These photographs will also be displayed in the Horrmann Library's Spotlight Gallery during the month of September.



Go to page 31 for more information about the 100th anniversary Homecoming celebration on September 22.

★ **Lowell Matson (fondly known as Doc) began teaching the first classes for a theater arts major 50 years ago, in the fall of 1968.** ★ Before that time, the College had extracurricular drama clubs. Today, the Department of Theatre and Speech has nine full-time professors and about 290 majors in two degree programs. It has ranked among the top college theaters in the nation for 15 years.

See pages 24–27 for more about the WCT golden jubilee celebration.

★ **The first learning communities in the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts curriculum were held 20 years ago, in the fall of 1998.** ★ Then-Provost Richard Guarasci had initiated the planning for this ambitious overhaul of Wagner's undergraduate program when he arrived in 1996.

In the fall issue of *Wagner Magazine*, we'll bring you stories from Wagner Plan graduates.



★ **In addition, the academic year 2018–19 marks the 10th anniversaries of the Center for Intercultural Advancement and the Port Richmond Partnership.** ★

The Center for Intercultural Advancement is an office that creates opportunities for dialogue and learning about different cultures. Its staff also supports international students and students of color, and it advises all students on studying abroad.

The Port Richmond Partnership is a coalition of Wagner College and organizations in Port Richmond. It is designed to extend Wagner's commitment to learning-by-doing and help revitalize an economically distressed, politically underrepresented community.



Wagner College Theatre patrons Ken and Dolly Smith have established an annual prize for the top theater students. Joanna Catalano '18 and Emma Pittman '18 received the inaugural Dolly Lorey Smith Awards for design and performance, respectively. Here, the Smiths are shown with Catalano (who's now working on Broadway's *The Play That Goes Wrong*) and former Provost Lily McNair.

## The Answer

QUIZ QUESTION  
ON PAGE 7

*Peter Ibbetson*, based on the George du Maurier novel, performed by Wagner's Dramatic Society.



**SEAHAWK SUCCESS** Guard JoJo Cooper '18 had a sensational final year, scoring in double figures 28 times. Midfielder Kirsten Monte '19 helped defeat Mercer for the women's lacrosse program's first NCAA tournament win.

## A Fine Quartet

### Seahawks notch record-setting seasons in four sports

MEN'S BASKETBALL set up the year well for Wagner athletics. The NEC regular season champions, they set a record with their 16-game winning streak before losing to LIU Brooklyn in the Northeast Conference (NEC) title game. Wagner received the league's automatic bid to the postseason National Invitational Tournament. Sixth-year head coach Bashir Mason was named the 2018 National Association of Basketball Coaches NCAA Division I District 18 Coach of the Year.

Women's lacrosse, directed by third-year head coach Katie Rowan, claimed its second NEC Championship in the last three years; first NCAA tournament win in program history, over Mercer University; and most victories in a single season (40).

Women's water polo claimed its fifth straight Metro Atlantic Athletic

Conference (MAAC) Championship title; second NCAA Tournament win in program history, over UC San Diego; and tie for the most victories in a single season (25). Eighth-year head coach Chris Radmonovich was named the 2018 BSN Sports MAAC Coach of the Year.

Baseball concluded its season with a program-best 38 wins, in addition to collecting a program-high 21 conference wins. The Seahawks were named the 2018 NEC co-regular season champions, and seventh-year head coach Jim Carone earned his second NEC Coach of the Year honor.

Two new athletic teams are joining the Seahawks in 2018: women's field hockey and women's triathlon. Wagner is the 21st school in the nation to add a varsity women's triathlon program, made possible through the USA Triathlon Foundation Women's Emerging Sport Grant. The team's first season of competition is set for fall 2018. Women's field hockey will compete as a club team for 2018–19 and as a Division I varsity team in 2019–20.

## Arts & Letters

### Slavery on Screen

Featuring pirates and slaves, powdered wigs and bejeweled gowns, and plenty of steamy romance, stories of eighteenth-century life continue to inspire and entertain us on the large and small screens.

Wagner English professor Steven Thomas has co-edited a collection of essays about this phenomenon, *The Cinematic Eighteenth Century: History, Culture, and Adaptation* (Routledge, 2018), with Srividhya Swaminathan, professor of English at Long Island University.

Topics range from adaptations of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to historical fiction on the subjects of slavery (*Belle*), piracy (*Crossbones and Black Sails*), monarchy (*The Madness of King George* and *The Libertine*), and the role of women (*Marie Antoinette*, *The Duchess*, and *Outlander*).

Thomas's chapter, "Cinematic Slavery and the Romance of *Belle*," considers how we represent the troubling history of slavery on the screen. Surveying a range of movies produced across the world, from *Ceddo* (Senegal) and *Burn!* (Italy) to *Amazing Grace* (England), *Amistad* (USA) and *Sankofa* (USA, Ethiopia, and Ghana), Thomas works through the history of narrative and cinematic strategies taken by filmmakers for various political goals. He concludes with a detailed analysis of the movie *Belle* (directed by Amma Asante in 2013) as an example of the innovative directions in which a new generation of filmmakers are taking the subject.



A scene from Amma Asante's *Belle*, featuring Gugu Mbatha-Raw.





TO BETTER UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT RICHARD

# FIVE FACETS

GUARASCI'S CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE 21 YEARS SINCE

# OF

HE JOINED THE WAGNER COMMUNITY, WE LOOK AT

# LEADERSHIP

FIVE EMBLEMATIC MOMENTS IN HIS LEADERSHIP

BY LEE MANCHESTER

**I**N JANUARY, President Richard Guarasci announced that he would retire next June, after 22 years at Wagner College. • While the search for our next president has already begun, it's the perfect time to pause and reflect. Let's look at five moments that have typified President Guarasci's leadership on Grymes Hill.



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## BEGIN WITH INNOVATION: THE WAGNER PLAN

BIOLOGY PROFESSOR Donald Stearns remembers Wagner's situation back in 1997, when Richard Guarasci was named provost.

"The College was in debt, had little in endowment funds, and had a standard curriculum model," he says. "The institution did not look special or particularly attractive to prospective students, except for our proximity to New York City. The faculty recognized that we were in a difficult situation.

"Richard proposed what became known as the Wagner Plan," Stearns remembers, characterizing it as "an affordable way for Wagner College to more effectively compete for prospective students. While the College could not outspend other institutions for physical facilities, we could brand the institution with an innovative curricular model that could be marketed as 'the practical liberal arts.' It would highlight the way experiential learning prepares students for real-world situations — engaging real issues in the community as well as course subjects in the classroom. New York City would be a major resource for many of those experiences."

Art history professor Laura Morowitz joined the Wagner faculty just a few months before Guarasci was hired.

"I really had no idea how things worked, so I don't think I fully realized how innovative and daring it was to completely restructure the curriculum," she says. "This was especially so since it seemed that the entire faculty — or at least the people I associated with — were really revved up by the Wagner Plan.

"One of the best parts was the spirit of shared endeavor. Richard gave the faculty a tremendous amount of freedom and leeway. It was our program, and we were free to shape it as we saw fit. It was something that made Wagner unique."

Sociology professor John Esser, a member of the curriculum committee that worked with Guarasci to develop the Wagner Plan, remembers how the faculty took ownership of the basic idea presented by the new provost.

"Richard had a bare-bones notion," Esser says. "He's very good at coming in with an idea and making you feel like it's your own — but that's OK, because they're good ideas! And together we developed those bare bones into the Wagner Plan."

One moment in the Wagner Plan's creation is still burned into Esser's memory, 21 years later. It happened at the end of the faculty meeting where the plan was finally approved.

"The meeting runs long, of course," he recalls. "We have a vote — no clapping, no congratulating, no nothing. Everybody's just exhausted ... and there's Richard, standing at the bottom of Spiro 2, which is sort of like a fishbowl. He's at one of the pinnacle points in his life, but there's no hoopla, and everyone just leaves — and there he was, standing there. I'll always remember that."

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## CONNECT WITH PEOPLE: 9/11

BY THE FALL 2001 SEMESTER, the Wagner Plan was an accomplished fact and Richard Guarasci was a well-established leader in the Grymes Hill community.

The morning of September 11, 2001, dawned exceptionally clear and bright for the freshman residents of Harborview Hall, barely two weeks into their new lives as college students.

Then, at 8:46 a.m., smoke began to rise from the World Trade Center, across New York Harbor, where a plane had crashed into the North Tower. Word spread quickly through Harborview, and students began looking out their windows toward the city. They watched in shock as a second jetliner hit the South Tower, at 9:03; as that tower collapsed, at 9:59; and as the North Tower disintegrated, at 10:28.

"Staten Island was locked down. New York City was locked down," recalls Frank Young, the College's fundraising chief at the time. "Of course, that meant Wagner was locked down. People couldn't go home, and we weren't sure how we were going to get supplies in to campus."

As that day passed into night, the world began learning details of what had happened: New York, the nation's economic capital, and Washington, our seat of government, had been attacked by terrorists. Thousands had been killed. We were at war.

The following day, President Norman Smith gathered the campus community onto the patio outside the dining hall to inform them about what was happening, "but he didn't actually have much that he could tell, and it didn't ease peoples' minds," Young says.



### REMEMBERING

Above, students lay flowers on Wagner's Sept. 11 memorial at the anniversary commemoration in 2005. Students' responses in the attack's aftermath inspired Guarasci.

### MAN ON A

**MISSION** 'I never see Wagner as a stressor or anything; it's what we're compelled to do — it's a calling,' says Guarasci (left).

"That's when we went over to Harborview — me, assistant provost Hal McCullough, and Richard. ... Richard knew everybody, so he was just fabulous.

"We went to every room," says Young. "I remember how calm those students were, and how they all wanted to do something to help."

"This was a recurrent pattern," Guarasci says. "Students wanted to know how to get to Ground Zero, how to give blood. I was so pleasantly stunned by the remarkable big hearts and civic commitment of our students."

In the midst of that crisis, Richard Guarasci's instinct was to make sure that the students were all right — every one of them. What he learned from knocking on all those doors and talking to all those students inspired him.

"It got me to rethink the idea of patriotism," he says. "How we all came together, that tragedy was so profound and we came together as New Yorkers, it gave me a sense of what it was to be a citizen. No matter our differences, we have much more that connects us."

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## KEEP TEACHING: PRESIDENT AND PROFESSOR

THE YEAR AFTER 9/11, Richard Guarasci was unanimously elected by the Wagner Board of Trustees to succeed President Smith, who'd been recruited to lead England's Richmond University.

President Guarasci took office on June 1, 2002. But even as president he was still, in his heart, a teacher — and so, he taught.

Each fall, he joined history professor emeritus George Rappaport for a (mostly) freshman honors seminar on “Darwin, Marx, Freud and Picasso.”

And each spring, he and government professor Abraham Unger taught another honors seminar, “The City and Citizenship: To Be a New Yorker.”

Jamie Lynn Macchia ’13 was placed in the “Darwin” seminar during her first semester at Wagner.

“My class with Dr. Guarasci was my first ‘real’ college class,” she says. “You can imagine how intimidating this was when I first saw who would be teaching the course. But once I attended my first class, everything I had anticipated was proven wrong. Dr. Guarasci was welcoming, open-minded and always welcomed discussion. He made us feel like equals rather than students.”

“If you want to know what kind of teacher he is,” Rappaport says, “the word I would use is ‘democratic.’ I just remember being impressed with his ability to get students to participate, not intimidating them and encouraging them to talk through any disagreements they have. It’s kind of peculiar, because he’s the president of the College, but the kids get pretty comfortable in the class.”

“Richard’s a very rigorous teacher,” Unger says, describing a teaching method used by Guarasci. “‘Close reading of the text,’ it’s called. You go through a text, paragraph by paragraph, and you just parse it out very scholastically. I watched him do this, which I had only really seen actually in the yeshiva.

“He would demand, in a very charming manner, that the students come in having highlighted sections of the work that they found interesting and be ready to ask a question or explain it to us.

“Whenever a student would say this is getting too tough, Richard would say, ‘I’m here to give you the Mercedes-Benz of education.’”



**DEMOCRATIC EDUCATOR** As a professor, Guarasci excels in inviting student discussion and challenging them to read texts closely.

## TAKE RISKS: FOUNDATION HALL

**IT WAS MAY 1, 2008.** The housing and credit markets were rapidly wobbling toward disaster, but had not yet tipped over the brink.

In that moment, Wagner College was poised to break ground on its first new residence hall in four decades, providing desperately needed on-campus student housing.

“We had oversubscribed students — we were tripling the doubles in Harborview, and we had 100 students living across the street in the Grymes Hill Apartments,” Guarasci recalls. “Attrition was going up because first-year students weren’t very happy, tripled in doubles.”

Fortunately, Wagner was on good terms with the financial world.

“We had developed a relationship with J.P. Morgan’s investment-bank side of the house,” Guarasci says. “We had three or four young investment bankers who knew us well, and they believed in us.

## THROUGH THE YEARS

Richard Guarasci started work as provost in 1997 and took on the presidency on June 1, 2002. What are some of the highlights of his tenure?

**1998** The Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts is launched as the new undergraduate curriculum.



**2001** *Time* magazine names Wagner a “College of the Year” finalist.



**2007** The Putting Wagner First campaign’s public launch is celebrated with a gala on Ellis Island. The campaign goal is \$50 million.

**2004** The Princeton Review publishes its first *Best Colleges* guide, including Wagner College in its select list.

**2009** Wagner’s Civic Innovations program is featured on the front page of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Later that year, the program gives birth to the Port Richmond Partnership.

**2008** *U.S. News & World Report* names Wagner among the top five “up and coming schools” nationally. • College marks 125th anniversary with celebrations in Rochester, N.Y., and Staten Island.







**RISK-WORTHY** Guarasci ensured that Foundation Hall was built despite the breakdown of the housing and credit markets in 2008.



“I got money from my dear friend Mike Manzulli through the Richmond County Savings Foundation, \$5 million toward the \$30 million I needed, so then we could approach borrowing — going to Morgan, naturally. And we had been planning this for four or five years of endless meetings.”

The groundbreaking was scheduled for 10 a.m. At 9 a.m., Guarasci received a phone call from J.P. Morgan.

Because of the financial crisis, the caller said, J.P. Morgan was moving all its money. The Wagner residence hall project would be sent to the company’s private bank instead. The whole deal was in limbo. “The private bank is a whole different part of Morgan Chase, a whole new group of people who had never heard of us, never been to campus, probably never been to Staten Island,” Guarasci explains.

His wife, Carin, met him in his office to walk to the groundbreaking.

“She said to me, ‘Sweetheart, it looks like you’re bothered by something,’” he recalls. “‘What is it?’

“I said, ‘There’s no longer any financing for this building.’

“She said, ‘Oh, what are you going to do?’

“I said, ‘Well, we’re going to go turn over some earth, and either they’re going to bury me in that hole or there will be a building there.’

“I didn’t tell anybody anything. We walked back, and I was confident that we’d figure this out.”

Guarasci started the whole process over with the new team from Morgan Chase.

“The Morgan people came out, and they were extremely aggressive about interrogating us and our numbers and everything else,” he says. “They were somewhat impressed by the campus — but, you know, they didn’t know anything about us.”

Guarasci decided that the College needed to look for alternate financing, just in case.

“We called in our financial team and said, OK, let’s shop around for other banks — the Bank of Ireland, I think, Royal Bank of Scotland, an investment bank from Scandinavia, a Japanese bank, and so on and so forth,” he says. “TD Bank had just come to [Staten] Island, and they kind of took a liking to us.”

The switch was made to TD, and construction proceeded.

“The Morgan people took me out to a steak dinner with Carin and some other clients they had, and I had to break the news to them that we were going to go with TD Bank,” Guarasci says. “They were furious — they thought they were doing us a favor!”

On January 18, 2010, the first students moved into the College’s new residence facility, Foundation Hall.

Guarasci remembers a quip shared with him that day by Student Government Association President

**2010** Foundation Hall, the College’s first new residence since Harborview in 1969, is opened.

**2011** The Putting Wagner First campaign ends, having raised \$57 million for the College.

**2013** The Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy is established, with a grant from the New World Foundation’s COIN Program.



**2016** Richard Guarasci becomes the longest-serving president in College history. • Princeton Review includes the College as 1 of only 50 nationwide ‘Colleges That Create Futures’ in new book.

## 2018

The student body diversity stands at **28 percent**, up from 9 percent in 1997; and the College endowment stands at **\$98.7 million**, up from \$4 million in 1997.

**2012** Main Hall’s \$15 million exterior restoration is completed. • The National League for Nursing names the Evelyn L. Spiro School of Nursing a 2012–16 Center of Excellence in Nursing Education.



**2014** The Evelyn L. Spiro School of Nursing launches the Doctorate of Nursing Practice, Wagner’s first doctoral program.

**2015** The *New York Times* ranks Wagner #6 on a list of the highest “value added” colleges in the nation.



Mike Pinto '10: "Al Smith built the Empire State Building in 18 months, and it took Wagner four years to build my dorm."

"What college presidents do is manage risk," Guarasci says. "If you're heading up a residential college, we have risk every moment here."

"You don't take wild risks; you take prudent risks, and try to assess the risk — but this is the job."

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## DISCOVER A NEW ROLE: GRANDFATHER

LAST DECEMBER, President Guarasci and his staff began working on a big announcement: his plan to retire next June.

And while his retirement announcement was in the works, another major shift in his life was underway: the pending birth of his first grandchild.

Guarasci swears that the one is not related to the other.

Still ...

Those who work with Richard Guarasci know that he is an utterly relentless leader with an eternally restless mind.

But if you want to see his heart melt, just ask him to show you a picture of his granddaughter, Zoe Amala Guarasci Potnuru, born on January 18 to daughter Bridget and her husband, Mani.

"When I found out I was pregnant with Zoe," Bridget remembers, "we gave my parents a children's book called *What Do You Do With an Idea?* They were like, 'Why are you giving us this book?' And I said, 'Well, I thought you'd like to read it to your grandchild.' My dad nearly passed out on the floor."

"A college president's job comes with a lot of stress," Carin Guarasci says, "but when Richard is with Zoe he forgets all that, he's just happy and making up rhymes and singing 'Farmer in the Dell' and 'Old MacDonald.'"

Carin and Richard's son, Patrick, has noticed the change, too.

"I'm hearing fewer stories about the Jets draft," he says, "and more stories about Zoe."

"When you're in her world, you're in Zoe-land," Richard says, "and she's a happy little kid, and she is well-loved — obviously, she knows — so, yeah, it is a different place."

"But I must say that I never see Wagner as a stressor or anything; it's what we're compelled to do — it's a calling, really."

### HEART MELTER

Richard and Carin Guarasci adore their first grandchild, Zoe, born in January 2018.

### FAMILY TIME

Richard and Carin visited Sicily, where Richard's Guarasci grandparents were from originally, with their children in 2016: Mani Potnuru and Bridget Guarasci stand left and right of Richard; Patrick Guarasci and Gaby Banuelos stand right of Carin. In the center is tour guide Marta Cannizzo.

This May, proud Grandpa Guarasci introduced Zoe to the commencement audience:

"I have a beautiful little four-month-old granddaughter who I think about all the time. Her name is Zoe. She is a multiethnic and multiracial child. Not only is she beautiful, but she appears to be very bright."

"I think about how little Zoe will experience the world," he continued. "Will she be the object of bigotry and cruelty, or will she be able to grow and flourish and learn, like you, and bring out the best in herself and in others?"

"What gives me hope that her life will be one marked by happiness and meaning is that you have learned, here at Wagner, to become the transformational leaders who will honor our national pledge to create a world 'with liberty and justice for all.'"

Whether he's a grandfather or a president, caretaker or teacher, innovator or financier, it all flows into the ultimate goal — the Wagner mission — for President Richard Guarasci. ■



“*W*hat are you going to do about that?” President Richard Guarasci remembers this question as Carin Guarasci’s first response when he told her that the financing of Foundation Hall had fallen through. Teachers she has mentored, like Amanda Cortese Ainley ’09 M’10 (who is now a school principal), remember it, too, adding that she always helped them solve problems without fear of judgment. Her daughter, Bridget Guarasci, remembers hearing it often while growing up and facing challenges.

“She was saying, essentially, ‘I have confidence in your ability to find a solution,’” Bridget says. “She never gives up.”

As Wagner’s first lady, Carin Guarasci has played a key role in the College’s flourishing over the past two decades. Her soft-spoken manner and compassionate nature, joined with her gritty determination and sense of mission, have benefited the College in many ways.

When Richard accepted the provost’s position at Wagner, Carin said she was hesitant to go. But, she did want to be closer to their aging parents, who lived near New York City. Also, she knew that Richard felt a deep connection to Wagner and wanted to work with first-generation college students. The College became a passion and a mission for her as well. “I became concerned about a much bigger perspective,” she says.



Guarasci also threw herself eagerly into travel to meet with alumni and friends of the College throughout the U.S. and the world. “Thanks to Richard and Carin, alumni became involved with the College,” Young says. “Carin was wonderful with these people.”

## GENTLENESS and GRIT

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FIRST LADY CARIN GUARASCI *By Laura Barlament*

Their house on Howard Avenue became a center for her role in the mission. It was named the Nicolais House to honor Michael ’49 and Margaret Christie ’49 Nicolais, whose gift made possible an expansion for hosting events. (In 2007, the Nicolais also made the largest single gift ever to Wagner, \$10 million, to support business education.)

“I think this house should be filled with people,” says Guarasci, sitting in her kitchen. “I want them to feel comfortable.” She has hosted innumerable meals and celebrations, large and small, inviting in the Wagner trustees, students, faculty, neighbors, and local groups.

Frank Young, who worked in development and alumni relations for many years, remembers the lunches she hosted for scholarship donors and recipients.

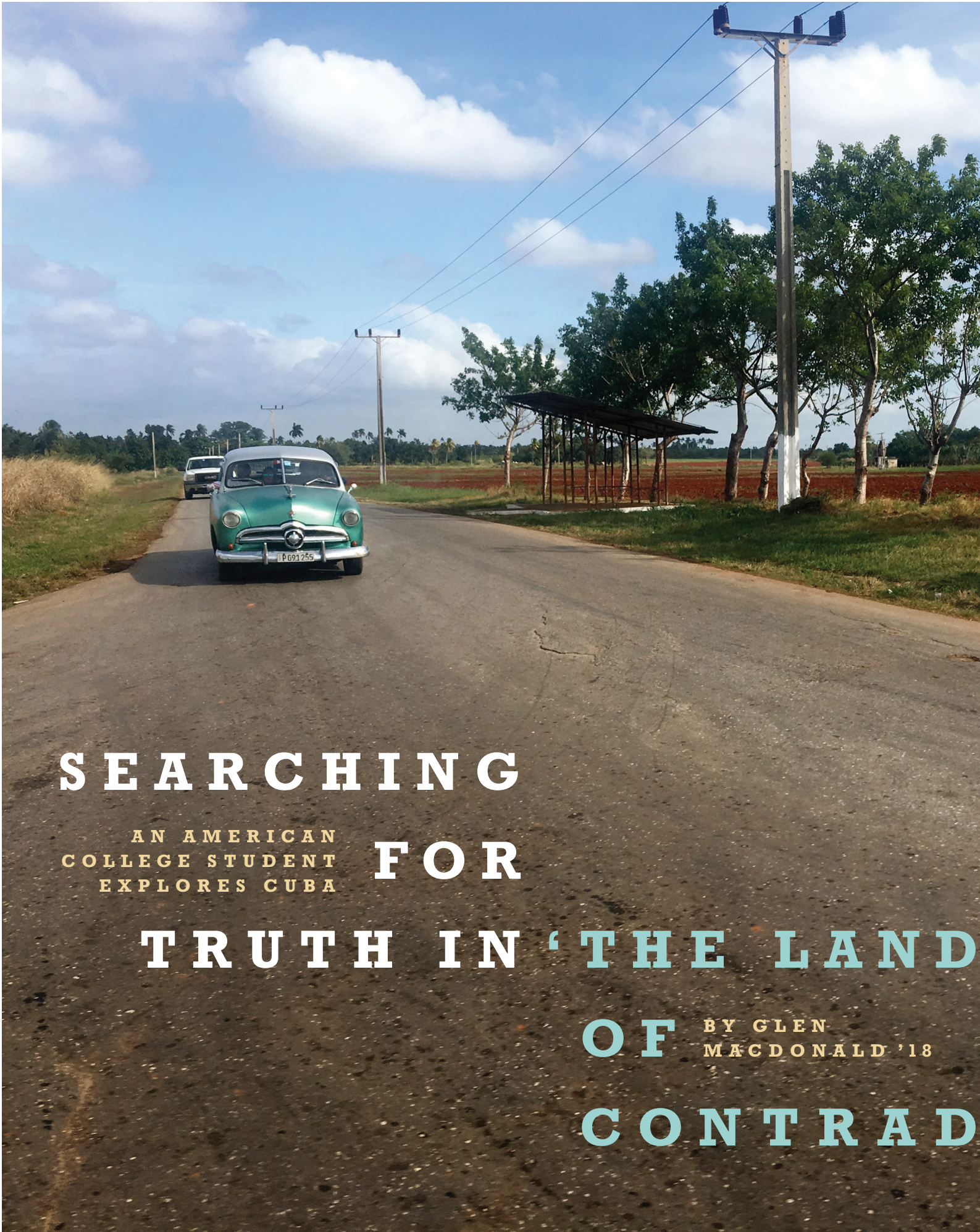
“She created this sense of community on the campus,” he says. “In 20 or 30 years, people who received scholarships will complete the circle and give scholarships themselves.”

In 2008, she used her expertise in K–12 education to create New Educators at Wagner (NEW), a post-graduate program that supports early-career educators.

“After 40 years of working in public education, I realized many young teachers were leaving early because of lack of training and support,” says Hank Murphy ’63 M’69, who has been a major supporter of NEW since its inception. “Carin had the initiative and the enlightenment to understand the problem. I congratulate her for being on the forefront of a major problem in public education and bringing talent into the field of education.”

Along the way, Guarasci pursued her own learning goals as well. She earned her doctorate in education from Teachers College, Columbia University, in 2017.

“This [time at Wagner] is the happiest time in my career, where I have experienced the most personal growth,” she says. “I have met wonderful people whom I appreciate and love. It’s been a wonderful experience for me.”



SEARCHING

AN AMERICAN  
COLLEGE STUDENT  
EXPLORES CUBA

FOR

TRUTH IN 'THE LAND

OF BY GLEN  
MACDONALD '18

CONTRAD



## DURING MY FRESHMAN YEAR,

President Obama announced plans to reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba. The news was surprising, but didn't concern me too much. For most of my life, Cuba had been obscured by complicated, passionate politics. The advocates and critics of Cuba had drowned each other out over the course of my education, leaving me with no strong opinion of the island nation whatsoever.

Three years later, however, I embarked with nine other students on a journey to Cuba, aiming to deepen our understanding of the country. As I found out from my professor-guides, Cuba is often called "the land of contradictions."

PROFESSORS Margarita Sánchez (Spanish) and Philip Cartelli (film) led the study abroad trip, along with a spring semester course, entitled "Desire, Nostalgia and Agony in Cuban Literature and Film," part of Wagner's Expanding Your Horizons program. For two weeks, we would immerse ourselves in Cuban culture via documentaries, short stories, poetry, and extended meetings with authors and filmmakers. We would stay at two vastly different locations; for the first week, we would study at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV) in the rural Artemisa province. There we would participate in a brief course on the history of Cuban documentaries. The following week, we would travel 90 minutes to Havana and experience cultural opportunities in the city.

As our plane flew from JFK toward Havana's José Martí International Airport, I skimmed a generic travel guide. It was full of trite information, such as the best bars and nightclubs and where to eat around Malecón, Havana's famous waterfront promenade. The author cautioned that Cubans could be shifty toward tourists, especially American ones. He praised the daiquiris at Hemingway's old haunt, El Floridita.

"The El Floridita isn't worth it," Dr. Sánchez had told us before we boarded the plane. "It's out of our way, and the drinks are overpriced. It's like a tourist trap."

Unlike the writer of the travel book, Dr. Sánchez did not aim to define Cuba in lofty adjectives and explicit warnings. When pitching the trip to potential students, she simply said, "You're going to love it!" She was the only one in our group who had already been to Cuba, so her previous knowledge of the country, plus her fluent Spanish, made her an expert guide.

CTIONS,

Before we landed, trading New York's blizzards for Havana's frequent (but brief) bursts of rain, I decided to empty my mind of all preconceived notions about Cuba and its history. I planned to return to the States with some kernel of truth about the country, even though I knew that task would be near impossible to complete within two weeks.

HORSES TIED TO A POST along the roadside calmly grazed while we zipped past sun-kissed farmland. The roads were mostly clear, save for a horse-drawn carriage. Farther down the road, a lone cowboy led a herd of cattle. From his hip hung a machete, glinting in the afternoon sun. A 1956 Chevrolet zoomed past them, leaving a trail of thick exhaust smoke.

Someone in our group blasted Rihanna's "Work" from their speaker. The familiar pop song played as our taxi drove through unfamiliar pastures and palm trees. The song tethered us to the moment, reminding us that the States were only 106 miles away. So close, yet so far.

We arrived at the school beyond exhaustion, too tired to sleep. We explored the grounds instead, daring to follow a path into the fields or behind fences surrounding a drained swimming pool, all illuminated by a fiery sunset.

The locals smiled at us, and I tried to communicate even though my Spanish was lacking. We feasted on rice and beans before finally heading to bed.

Before I fell asleep, my suitemate Jeff wanted to show me something. On the back of his bedroom door was scrawled a message in English: "DON'T TRUST THE STORYTELLER. TRUST THE STORY."

I DEVELOPED NEW HABITS in Cuba. In restaurants I ordered coffee and water, a Cuban custom. I hankered for the fresh tomatoes grown at the school's farm. Also, and most bizarrely to anyone who knows me, I began to wake up early on a daily basis.

A nightly chill would still linger as rays of sunlight peeked out from behind the distant mountains in view of our dormitories. Breakfast was served early. Workers from nearby villages would bike over to the campus to chat with film professors and other staff members over coffee and bread with butter and sugar.

The first morning I ate alone, reading a book of Cuban short fiction. After a small breakfast, I was joined by Alejandro, a retired producer who now worked at EICTV. During our stay, Alejandro acted as a liaison between our group and the school, making sure we had everything we needed, from toilet paper to bushels of lettuce for the vegetarians. His English was sparse and his face weathered from the cigarette smoke typically billowing between his fingers.



## THE SONG TETHERED US TO T THAT THE STATES WERE



The Wagner group began their Cuba stay at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV) in Artemisa, a rural province. Above, the dining hall where Glen met Alejandro (left) at breakfast. Right, Renata Pastuszak '20 films some goats in a field near EICTV. Far right, Jeff Wisnewski '18, Glen MacDonald's suitemate at EICTV.

After an exchange of polite nods, he asked me if I spoke Spanish. I replied with an unfortunate, "No."

We sat together in an awkward silence. Alejandro calmly buttered his toast as my eyes went back to my book. I flipped to the table of contents. Gesturing to the list, I asked Alejandro if he could recommend any writers to me. He selected two: "The Horizon" by Abilio Estévez and "Puerta de Alcalá" by Leonardo Padura, a writer we planned to meet later on in the trip. I thanked him — "Gracias!" — and smiled, unsure of how to further the conversation.



## THE MOMENT, REMINDING US ONLY 106 MILES AWAY.



Alejandro would also join us for dinner. Our conversations were always brief, but each day I had more words to say to him — *frío, leche, lo siento*.

At every meal, Alejandro would wordlessly get up and return with seconds. One night, he brought over several dishes of goiabada, a sinfully sweet guava puree so rich most of us couldn't finish a single helping. At this point, I felt confident enough in my limited amount of Spanish to tell Alejandro, "*Gracias pero no mas, mi amigo!*"

He smiled before responding in English, "No more!"

Through Dr. Sánchez's translations, I uncovered some details about his life. He had not had milk since he turned seven years old, the age when the government stops supplying Cuban families with rations of dairy products. His family is poor, and he admits he was unable to provide his granddaughters with gifts for the recent Feast of the Epiphany. Years earlier, he had been sent off to a work camp for political reasons after being outed by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, Cuba's notorious neighborhood watch.

Now in his 70s, Alejandro has seen many changes throughout his lifetime. His face at rest seems distant and weary. However, mere seconds into conversation with him, his eyes light up behind a veil of cigarette smoke and a faint smile returns. He quietly nods, letting you know he's partially able to decipher your pitiful Spanish.

Despite our differences, Alejandro chose to sit with me that first morning and stick with me through the awkward beginnings of a tourist in a foreign land. In some respects, Alejandro represented most of my experiences with the Cuban people — accommodating and ready to forge a relationship with Americans.

WE MET THE WRITER Leonardo Padura in the city of Havana, blocks away from the touristy areas. The streets were cracked, and a gray, overcast sky masked the sun. The buildings were painted with cheery, tropical colors, faded from years of exposure to the relentless spray of the nearby sea.

Padura joined us at a restaurant, New Georges. The place was a repurposed apartment building, with narrow staircases and a large balcony that surveyed the street. The restaurant would become a favorite in our group. It would always take us a couple of hours to properly savor a meal at New Georges.

Padura's face was round and grandfatherly. He shared his lengthy history as a writer in Cuba in near-perfect English. When he spoke, his eyes would always focus on one fixed spot on the table.

I asked him about his writing process, and he gave a puzzling response.

"You have to start with the essence of a novel. The novel is a lie that I'm telling you is true but you know it is a lie,"

Alejandro returned the smile and grabbed my plate along with his own.

"Oh no, you don't have to ...," I began, before realizing that responding in English was pointless. Alejandro made a beeline to the breakfast counter and returned with a second helping of toast, placing it before me. I was grateful and surprised by Alejandro's hospitality, as I certainly didn't prove myself to be the most interesting or tactful breakfast companion.

I found myself having a standing breakfast appointment with Alejandro each morning before class. Sometimes,

WHEN DISCUSSING THE  
EXPLOITS OF LARGE  
NATIONS, WE OFTEN  
FORGET ABOUT THE  
INDIVIDUALS AND  
THEIR EXPERIENCES.

he said. “We live in a reality of lots of contradictions. I study these realities to find stories that become novels.”

Most of Padura’s work features corruption and criminality, a world kept hidden through Cuba’s strict censorship. Through his fiction, Padura is able to critique subjects deemed taboo in Cuba’s press. While his work could be categorized as detective fiction, Padura does not consider his mystery thrillers to be conventional pulp fiction. Rather, his novels explore the darker side of Cuba — the illnesses of Cuban society.

Another of Padura’s interests (or, as he calls them, “obsessions”) is an individual’s place in history. Witnessing the sharp political turns throughout Cuba’s history, Padura is fascinated by the idea of how a single day can change entire lives.

Yet, Padura does not let the past limit him.

“The historian has to be completely loyal to what happens,” he said. “A writer has to tell the truth.”

DURING MY LAST DAYS in Havana, I found myself walking aimlessly through the streets with Jeff. Odors of cigarette smoke, the ocean, and rum wafted toward us in the breeze as we walked alongside the Malecón, listening to the waves bombard the coast. The overcast sky returned. Cuba was sending us off with a gloomy goodbye. Still, the locals didn’t seem to mind.

A pair of Cubans approached us. The first man wore a stylish seersucker suit and thick-rimmed glasses. Black dreads hung from his head, contrasting with his white suit. His friend followed him, comfortably dressed in jeans and T-shirt.

“Can I ask you something?” said the stylish man. “What do you think of Cuba?”

The question took me back a bit. I wasn’t sure if I had an answer. My entire quest to uncover truth about Cuba seemed to be in vain.

“It’s unlike anything everyone told me about,” I said, which was at least true.

Jeff remarked about the man’s fashion sense. “You could fit in New York, y’know?”



He chuckled and thanked us, and we parted ways. A few yards away, another man called out to Jeff and me. This man was elderly, bearded, and didn’t move from his relaxed position on a park bench. He must have heard me complaining to Jeff about a leather cowboy hat I was pressured into buying. (Don’t ask.)

“Relax, man!” he called out, smiling. “Cuba is love, man. Cuba is love.”

We smiled and kept walking. The horizon threatened the shore with ominous storm clouds, but the old man did not look worried.

WE RETURNED TO NEW YORK on my 22nd birthday, and my final college semester began the following day. The stresses of internships, essays, and graduation made Cuba seem like a fading dream. The tropical sun felt farther away than ever amid the ice and snow.

Family and friends have asked me about Cuba; I still struggle to find a response that captures the complexities of





In Havana, Cuba's capital, students learned more about the country's culture and history. Wilfredo Benitez from the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba, which promotes Cuban artists, gave them a tour of Old Havana with its unique architecture. The women dressed in white practice Santeria, an Afro-Caribbean religion that originated in Cuba. The group photo at left shows Professor Margarita Sánchez in the front, wearing a blue scarf. Glen MacDonald is the tall fellow in the back, toward the center.

the nation. In our class reflecting on the trip, Dr. Sanchez frequently used the word “ambivalence” to describe Cuba. This constant state of contradictory ideas leads many Cubans, at home and abroad, to declare their own truths about Cuba: It is paradise; it is punishment. Castro is a saint; Castro is a devil.

Months later, I still think about Padura and his duty to tell the truth. Padura believes that, while historians must focus on facts and figures, a writer must tap into an individual's feelings at a particular time. To Padura, these feelings express something greater than history: a human experience.

After my two short weeks in Cuba, I am unable to tell you about the “true” Cuba. I can tell you about some of the key players in the story of the island, characters like Alejandro, Padura, the stylish man at the Malecón, and many others I have neglected to mention. These individuals come from different backgrounds yet still reflect the same Cuban spirit of openness and hospitality, despite their country's frayed diplomatic relations with the United States. When discussing the exploits of large nations, we often forget about the individuals and their experiences. The

Cuban people are more than a political talking point but rather a nation of artists, revolutionaries, healers, dreamers, and much more. To view them as only communists or Fidel's people is limiting.

While tensions remain with Cuba under the Trump Administration, Americans should not abandon attempts to understand Cuba and its people. Currently, a new chapter of Cuban history is being written. Miguel Díaz-Canel was named the president of Cuba during the waning days of my senior year. For the first time since 1959, a Castro is not in power. This event offers new opportunity for Cubans to redefine themselves and for Americans to redefine their views of Cubans. An entire people's culture has been barricaded from us by Cold War Era fears. After traveling there, I realize just how much the American perception of Cuba has been warped.

Yet, my opinion is just that — an opinion. Do not trust me but trust my story, my story about the Cubans who welcomed an American onto their shores. ■



# STILL HAVING FUN AT 50!

## THE WAGNER COLLEGE THEATRE FAMILY CELEBRATES AT A GOLDEN JUBILEE GALA

BY LAURA BARLAMENT  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARIO MORCADO



1  
2

**A STAR-STUDED EVENING** 1 *Jersey Boys* Broadway and film star Renée Marino sings "Someone to Watch Over Me." 2 WCT 2013 graduates reprise "Seasons of Love" from *Rent*. 3 The tap showstopper "42nd Street," choreographed by Patrick Heffernan '11, featured Professor John Scacchetti and Megan Kelley '11, with dancers including Jasmine Canziani '17 (far right). 4 Randy Graff '76 H'01, who won the 1990 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical for her role in *City of Angels*, performs "You Can Always Count on Me" from that show, with Tim Weil, piano. 5 Professor Amy Williams sings "You and I" from *Goodbye Mr. Chips* with Josh Sottile '16. 6 Joe O'Malley '16, Professor Charlie Siedenburgh '95, and Philip Straniere '69 M'73 in "Brotherhood of Man" from *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.



3



4



5



6



1

**SHOWING THEIR STUFF** 1 Professor Michele Pawk and Janine La Manna '88, who co-starred in *Seussical on Broadway*, hosted the program with humor and pizzazz. 2 Army Hillner '04, who was part of the national tour of *Hairspray*, sings "Good Morning, Baltimore" from that show, accompanied by Professor Lauri Young. 3 Brittany Cattaruzza '14 and Professor Mary Six Rupert tap dance to the Gershwins' "My One and Only."



2

“COMMUNITY,” “SUPPORT,” “NURTURE,” “FAMILY” — theater alumni say words like these again and again when describing what Wagner means to them.

They have shared this spirit with each other and with rapt audiences through 274 shows during the past 50 years, ever since the department was founded with the hiring of Lowell Matson as chair and professor in 1968.

On May 11, about 260 alumni, former and current faculty, and theater supporters came together to celebrate the program at a Golden Jubilee Gala. Graduates from 1975 to 2018 participated in a revue program that connected the generations.

“It’s like looking at my family photo album,” said Charlie Siedenburgh ’95. An arts administration major, Siedenburgh has worked in public relations for theaters including the Metropolitan Opera and the Paper Mill Playhouse, and he teaches courses at Wagner as an adjunct professor.

The program also included alumni who participated in student theater before there was an academic program — people like Philip Straniere ’69 M’73. A history major, he became a lawyer and a judge, but continues to perform in local theater.

“Theater is great preparation for anything,” Straniere said. He has often used his contacts in the theater world to find legal assistants, because he knows they will be smart. “If there’s a screw-up, they’re not going to panic,” he said. “Theater training helps you react quickly to unusual situations.”

Yet on the night of the gala, returning to the Wagner Main Stage could be an emotional experience, even for seasoned professionals. Randy Graff ’76 H’01 was one — she had not set foot on that stage since she left Wagner in 1976. “It’s very strange. Surreal,” she said.

She remembered attending WCT’s 1969 production of *The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd* while she was in high school. “I was transported by that production, and I knew I wanted to come here,” she said. She thrived in the close-knit Wagner community, where she had many performance opportunities throughout her four years and easy access to the New York theater scene — “still strong features of the program,” she noted. She went on to a celebrated career, which included originating the role of Fantine in *Les Misérables* on Broadway and winning the 1990 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical for her role in *City of Angels*.

Graduates from all eras echo Graff’s words about the opportunities and close-knit community. They are also following in the path blazed by her and many others toward successful careers in theater and other fields, ranging from educators to electricians to executives and more.

Theater director Matt Lenz ’86 (see more about him under “Awards”) said, “I had opportunities here that allowed me to explore. I thought I would always be an actor, but I got the chance to direct as a student. That made me feel, ‘Here’s something I can do too.’ It was having done it here that made me think it was possible.”

Jasmine Canziani ’17 is teaching dance and directing children’s theater in Westchester County while auditioning for shows in New York City. “It’s a special community that you don’t feel when you’re out in the world,” she said. “Now we’re all dispersed. It’s a different community, but we’re still very connected.”

Later that night, Canziani demonstrated that connectedness as she joined more than 20 alumni from the past 10 years, plus two faculty, who tap danced to “42nd Street”



(choreography by Patrick Heffernan '11, who was part of a *42nd Street* national tour) from the popular musical.

"We create families during our shows," said Professor Michele Pawk, who co-hosted the revue along with her co-star from Broadway's *Seussical*, Janine La Manna '88. "Both back stage, and with our audiences."

Fittingly, funds raised through the Golden Jubilee Gala will benefit WCT's outreach and inclusive programming. ■

## THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION CONTINUES

### KEYNOTE BY JOHN KENRICK

**Musical Theatre: A History** October 3

**WCT DESIGN EXHIBITION** October 1–31

### WCT ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND

October 4–7

Details will be announced via social media and the website: [wagner.edu/theatre](http://wagner.edu/theatre)

 @TheatreWagner

 /WagnerCollegeTheatre

**M**ore than 1,200 individuals have graduated from Wagner's theater and arts administration programs. Three alumni received Presidential Medals honoring their achievements and service to the art of theater.



### EDUCATION AT ROUNDABOUT AND JENNIFER M. DI BELLA '04

Jennifer Di Bella is the director of education for Roundabout Theatre Company, a New York City-based nonprofit organization that is a leading cultural institution of the city and the nation. It reaches more than 30,000 people annually with education programs including student matinees, classroom residencies, and teacher workshops. Di Bella, one of Wagner's first theatre education majors, has worked with Roundabout since 2005. She's also a citywide and national leader in arts education, serving with organizations like the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable and the American Alliance for Theatre and Education.



### KATHY BRIER '97

Since her Wagner Main Stage days in roles such as Dolly in *Hello, Dolly!* and Rose in *Gypsy*, Kathy Brier has created groundbreaking characters on stage and screen. Highlights of her career thus far include originating the character Marcie Walsh on ABC's *One Life to Live*, for which she received a Daytime Emmy nomination; playing Tracy Turnblad in the Broadway production of *Hairspray*; and appearing as singer and actress Sophie Tucker in HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*. Brier attained a bachelor's in both theatre performance and arts administration from Wagner. She is married to fellow theatre alumnus Jason Munt '01, and they have one child, Donovan, age 6.



### MATT LENZ '86

Matt Lenz was a leading man during his days on Wagner's Main Stage, but he also received his first taste of directing at Wagner – a route that led him to a busy career in theater directing on Broadway and nationwide. His Broadway credits include assisting Tony Award-winning director Jack O'Brien on *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Catch Me If You Can*, and *Hairspray*. His upcoming projects include new musicals *Chasing Rainbows: The Road to Oz* and *Grumpy Old Men*.



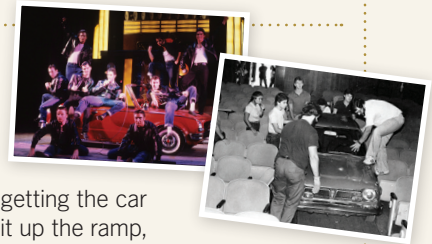
### PROFESSOR GARY SULLIVAN

received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his many contributions to Wagner College Theatre since 1975. Sullivan began, only seven years after the department's founding, as the technical director and scenic designer. Famously, he managed to get a car on stage for the 1982 production of *Grease*. He became department chair in 1987, and he initiated WCT's popular subscription program in 1988. Currently the director of arts administration, Sullivan also served a term as Wagner's provost.

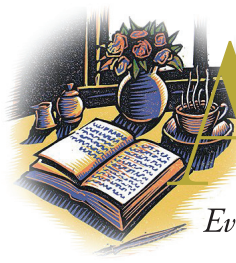
## GREASED LIGHTNING

### GARY SULLIVAN RECALLS HOW HE GOT A CAR ON THE MAIN STAGE

The car was a little Honda 600, so it conveniently rolled down the theatre aisle. I had built a ramp for getting the car onto the stage. I started its engine and was driving it up the ramp, while a tech crew was coaxing it from behind. Halfway up the ramp, the car couldn't muster enough traction and began slipping backward. I thought, "Well, that could be very bad." So I mashed the gas. The tires spun, sending off billowing clouds of smoke, in true drag strip fashion. In a moment, the car literally leaped onto the stage. The large adoring crowd that had assembled cheered. As I braked and shut the car down, I thought, "Well, that was a scream." It could have gone badly, but didn't. Maybe we planned it out fine. Maybe we could have done differently. But from that day forward, the entire campus knew we were doing a production of *Grease*.



AWARDS!



# AlumniLink

Events, opportunities, and celebrations for the Wagner family, both near and far



**FRIENDS FOREVER** College roommates Barbara Borman '68 and Ann Johansmeyer '68, left of the Seahawk, take annual volunteer vacations together.

## Reunion Stories

### Old friends, new friends, and even new flames ignite at the annual alumni weekend

EVERY YEAR, Alumni Reunion Weekend brings different alumni back to reconnect with each other and with the campus. It is also an occasion for people to meet each other for the first time, whether they are from different generations of the Wagner family, or from the same class year. Here are a few stories I collected from the weekend. — *Laura Barlament*

**Jillian Vollentine Holt '03** became an expert anchor painter as an AOPi member at Wagner. An elementary ed major, she earned a master's in student development in higher education at Central Connecticut State, where she now works as the assistant dean of the

School of Graduate Studies. She has taught all ages, from kindergarteners to graduate students. Her favorite Wagner memories include hanging out on the Oval on a beautiful day and sitting on the Adirondack chairs that used to be on the Union patio.

"It's been a great ride," **Barbara Borman '68** says of the 50 years since she left Wagner. Her husband was in the Navy, so she moved frequently. A nursing major, she has worked in many different contexts, from hospitals to home health. She is a sexual assault nurse examiner, educates caregivers about how to care for themselves, and travels to many countries on medical missions, including Ecuador, Haiti, Nepal, and Kenya. She goes on annual volunteer vacations with her college roommate, **Ann Johansmeyer '68**, who was an English and history major, and who worked as an editor for a financial firm.



### **Sally Morales '76** and **John Stewart '76**

did not know each other when they were students. They met at their 40th class reunion in 2016. John subsequently invited Sally to a Yankees game. In October, they are getting married. Sally is retired from teaching elementary special education in the Bronx. John is retired from a business career. He has a daughter, Suzanne Stewart Rossi, who met her husband, Chris Rossi, when they were students at Wagner. They both later transferred to SUNY Cortland. Nevertheless, Wagner College has played matchmaker for multiple generations of this family.



### **Larry and Eileen Gibney '67 Moyer** and **Roland and Sheres Caines '88 Johnson**

met each other at Reunion Weekend and enjoyed hanging out together. The Moyers live in Boston and the Johnsons in Fairburn, Georgia, near Atlanta. When or where else would they have found this connection?

### **Chantal Meyenberg '03** and **Jason Pablo '03**

are best friends who met when they took a Wagner class about exploring music in NYC. Their shared memories include a trip they took to London over fall break one year — their first experience traveling abroad independently. Jason was a business major, but he returned to Wagner to earn a second degree

in nursing and now is happily employed at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital. Chantal is running the operations for an environmental insurance firm.

# Alumni Association Honors

The 2018 annual awards recognize leaders in serving the College and the community and in professional achievement



**POLLY PECK MOLES '68** was named the John "Bunny" Barbes '39 and Lila T. Barbes '40 Wagner Alumni Laureate. A longtime Wagner trustee, she has given back in many ways, notably by founding the Alpha Delta Pi Scholarship Fund and the Dr. Gregory P. Knapp '66 H'00 Strength Room in the Spiro Sports Center.



**DR. KURT M. LANDGRAF '68 H'08** was named the Distinguished Graduate. Named the president of Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland, in 2017, he has served in many leadership positions with major corporations, most notably DuPont and Educational Testing Service.



**RUSSELL H. JOHNSON '67 M'72** was awarded the Dr. Kevin Sheehy '67 M'70 M'92 H'99 Alumni Leadership Medal. He has served as alumni magazine editor, fundraiser, and administrator; officer of the National Alumni Association; and a benefactor of the English program through the Dr. Thomas Kendris Memorial Fund.



**NANCY H. HAIG '75 M'81** was named a Wagner Alumni Fellow in Economics and Business Administration. She is the global director of internal audit and compliance for Alvarez & Marsal and a leader in the international Institute of Internal Auditors.



**RICHARD BYRNE '85** was named a Wagner Alumni Fellow in Theatre. He is a stand-up comic who performs widely, including as the warm-up comic for *The Dr. Oz Show* since its inception in 2009.



**ANDREW DICK M'02** was named a Wagner Alumni Fellow in Microbiology. A leader in developing cleaning and sanitization standards for the personal care products and pharmaceutical industries, he is the senior manager for quality assurance microbiology and lab controls at Johnson & Johnson.



**NICOLE GIAMMARINARO '07** was named a Wagner Alumni Fellow in Nursing. As the director of education and research for Northwell Health's Office of

Patient and Customer Experience, she oversees cultural transformation efforts for the largest integrated healthcare system in New York.



**GOTFRED C. JACOBSEN '54** received the Reverend Lyle Guttu Award. He served as a pastor in New Jersey, then worked for many years in the fields of mental health, counseling, and family therapy in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and California.



**JUSTIN JOSEPH "LEFTY" LEFKOWITZ '12** and **JAMIE LYNN MACCHIA '13** were awarded the Wagner Alumni Key, for graduates of the last decade. Lefkowitz was pursuing a successful finance career until a health crisis changed his direction toward visual art. Crowned Miss New



York in 2015, Macchia is now a development officer with Staten Island University Hospital and a powerful advocate for pediatric cancer research.



**MICHAEL V. BARRETT '68** and **REBECCA M. COLUCCI KELLY '06** received Certificates of Appreciation. Barrett '68 has been instrumental in



organizing reunions of alumni who attended Wagner's study abroad program in Bregenz, Austria. Kelly was a beloved, longtime member of Wagner's alumni relations team who now is the reminiscence coordinator at Sunrise Senior Living in Staten Island.

## Upcoming Events

### AUGUST

**First Day of Classes**  
August 27

**Last Day of the Wagner College Fiscal Year**  
August 31

### SEPTEMBER

**Wagner v. Syracuse Pre-Game Reception**  
September 8, Syracuse, N.Y.

**Sal Alberti Memorial Golf Classic**  
September 10, Colts Neck, N.J.

**Homecoming**  
September 22

### OCTOBER

**Wagner College Theatre: A Little Night Music**  
October 4–14, Main Stage

**Wagner College Theatre: Mouth Pieces**  
October 11–14, Stage One

**Wagner Athletics Hall of Fame Induction and Delta Nu 75th Anniversary Celebration**  
October 13

**Seahawks Coast-to-Coast Reception**  
October 20, Classic Harbor Line Fall Foliage Brunch Cruise, Boston

### NOVEMBER

**Marching Band Reunion**  
November 3

**Veterans Day**  
November 11

The Wagner College Seahawk Marching Band will perform in the New York City Veterans Day Parade. We would be proud to have veterans march with us under the Wagner banner. For details, email Band Director Jose Diaz at [jose.diaz@wagner.edu](mailto:jose.diaz@wagner.edu).

**Wagner College Theatre: Working**  
November 15–December 2, Main Stage

**Day of Giving**  
November 27

**Wagner College Theatre: Everybody**  
November 29–30, December 1–2, Stage One

### DETAILS AND TICKETS

[wagner.edu/alumni](http://wagner.edu/alumni) • 718-390-3224  
[wagner.edu/theatre](http://wagner.edu/theatre) • 718-390-3259

**CHANGE HAPPENS.** Please call the Office of Alumni Relations at 718-390-3224 or check [wagner.edu/calendar](http://wagner.edu/calendar) for updates.

 Read full bios of all of these accomplished alumni at [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine).

**History Makers: How Thelma Biele Corey '37, one of Wagner's first female graduates, fought for her education and became a special education pioneer**

Thelma Biele Corey (1913–1994) made history at Wagner College, and again as a teaching professional on Long Island.

Thelma was part of the first group of women to enroll at Wagner College after trustees voted to admit female students in 1933. Most of those pioneers lived on Staten Island — but Thelma came from Huntington, Long Island, about 50 miles from Grymes Hill.

According to a 1994 letter from her husband, Thelma was born with hypothyroidism, which, “untreated, made her a slow learner.” After her hypothyroidism was discovered, several years after she was married, “a lifetime of medication ... resulted with her becoming an excellent student.”

Before that, however, school was very difficult for Thelma. It took her five years to graduate from high school. She enrolled at the New Jersey College for Women in 1932 but could not make passing grades. She enrolled at Wagner for her second year of college.

Her grades at Wagner were mostly Bs and Cs — but she just couldn't pass English literature, a course she needed in order to graduate. Finally, she took it at Hunter College, got a C, transferred the credit, and earned her degree in June 1937.



**MULTI-TALENTED** In the 1936 *Kallista*, Thelma Biele Corey was praised for her theater performances and touted as “the first girl on the debate team.”

Thelma's father, Fred J. Biele, must have been proud of his daughter's achievements. In 1936, he gave the college 20 sugar maple trees, planted behind Main Hall, to honor Wagner's first female students.

In 1955, after her four children were no longer little, Thelma took a job with the Huntington chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women as the teacher for a pioneering program for children with special needs, the Playgroup for Exceptional Children. At the same time, she began taking graduate courses in special education. By 1967, Thelma was amply prepared to

start an educational program for teen patients at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center in nearby Brentwood, the largest hospital in the world at the time. For the first five years of the Pilgrim program, Thelma was the only teacher on staff, responsible for the high-school equivalency education of blind and developmentally disabled residents. In 1977, at the first graduation ceremony for her students, the program was renamed the Thelma B. Corey School in her honor. She retired in 1981.

Thelma Elsa Biele Corey died in 1994 at the age of 80.



**Facts about the First Women of Wagner**

This year marks the 85th anniversary of Wagner College's decision to admit women. We haven't been able to find details about all of the first 23 female students, but we do know these facts:

- 18 lived on Staten Island
- 2 were from Brooklyn
- 1 was from Little Falls, N.Y.
- 1 was from Huntington, N.Y.
- 16 enrolled as first-year students
- 6 transferred from another college
- **8 earned degrees at Wagner** — a little more than a third



# Giving Back by Teaching

**In the Department for Lifelong Learning, alumni pass along their knowledge to children and adults**

MICHAEL FERMAN '84 got his start in acting at Wagner College.

Today, he uses his nearly 40 years of professional experience to enrich the next generation through the Actor Children's Theatre, a program of Wagner's Department for Lifelong Learning.

"Whether I'm working on Broadway, in a feature film, or on television, I still use the training I learned at Wagner as an undergrad," Ferman says. "Working at Lifelong Learning is like coming home again, only now I'm the one who gets to pass on to my students the skills and knowledge I acquired here so many years ago. It's an amazing feeling!"

The Department for Lifelong Learning provides educational opportunities ranging from youth programs to adult professional development and enrichment courses. This year, the department wants to expand its offerings and provide channels for alumni educators to share their passions and talents in innovative ways.



**THE EDUCATION CHANNEL** Michael Ferman '84 conveys his professional knowledge to the next generation through Wagner's Actor Children's Theatre.

Do you have an idea for a course, workshop, or boot camp? Lifelong Learning wants to hear from you! Specify the age group you are interested in working with, and your preference for location — the Staten Island campus or Wagner's new classroom space in Lower Manhattan. Contact Sharon Guinta, director of lifelong learning, at 718-390-3221 or [sharon.guinta@wagner.edu](mailto:sharon.guinta@wagner.edu).

AT WAGNER'S BIGGEST FALL PARTY,  
WE WILL CELEBRATE 100 YEARS ON STATEN ISLAND!

## HOMECOMING 2018 FOR WAGNER FAMILIES, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS

**SATURDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 22**

### The Wagner Antiques Roadshow

1–2 p.m. • Union Atrium

### Homecoming on the Oval

2–5:30 p.m. • Sutter Oval

### Wagner Seahawks vs. Sacred Heart Pioneers

6 p.m. • Hameline Field

Especially for Wagner families: On Friday, September 21, join us for dinner with your students, a pep rally, and movie night under the stars.

### THE WAGNER ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

**Do you own a piece of Wagner history?** It might be any physical object or trinket that you've kept that represents Wagner history to you. At our Wagner Antiques Roadshow at Homecoming on September 22, join other history buffs for wine and cheese, and have your piece of Wagneriana appraised for its significance to our dear alma mater's history.

The expert appraisers will be Lee Manchester, Wagner's unofficial historian; Lisa Holland, Wagner archivist and librarian; and Sarah Scott, professor and chair of the Department of Art, Art History and Film. Professor Scott will also give a short talk about material culture, objects, and their cultural value to us.

Items can be dropped off in the Union Atrium starting at 11 a.m. Whether or not you have anything to contribute, you can enjoy the Roadshow at 1–2 p.m. in the Union Atrium. Selected items will be displayed in our centennial museum installation project.

Can't make it to Homecoming but you have Wagner objects to contribute to the Roadshow and/or centennial project? Please contact the Office of Alumni Relations.



[wagner.edu/homecoming](http://wagner.edu/homecoming)

Office of Alumni Relations • 718-390-3224 • [alumni@wagner.edu](mailto:alumni@wagner.edu)



# ClassNotes

Updates from old friends across the generations

## 1950 and '52

**Jack '50 and Margot '52 Eagleton** write, "Living a quiet, retired life on scenic Longboat Key (Fla.). We are happy to report no snow on Longboat!"

## 1954

**Wanda Schweizer Praisner '54 M'57** continues to serve as a poet-in-residence for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. A 14-time Pushcart Prize nominee, she gave readings at the Bernardsville Library and the Highland Park Library from her sixth collection, *To Illuminate the Way* (Kelsay Books, 2018). This collection contains several poems with reflections on Wagner experiences and places: "Thoughts of College Courses,"

"What I Remember," and "Homecoming, 2007." She writes about taking classes with the late Professor Nicholas Moss, who she says "was the best teacher I ever had."

## 1956

**Donald Burry and Lillian Beneforti Burry '57** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 2018. The *Two River Times*, a newspaper based in Red Bank, N.J., featured them upon this occasion. They met at Wagner, where they fell in love: Lillian was prom queen, and Donald was her prince. They married at Trinity Church, New York, and held a reception at Delmonico's Restaurant. After their wedding, Don served in the Coast Guard and went on to be East Coast

regional manager for Rohm Haas Chemical Co. Lillian was a teacher and then a volunteer for environmental causes and the League of Women Voters, and then was elected to the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders. They have one daughter, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. They credit their success to "mutual respect, integrity and flexibility," allowing each other their own space to grow, and "thinking in the plural."

## 1957

**Lillian Beneforti Burry and Donald Burry '56** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. See more information under 1956. **Mary Fritsch** is now happily retired in Sarasota, Fla.,

after raising a family and teaching first grade and early childhood in Ridgewood, N.J., where she lived for over 50 years. She enjoys her new home, her circus friends, the pool, and the many arts to be found in Sarasota. **Alan W. Schlienger** is celebrating his 20th year of retirement in Northfield, N.J. He was previously employed by the state of New Jersey.

## 1958

**Betsy Ebers Press** attended Wagner Reunion Weekend this year to celebrate the class's 60th graduation anniversary. She stays busy volunteering for the burgeoning American Documentary Film Festival in Palm Springs, Calif. She serves as the home stay host chairperson. She is also hospitality chairperson of

### Keep in Touch!

**Email:** [alumni@wagner.edu](mailto:alumni@wagner.edu)

**Web:** [wagner.edu/alumni](http://wagner.edu/alumni)

**Mail:** Alumni Office, Reynolds House, Wagner College, One Campus Road, Staten Island, NY 10301

**Deadlines:** This issue reflects news received by July 9, 2018. The submission deadline for the fall 2018 issue is October 15, 2018.

**Content:** Wagner welcomes your news and updates, and we will happily share

them with the Wagner family. We ask that you send us announcements of weddings, births, and graduations after the fact.

**Photos:** We accept photos of Wagner groups at weddings and other special events. With the photo, send the names and class years of all alumni pictured; birth date, parents' names, and class years with photos of children; and dates and locations of all events.

**Photo Quality:** Digital and print photos must be clear and of good quality. Prints should be on glossy paper with no surface texture; they will be returned at your request (please attach your address to the photo). Digital photos must be jpegs of at least 250 pixels per inch; low-resolution photos converted to a higher resolution are not acceptable.

Palm Springs Community Concerts. In the spring and fall, she visits her home in Rhinebeck, N.Y. **Paul West** was with his brother, **Lonnie West**, when he passed away in Maryland on Sunday, June 3, during Wagner Reunion Weekend. Lonnie was a basketball star at Wagner and a member of the Wagner Athletics Hall of Fame. He devoted his career to social services, caring for seniors.



**Paul Julch '58** and **Anthony Galdi '52** M'55 came out to the LPGA Golf Course in Daytona Beach, Fla., to support the Seahawks at the Northeast Conference Men's Golf Championship on April 27. The team finished in seventh place, and **Nick Musshafen '18** earned a spot on the All-Tournament Team. Pictured from left to right are Paul, Anthony, Coach Cole Buck, **Oskar Sundberg '19**, **Lucas Moreno '18**, **Ben Steenland '21**, Musshafen, **A. J. Skinner '19**, and **Chris Fourman '09** M'11, the team's former coach and a current senior major gifts officer for the College.

## 1960

**Norman Black '60** M'73 published the five-volume set *Combat Veterans' Stories of the Vietnam War* this year. The books are available on Amazon and audible.com. They contain autobiographical interviews with 57 combat veterans about their memories of the war from 1961 to 1975, as well as related documents and photographs about service members' experiences. Norman previously published volumes with interviews of World War II and Korean War veterans.



**Norman Black '60** M'73 published the five-volume set *Combat Veterans' Stories of the Vietnam War* this year. The books are available on Amazon and audible.com.

## 1963

**Charles Gravenstine** taught a course on pastoral leadership during November 2017 at the Harmony Pastoral Institute in Belgaum, India. Dr. **Winfried H. Hansen** won the 2016 Phillips Petroleum Award for Southeastern Swimming for his work as a United States swimming referee. **Lois Schutz Laurence**

and her husband, Ron, finished their 15th season of operating a pick-your-own blueberry farm in Stratham, N.H. The farm also offers other berries and 29 vegetables.

## 1964

**Anthony T. DiSimone** has released a novel entitled *Bloodline*, available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Archway Publishing. He describes it as an epic novel that "traces Italian bloodline from the feudal-style Sicilian oppressive society to the capture of the office of U.S. presidency. It contains intrigue, violence, murder, and adult content from the 1860s to 1970s. An exciting chronicle based on real historical background. Critical comparisons say it's the 'Godfather meets

James Michener.' Keep away from the kids." **Brian Morris '65** sent us the sad news that **Manuel "Manny" Rubio** passed away unexpectedly on December 21, 2017. "During my years as the PR guy at Wagner, Manny Rubio was pretty much our exclusive photographer for PR and sports," Brian said. Manny was from Staten Island and lived for many years in Tucson, Ariz. He had a photography studio and traveled the world on assignments for corporate clients. He was also a sports and animal photographer, a naturalist, and an author of herpetology textbooks. His books include *Rattlesnake: Portrait of a Predator* and *Rattlesnakes of the United States and Canada*. He worked closely with Carl Kauffeld, curator of reptiles at the Staten Island Zoo. The Reverend **John Smolik**

has been a Lutheran pastor for over 50 years, and for 48 of those years has served at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Pottstown, Penn.

## 1966

**Elizabeth Barker** is keeping busy. As a family nurse practitioner, she is involved in two outreach mission projects, which include primary care improvements in rural Jamaica and developing a school of nursing in rural Honduras.

## 1967

**Russ Johnson '67 M'72** published his sixth crime novel, *Sailing the Gates of Hell*, on January 15. It is the latest book in the Detective Pete Nazareth series. He then released his seventh book, *Noblest Love*, which deviates from his other books in that it is not a crime thriller, but is a humorous satire. It was published under the pen name Alistair Flythe. Find his books on Amazon.

**Sharon Kaplan Luchow**, **Barbara Linke Cox**, and **Maureen Robinson** reunited last summer in Sicily. The trio had graduated from Wagner College together 50 years earlier. **Arno Rafael Minkkinen** and **Sandra Hughes Minkkinen '68** were in Helsinki, Finland, in December 2017, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Finnish independence and the Pro Finlandia Medal that Arno received from the president of Finland in honor of his

artistic achievements. The Finnish Embassy in Croatia marked this anniversary as well with a gala opening of Arno's retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb. Arno's work was previously on exhibit at the Oscar Niemeyer Center for the Arts in Avilés, Spain, from June 30 to October 1, 2017. In May 2018, Arno taught a master class in Frankfurt, Germany, as part of the Ray 18 Festival, where some of his murals were exhibited at the Museum für Angewandte Kunst. Then, they attended Wagner Reunion Weekend in June 2018. In 2018–19, he will have exhibits and lectures in Brussels; Lima, Peru; and Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia. Lastly, a note from **Maryanna Crawford '68**: "I am sorry to have to tell you that my sister, **Katharine Perry Sinko**, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, January 5, 2018, at her home in Trumansburg, N.Y. She was an education and art major. She also participated in the Bregenz Program in 1966."

## 1968

**Richard J. Marino** and **Christine DeRicco Marino '69** regretted that they were not able to attend Wagner Reunion Weekend this year. They celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in June. In 2015, after Rich sold his E. A. tax practice and financial planning practice, and Chris retired from Allergan Pharmaceuticals, they

moved to Palm Beach, Fla. Chris volunteers as a math tutor at an elementary school, and Rich is a fourth degree in the Knights of Columbus and a trustee for his VFW Post. Rich also continues with his musical pursuits, playing guitar and singing, accompanied by software-generated keyboard, bass, and drums. He still performs occasionally and enjoys it as much as playing at "those old Phi Sig, Delta Nu, and Kappa parties at Wagner." **Sandra Hughes Minkkinen** and **Arno Rafael Minkkinen '67** were in Helsinki, Finland, last December; see details under the Class of 1967. **Dana Miller Mochel** retired from nursing in 2006 and became a veterinary

technician at the county animal shelter in 2007. She lives in Carrboro, N.C.

## 1969

**Christine DeRicco Marino** and **Richard J. Marino '68** celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in June. They live in Palm Beach, Fla. See more information under 1968. **Philip Straniere** was profiled by the *Staten Island Advance* upon his retirement as a judge, most recently serving as supervising judge of Civil Court Richmond County and acting Supreme Court justice. He gained notoriety (including articles in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*) for the writing



**TWO VIEWS** Above, **Arno Rafael Minkkinen '67**, with curator José Ferrero, attends the opening of his show at the Oscar Niemeyer Center for the Arts in Avilés, Spain, last year. In June of this year, Arno was on campus for Alumni Reunion. Because of a foot injury, he was using a cane, which he incorporated into one of his characteristic self-portraits (right) taken in Harborview Hall. He calls it "An Arm and A Leg, Wagner College," and we are printing it courtesy of the Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York.

style of his decisions, in which he employed many common cultural references, especially to Broadway shows and music. He has been involved in theater and acting for many years. He advocates for free speech and respectful dialogue in today's society. "Listening only to people who share your opinions means you're living in an echo chamber," he said. "Start a dialogue, ask why they feel that way, and learn from each other."

## 1970

**Joan Antoniello** was profiled in January in the *Wall Street Journal*. She has been a financial adviser for 10 years, with previous

experience in retail banking and the insurance industry, and serves more than 100 high net-worth clients. She also works with newly engaged couples and women going through divorce. Her philosophy is that people need to step outside their comfort zone, both in life and in financial planning. "Many advisers focus on one aspect, such as investment planning, without seeing the effect on other areas of a client's financial life," she told the *WSJ*. "I feel that at certain points in our lives, we become a little sedate, and we need to shake things up by pursuing new challenges," she added. U.S. Army Col. (Ret.) **Christine Fleming Mahon** was inducted into the

Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame on October 27, 2017. Highlights of her military career include serving as the chief nurse of the 403rd Combat Support Hospital in Phoenix, the 129th Evacuation Hospital in San Diego, and the 921st Field Hospital in Sacramento, Calif. As commander of the 4211th U.S. Army Hospital in San Diego, she was the first nurse to command a battalion-level hospital unit in the 63rd Regional Support Command. She was awarded the Legion of Merit for her service from 1993 to 2003. As a volunteer in Phoenix, she has been extremely involved in supporting military veterans and the community as a whole. She

has provided leadership for the Military Order of the World Wars and Veterans First as well as for her church, the Arizona Public Health Association, and many other organizations.

## 1971

**Burt Wilcke** M'71 retired on September 1, 2017, and was designated an emeritus professor at the University of Vermont. He previously worked for 25 years in public health practice at the county and state level in California, Michigan, and Vermont. He is still active at the state and national level in several public health organizations, and plans to use his time to be with family and travel,



as well as to return to global health work focused on communicable disease control and prevention.

## 1972

**Anthony Ferreri '72 M'81** was appointed to serve as regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A Staten

Island resident, Anthony will represent the region including New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to HHS Secretary Alex M. Azar II. He previously served as president and CEO of Staten Island University Hospital and as executive vice president and chief affiliation officer

for Northwell Health. "I've spent my career working to deliver improved health care to communities in New York and New Jersey, and I'm honored to have this opportunity to serve our country and continue this mission from a new perspective," he told the *Staten Island Advance*.

## 1973

Dr. **James and Karen Norwell Requa** have become grandparents, as their son and his wife, **Jason '05 and Laurel Patterson '05 Requa**, welcomed a baby girl, Caroline Lorraine, on December 6, 2017. They are all very excited about the new member of the family.

## 1974

Dr. **Susan Moan Hardie** is president of the California chapter of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, or APSAC. Visit [apsac.org](http://apsac.org) to find out more.

## 1975


**Joanne DiMango-Orr '75 M'77** retired from teaching in the Tinton Falls School District in New Jersey in 2015, and enjoys her retirement in Manalapan, N.J., where she lives with her family. **Genevieve Smith Germaniuk** shared with us the sad news of the death of her husband, Dr. **Humphrey D. Germaniuk**, on April 20, 2018, of complications from liver disease. Humphrey was a Wagner biology major who earned a dual Ph.D. and M.D. at the University of Rome, Italy, and followed that with a distinguished career in forensic medicine. He served as the chief medical examiner for Washington, D.C., and the first certified forensic pathologist in Trumbull County, Ohio. **Helen Settles** was honored on March 22



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at a Woman's Herstory event held by Staten Island Councilwoman Debi Rose at Brighton Heights Reformed Church. She was honored alongside three other women who "work every day to make our city a better place."

## 1976

**Charles Bauer** was honored last spring as the Commack (N.Y.) High School 2017 Coach of the Year. He is the coach of the girls' varsity golf team, which won the League 1 championship with a 13 and 1 record. In the past five years, the team's record has been 54 and 16. He also coaches the boys' junior varsity golf team, as well as the boys' and girls' junior varsity soccer teams. He has had three undefeated seasons and was twice named Suffolk County Coach of the Year.

## 1977

**Barbara Schiano** is a full-time lecturer for the Department of Nursing at the College of Staten Island.

## 1980

**Ed Burke**, Staten Island's deputy borough president, was honored with the Community Enrichment Award at the Fifth Annual Minty Awards Dinner Gala on January 11. Ed has supported performing arts in schools throughout his career in government. The Minty Awards, led by Minty

Organization Executive Director **Michael J. Pinto** '10, recognize the role high school theater programs play in encouraging students to build their confidence and public speaking abilities.

## 1981

The International Nurses Association welcomed **Deborah Barcia** into their prestigious organization with her inclusion in the *Worldwide Leaders in Healthcare*. Deborah works for Molina Health Care in South Carolina. She has four decades of nursing experience, including advanced training and certification as a diabetes educator and registered nurse medication tech instructor.

## 1982

**Courtney Bennett**, executive director for One Hundred Black Men of America, Inc., was honored at the Trailblazers Program and Award Ceremony in honor of African American History Month by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer. The event was held February 6 at the Alhambra Ballroom. **Patricia Thayer Moresco** retired from her second career as an elementary school math specialist in June 2017.

## 1983

**Robert Flaherty** is serving as a councilman for the Town of Philipstown in Putnam County, N.Y.

**Yvonne Mills** joined her classmates for the 35th anniversary of their Wagner graduation at Reunion Weekend. Her many friends were shocked and saddened at her unexpected passing on June 3. "She was a classmate, friend, kindred spirit," wrote **Annamarie Lambiasi** '85. "She chose to spend her last moments with her dearest friends at Reunion. We are all truly blessed to have known and loved her."



## 1984

**Cynthia D. DiBartolo**, founder and CEO of Tigress Financial Partners LLC, delivered the 2018 commencement address at Columbia University's Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons in May. She also co-chaired the 21st Annual Wall Street Project Economic Summit, "The Financial Emancipation of People of Color," held February 7-9 at the Sheraton Hotel in Manhattan. The summit covered topics such as "Every Platform and Idea Matters: Millennials, Entrepreneurs and Other Key Influencers" and "Building an Inclusive Equity Agenda to Promote Economic Empowerment." Also contributing to this program was Wagner Trustee **Mary Caracappa-Hurtado** '82, who has retired as managing director, firm strategy and execution, for Morgan Stanley. **AnnMarie Di Vietri Fusaro** is celebrating 33 years as a neonatal

intensive care nurse. For the past 23 years, she has worked at NYP Brooklyn Methodist Hospital.

## 1987

**Keith Lamont Stith**, deputy chief of the criminal investigations division in the Hudson County (N.J.) prosecutor's office, presented an interactive workshop at Wagner on December 3, 2017. Entitled "Do You Know Your Rights? What to Do If You Are Stopped by the Police," the workshop provided young men of color tips on how to navigate police interactions and get home safely. He was also honored at the MLK Agent of Change Ceremony at Wagner College on February 15, 2018.

## 1988

**Everett Johnson**, executive officer at investment firm Edward Jones, was featured in an ad touting the firm's integrated software development.

## 1990

**Lou Anarumo** was named defensive backs coach for the New York Giants in January. He spent the previous six seasons with the Miami Dolphins in the position of defensive backs coach and interim defensive coordinator. A former Wagner football player and assistant coach, he has also coached at Purdue, Marshall, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy,



## Seahawk Graduates to the Ravens

**NFL's Baltimore Ravens draft the multi-talented Greg Senat '17**

**T**his spring, offensive tackle Greg Senat '17 became the first Seahawk football player in 53 years to be selected in the NFL draft. Senat was drafted in the sixth round by the Baltimore Ravens. He follows Rich Kotite '66, drafted by the Minnesota Vikings in 1965; and Allan Ferrie '61, also drafted by the Vikings, in 1961.

Senat took an unusual path toward this exceptional achievement.

"I always wanted to be a basketball player," he said in a May 6 interview, while he was on his way back to New York from rookie camp in Baltimore. "That was my main sport growing up. It's a happy surprise that I ended up being a football player."

A Queens native who grew up in Elmont, New York, Senat was recruited by basketball coach Bashir Mason. The chance to go to college close to home drew the NBA hopeful to Wagner.

In basketball, he was a forward for the great 2016 team that captured the 2016 NEC regular season championship and the program's first-ever postseason tournament victory, in the NIT.

But meanwhile, he said, football looked like fun to him. Coach Jason Houghtaling was interested in him, too. After Senat finished the 2016 basketball season, he played spring football. In 2016–17, he served as the starting right tackle for football and appeared in 22 games for the basketball team.

Eligible for another year of NCAA play, he continued with the football team's offensive line for the 2017 season as a fifth-year senior. His athletic talent drew national attention, leading him to

become the second NEC player ever invited to the NFL Scouting Combine, a weeklong showcase of promising football players.

Beyond athletics, he carved a unique path at Wagner. He was a nursing major until his athletic commitments became irreconcilable with that rigorous class and clinical schedule. He completed his bachelor's in medical anthropology. Working in Wagner's Center for Leadership and Community Engagement, he promoted athletes' involvement on campus and career preparation. He brought all kinds of student groups together to have an impact in the community, and he mentored local high school students in the Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy.

"Wagner taught me how to get along with people of all different races, sexual orientations, creeds; there being one big family," he says. "Wagner taught me how to solve problems. Being a student and playing a sport, two sports at one time, I learned how to manage my time, figure out what's important and what's not important. Wagner taught me how to be engaged in community affairs. It taught me how to speak in front of people. Wagner has taught me a lot of life skills, that's for sure."

Senat says he enjoyed "creating a new family" with his football teammates at Wagner. Now, he's doing the same in the professional arena.

"It's a lot of fun from what I've experienced so far. The team camaraderie is great. The team spirit is great. It's a great experience so far.

"It's like college, just a little more complicated."





What My Father Taught Me  
by MARIA GIURA

**Maria Giura '90** had her first book, *What My Father Taught Me*, published in 2018. Maria will give a reading of her work at Wagner on Thursday, October 11, 2018, at 7 p.m.

and Harvard. "It always makes you feel proud when one of your former players and coaches rise through the ranks. In Lou's case he played and coached here at Wagner, so it's very special," said Wagner Athletic Director Walt Hameline.

**Maria Giura**, former senior associate director of admissions and director of career placement at Wagner College, had her first book published in 2018 by Bordighera Press. Entitled *What My Father Taught Me*, it is a collection of poetry in which she writes richly and candidly about growing up Italian-American and Catholic. It starts with her earliest days as the daughter of immigrant parents to her coming of age and onward into adulthood. American Book Award winner Maria Mazziotti Gillan called Giura "a powerful poet who explores the issues of family, faith, and longing with an honesty and reverence that leave us in awe." Maria will give a reading of her work at Wagner on Thursday, October 11, 2018, at 7 p.m.

## 1993

**Joseph Mignone** was welcomed into the International Association of HealthCare Professionals with his publication in *The Leading Physicians of the World*. The medical director of 21st-Century Oncology in Jacksonville, Fla., Joseph has over 14 years' experience in medical oncology.

## 1994

**Rob Comerford**, senior partner with Deloitte, came to campus with colleague Rachel Grandovic on March 19 to host a seminar for Professor Margaret Horan's accounting students.

## 1996

**Dan Mullen M'96** was named head football coach at the University of Florida, after nine seasons with Mississippi State. Previously, he was the offensive coordinator for Florida when they won national championships in 2006 and 2008. "I strongly believe Dan is the most prepared candidate to have immediate and long-term success at the University of Florida," said Florida athletic director Scott Stricklin. "Coach Mullen is one of the best offensive minds in all of college football, and has an unbelievable track record in tutoring successful quarterbacks such as Alex Smith, Chris Leak, Tim Tebow, Dak Prescott, and Nick Fitzgerald."

## 1998

**Nadia Lopez '98 H'16**, founding principal of Mott Hall Bridges Academy in Brooklyn, was featured on NBC's *Today* show in February. The segment was hosted by NBC special anchor Maria Shriver to celebrate great thinkers who find meaning in their own lives by inspiring others. Nadia was featured alongside Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff.

## 2001

**Erin Cohan** was named chief of staff and vice president of the Center for American Progress on November 21, 2017. She previously served as the inaugural director of state and local government affairs for CAP, leading the organization's work with politicians and elected officials such as governors and attorneys general. "Erin has successfully advanced progressive ideas at all levels of government, and has done so with both strategic skills and policy smarts," said Neera Tanden, CAP's CEO and president. "I am thrilled that she is bringing her wealth of experience to the chief of staff role." **Elizabeth Weintraub** was part of a lecture and panel discussion on January 22, presented by the Wagner College Holocaust Center and Women of Wagner, about sexual violence against Jewish women during and after the Holocaust. The talk also included Professor

Lori Weintrob, Women of Wagner member **Jacqueline Caruso '18**, and **Amanda Akaliza '19**, whose family survived the Rwandan genocide. Elizabeth is the regional director of CE You! Continuing Education.

## 2002

**Kinsey Casey** joined the staff of Emerge America, an organization that inspires Democratic women to run for public office and gives them necessary skills, as its inaugural chief of staff in November 2017. She previously served in the Obama administration as chief of staff for Secretary John Kerry's Office of Global Partnerships at the U.S. State Department, where she served as a key advisor and as the "primary liaison for collaboration between the State Department, the public and private sectors, and civil society." **Elizabeth Soares** is married and has two boys, John and Andrew, and lives in Dartmouth, Mass., working as a general sales manager for South Boston radio station WPLM.

## 2003

Former Wagner assistant football coach **Patrick Graham M'03** was hired by the Green Bay Packers as their new defensive run game coordinator and LBs coach. He previously worked with college teams at Richmond, Notre Dame and Toledo, and with the New England Patriots and New York Giants.

# Knot Notes

## 2004

**Russell Kelly** joined Dr. Kenneth Branton at Pain Modulation Associates as a physician assistant. The office is at the Lahey Outpatient Center in Danvers, Mass. Russell has more than 10 years' experience in acute and chronic pain management. He began his career at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center in Brooklyn and continued at Merrimack Valley Hospital in Haverhill, Mass. **Renée Marino** is a member of the company for *Pretty Woman: The Musical*, which stars Samantha Barks as Vivian and Andy Karl as Edward. It began performances on Broadway on July 20 at the Nederlander Theatre, with an official opening on August 16.

## 2005

**Paul Marrone** married Alexandra Scalici on October 27, 2017, in St. Clare's Roman Catholic Church in Great Kills, Staten Island. **Jason and Laurel Patterson Requa** welcomed a baby girl, Caroline Lorraine, on December 6, 2017. Grandparents **James '73 and Karen Norwell '73 Requa** are excited about a new addition to the family.

## 2006

**Andrew Bailey** announced on February 26 that he is retiring from baseball. He has joined the Los Angeles



**Mariah Amendola '17 and Kristian Wredstroem '18** tied the knot on July 4.

Angels coaching staff as its instant replay coordinator and coaching assistant. "Thank you to the A's, Red Sox, Yankees, Phillies and Angels organizations for believing in me, allowing me the opportunity to play the game and realizing my childhood dream. I am looking forward to new challenges, new memories and hopefully many championships as I am excited to announce I will be joining the Los Angeles Angels MLB staff," he said via his Instagram account. **Maria Maniglia '06 M'07** and her husband, Charles, welcomed a new baby girl on the morning of New Year's Day 2018 at Staten Island University Hospital. Gianna Grace was the first baby born at the hospital in 2018. Maria told the *Staten Island Advance* she's "feeling great and is excited to have borne the hospital's first baby of 2018."

## 2007

**Natalie Layton and Kelli Guardin Rooney** are employing Wagner student interns for their business, High Demand Dance Competition LLC. The two friends, who both studied dance at Wagner, co-founded this business four years ago. Their most recent tour season featured seven different shows in several states. **Jake Smith** was part of the team behind Leonard Cohen's posthumous Grammy win in 2018. Cohen's "You Want It Darker" was named Best Rock Performance. "Two years ago, my bandmate Conor and I got the opportunity to write the choir parts for Leonard Cohen's last record (we sang in the choir as well)," Jake writes. "So, that means that Conor and I get Grammys!" **Ray Wetmore** and **J.R. Goodman '13** are on the props team of the latest Broadway revival

of *Carousel*— Ray in production properties, and J. R. as production props assistant. It opened in April 2018.

## 2008

Public School 21 in Staten Island is getting kids ready for college early under the guidance of Principal **Anthony Cosentino M'08**. The school has established a new center where students can gain college preparedness and see college-related activities, meet Wagner students, and even take a virtual tour of Harvard University. Kindergartners design college pennants while fifth graders create digital portfolios to provide backgrounds and goals. "Kids need to know what are they learning, why are they learning it, and how this will impact them down the road," Anthony told the independent education news organization *Chalkbeat*, which featured the school. **Amanda Concilio Intoccia** was included in *Staten Island Business Trends'* list of the top women in business on the island. She is co-owner of Bamboo Salon, which her mother launched in 2003. She went to the Paul Mitchell School to get her license post-Wagner graduation, launched an education training program with her mother, and submitted an essay to *Modern Salon Magazine*, winning her salon a \$30,000 makeover. "My advice to other women in business is to just go for it," she

says. “If you’re passionate and feel strongly about chasing your dream, stay focused and do it. Life’s too short not to do what you love.” **Vlada Lisovetsky** married Joshua Dov Epstein on June 3 at the Mandarin Oriental hotel in Manhattan, according to the *New York Times*. Vlada is a corporate strategy consultant with the hedge fund Maritime Capital, and Joshua is a partner in Levin-Epstein & Associates and of counsel at Shibolet, both law firms in Manhattan.

## 2009

**Robert Geronimo** debuted his webcomic *Stat Rats* on July 2, 2017. The webcomic is supported by Staten Island Arts. Robert describes it as “a weekly biographical comic about two kids growing up in the Staten Island suburbs and an homage to the old Sunday strips that I grew up reading.” He releases new comics on Sundays. Find it on Instagram and Tumblr.

## 2010

**Jennifer Gimbel** is an editor for finder.com, a website that provides information on financial products and services. She was previously an editor at Disney Consumer Products and Interactive for six years.

## 2011

**Joanna Ciavarella** was named head coach of the men’s and women’s tennis teams at Berkeley College. She

previously served two seasons as assistant coach of men’s and women’s tennis at Hunter College. She holds a master’s in chemistry from Brown University and is pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry from the CUNY Graduate Center.

## 2013

In May, WCT alum **Alex Boniello** was cast as Connor Murphy in *Dear Evan Hansen*, a show that has won six Tony awards including Best Musical and Best Actor for Ben Platt. He succeeded Tony nominee Mike Faist. He joined two more Wagner College Theatre alums already in the *Evan Hansen* company: **Danielle Buccino** ’07 and **Olivia Puckett**. Danielle has been assistant stage manager for *Dear Evan Hansen* since it opened in 2016. Olivia, a member of the original cast of *Dear Evan Hansen*, is understudy for the characters of Alana Beck and Zoe Murphy. Alex was

previously seen in the role of Blaine in the off-Broadway musical *Cruel Intentions*, showing at Le Poisson Rouge in Manhattan from December 2017 to April 2018. **J.R. Goodman** and **Ray Wetmore** ’07 are on the props team of the latest Broadway revival of *Carousel* — J. R. as production props assistant, and Ray in production properties. It opened in April 2018. **Thomas Perretta** M’13 launched his own company, Thomas Felice, in October 2017. It carries a line of high-quality watches with unique designs and custom-crafted hour and minute hands.

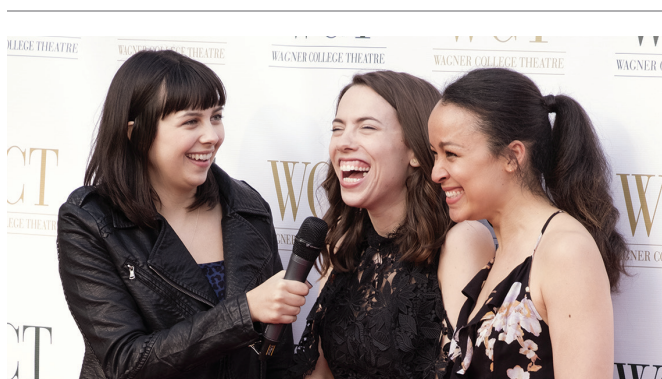
## 2016

**Kayla Jardine** was named Alum of the Month for January 2018 by IES Internships. She interned in Ireland for Martello Media and the General Post Office Museum, and now works as an associate digital producer at Entercom. Previously, she held positions with NBC

News and CBS Radio. Her favorite interviews include Ed Sheeran and *America’s Got Talent* runner-up Angelica Hale. To students looking to study or intern abroad, she says, “I can’t speak highly enough about IES Abroad and the chance to study and intern in another country. I was so nervous to leave the United States in fear of missing out, but I gained so much more abroad. ... Go, learn, and enjoy!” **Carolina Silva** was honored at the inaugural Women Who Inspire at Wagner College ceremony on March 21, alongside **Cynedra Osinaike** ’18, staff members Gloria Malchiodi and **Desiree Braithwaite** ’14, and Professor **Edna Aurelius** M’08. In August 2018, Carolina begins her service as president of the Wagner Alumni Association Board.

## 2017

**Mathieu Loisele** was the 60th overall pick of the Canadian Football League draft, selected by the Toronto Argonauts. He was a linebacker for the Seahawks. **Theresa Reed** has gotten some great TV production experience during the past year. In December 2017 she was in Los Angeles working as a temp at *The Bold and the Beautiful*, the CBS daytime drama where she had also interned as a student. Then, she worked as a production assistant with *The \$100,000 Pyramid*, a game show on ABC with celebrity host Michael Strahan.



**ON THE RED CARPET** April Lavelle ’13 interviews Melanie Brook ’13 and Olivia Puckett ’13 at the WCT Golden Jubilee Gala on May 14. Olivia is one of three WCT alumni in the company of the hit Broadway show *Dear Evan Hansen*.

# In Memoriam

*Celebrating lives that enriched the Wagner family*



## ALUMNI

Mr. Archie Edgar '49  
Mrs. Florence Hardie-Artasense '49  
Rev. Harald K. Kuehne '49  
Mr. Roland Tiedemann '49  
Mr. Harold P. Archinal '50  
Mrs. Barbara Rumpf Fehringer '50  
Mrs. Eleanore E. Muller Gearhart '50  
Mrs. Kathryn Otten Bowen-Smith '51 M'63  
Mr. Christopher Deane '51  
Mrs. Joan O'Regan Graves '51  
Mr. Raymond Doody '52  
Mrs. Dorothy Schnackenberg Novak '53  
Mr. Wilbert A. Wehrli '53  
Mrs. Jean M. Anderson Matula M'54  
Rev. William T. Heil Jr. '55  
Mrs. Valerie M. Jackson '55  
Mr. Robert S. Hicks '56  
Mrs. Betty Zindel Hagen M'57

Rev. Norman C. Krapf '57 M'60  
Mr. Philip Brunner '58  
Mr. Thomas J. Drake '58  
Mr. Frank L. Sharp '58  
Mr. Angelo A. Sinisi '58  
Mr. Charles "Lonnie" West '58  
Mrs. Ruth Richmond Leason M'59  
Mr. Alan M. Snyder M'60  
Mrs. Ingrid Arend Buswell '61 M'81  
Ms. Emma J. Lauterbach '61  
Mr. Robert C. Rich '61  
Mrs. Carol A. Nesland Carlsen '62  
Mr. Thomas C. Rowland '62  
Mr. Jerome P. "Jerry" Scully '62  
Mrs. Audrey J. Pelmas Svenningsen '63 M'66  
Ms. Virginia L. Minor '64  
Mr. Stephen T. Norfleet '64  
Mr. Manuel "Manny" V. Rubio '64  
Rev. Dr. E. Werner Weinreich M'65

Mr. Thomas F. Fawcett '66  
Mrs. Katharine Perry Sinko '67  
Mr. Raymond Goehner '68  
Mr. Brian J. McNamara '70 M'72  
Mr. Francis Bayersdorfer Jr. '72  
Mrs. Florence Traversaro Confrey '72  
Dr. Humphrey D. Germaniuk '75  
Lt. Col. Theresa "Terry" DiResta '76  
Mrs. Eileen Elizabeth Anderson Endres '76  
Ms. Yvonne D. Mills '83  
Mr. Jerry A. Franklin Jr. '89  
Mr. Alvin Grant '08

## FACULTY AND STAFF

Ms. Jeanne Corbo  
Mr. Robert Hicks  
Ms. Claire P. Maher M'76

## Jeanne Corbo

Jeanne Corbo died on May 13, 2018, in Staten Island. She worked at Wagner College for 40 years, from 1953 to 1993, serving as director of career planning and placement. She was originally from Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, and she graduated from the Stenotype Institute of Pittsburgh.

Many alumni benefited from her assistance in finding their career paths. Harold Kozak '68 attributes his long career in teaching to the tutoring opportunities she provided him while he was in college. "Jeanne made me realize that my true ambition was to go into teaching," Kozak said. "As a result, I began teaching at the high school level, and after going to graduate school, I taught at City University for 12 years, and just finished 22 years at Wagner. I owe it all to Jeanne Corbo."

Corbo also made an indelible impression on Nancy H. Haig '75 M'81, who this year was named a Wagner Alumni Fellow in Business and Economics for her distinguished career in internal auditing. Corbo connected her with her first job in that field at Chase Manhattan Bank.

"She was a dynamo," said Haig, who now hires Wagner interns herself to work at Alvarez & Marsal, where Haig is global director of internal audit and compliance.



## Coach Robert Hicks

Coach Robert Hicks died at his home in Newport Beach, California, on April 7, 2018, at age 91. A Wagner Athletics Hall of Fame member, he served 16 seasons (1962–77) as the Wagner football coach and was one of the most successful coaches in the program's history, with 77 wins. Hicks guided the Seahawks to two undefeated campaigns in 1964 and 1967, capturing the Lambert Trophy for the latter as the top team in the East.

An excellent developer of talent, Hicks coached several All-Americans. One of them, Andy Senese '70, remembered Hicks for his "tough but fair" coaching style. Instead of cursing, he would substitute his own favorite phrases, "cheese and crackers" and "piss and vinegar." He was always dressed in a hat, jacket, and tie. Rich Kotite '66, who spent 26 years in the NFL as a player and as head coach for the Eagles and the Jets, said, "He was the best coach I ever had. This guy was special."

During Hicks's own college years, he co-captained the Penn State football team and played in the 1948 Cotton Bowl. He coached at Albright College, Juniata College, DePauw University, and the University of Detroit before Wagner. After his retirement from Wagner, he served as Cranford Township (New Jersey) director of pools for many years, maintaining recreational facilities and establishing a workout facility for the community.



## Claire P. Maher M'76

Claire P. Maher M'76 died on March 30, 2018, at age 79. She had a long career in education, including 35 years with the Early Childhood Center at Wagner College. She started as a half-time teacher for the Wagner College Nursery School, as it was known then, in 1977. She became a full-time teacher for the school the next year and was appointed director of the Early Childhood Center in 1997. During her years there, she pursued and received her master's degree in early childhood education. She retired in 2012.



# Careful Thinking

*How to Avoid the Pitfalls of Human Reasoning*

*By Donald Stearns and Utteeyo Dasgupta*

**M**aking sound decisions is critical to survival and success. Yet, we often think irrationally, ignoring credible evidence and logical consideration. How do we train ourselves to make more rational decisions?

As a biologist and a behavioral economist who focus on teaching and learning, we want to help you think through how this self-destructive dynamic happens — and how you can change it.

First, you need to understand how your brain works. The brain makes sense of the world by connecting new perceptions with what it has perceived in the past. This process often leads to inaccurate perceptions of reality. An illustration: When Donald's daughter was a little girl and first encountered deep snow, her brain connected the small, white particles with what she already knew: sugar. She thought the snow was sugar and wanted to bring some inside, in case people needed it.

Such mistakes happen not only to children, but also to adults. In fact, the longer we live with a major misperception, the more we have invested in it, the more decisions we have made throughout our lives based on it, and the less likely we are to change our minds. Unconsciously, we support our perceptions, selecting information that favors them, regardless of their accuracy or validity, and dismissing contrary evidence as not credible — the process known as confirmation bias.

When we have believed misinformation, we continue to operate from that standpoint unless we consciously override it. Conscious override requires deliberate, purposeful examination of that perception based on credible evidence collected with as little bias as possible. That's a lot of work.

Psychologists and behavioral economists routinely point out that such behavior allows us to fall prey to decisions that are not in our best interests. Remember that New Year's resolution to get into better shape? Most of us, during our first visit to a health club, are overly optimistic

*Phools: The Economics of Manipulation and Deception*, that companies and businesses routinely exploit us based on such irrational decision making.

So, how do we override our unconscious biases and misperceptions? By purposefully trying to distinguish fact from fiction, striving to collect credible information in an unbiased manner, and critically examining concepts based on that evidence.

One of the first steps is to examine our sources of information. If the source has a vested interest in shaping what we think (for example, a politician's web page), we should verify information

“Our ‘short-term self’ often leads us to make irrational, impulsive decisions based on unexamined mental perceptions.”

about our exercise plans, and we willingly sign expensive contracts. Research suggests that too often we overestimate our resolve and end up paying much more than we should.

Of course, the health clubs' contract offerings, where people essentially end up paying for “not going” to the gym, are not coincidences. George Akerlof and Robert Shiller, two Nobel Prize winners in economic sciences, show in their 2015 book, *Phishing for*

using reliable sources with no such vested interest. We teach our students to rely on scholarly articles and reports that are independently reviewed by professionally recognized experts, and journalism that draws conclusions based on well-researched evidence instead of cherry-picked information. Look for news organizations and journalists who belong to reputable professional organizations that have truth and accuracy standards, as well

as codes of ethics. We also recommend online venues that help distinguish credible from not credible information, such as AllSides.com, FactCheck.org, OpenSources.co, PolitiFact.com, PubPeer.com, RetractionWatch.com, Snopes.com, USAFacts.org, WebLiteracy.PressBooks.com, and WikiTribune.com.

As we collect evidence, we must consciously override confirmation bias. We must allow the possibility of changing our minds when credible evidence leads in that direction. Such careful thinking allows us to better understand situations and make rational decisions.

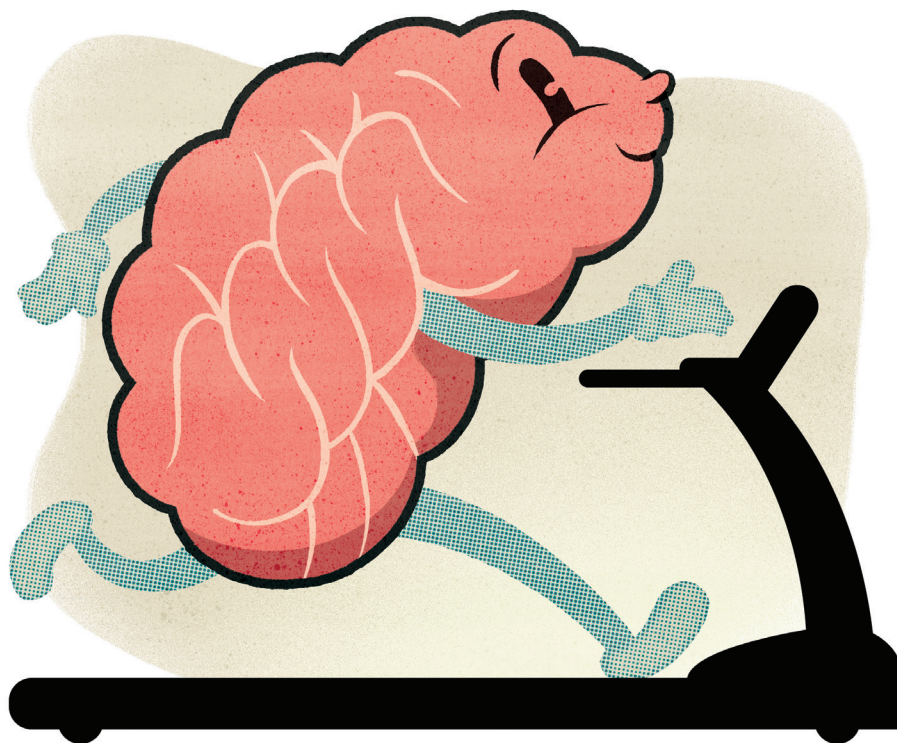
Thomas Schelling, a behavioral economist and another Nobel Prize winner, suggested that each of us has two selves: a short-term self who is easily distracted and seeks immediate rewards, and a long-term self who is far-sighted and strong-willed. After we have collected solid evidence for our decisions, another approach towards making rational choices is to place the short-term self in a carefully structured maze that redirects some of the primal, impulsive, and instinctive actions towards long-term, more rational goals.

For example, returning to the failed New Year's resolution to regularly exercise at the health club: the earnest health-club enthusiast may decide to go to the gym with others. With this conscious, deliberate, slight restructuring, even if the short-term self does not want to follow through with the long-term self's New Year's resolution, the gym partner will nudge the short-term self to stick to the exercise routine. Another example: Setting up an automatic payroll deduction for retirement contributions ensures that, with each paycheck, there will be some funds saved towards retirement — funds that, given impulsive human nature, would have likely been spent instead on ephemeral, short-term goals.

A realistic approach towards making rational choices to achieve long-term goals that are in one's best interests starts with deliberately and carefully considering long-term goals, then purposefully configuring actions in ways that discourage impulsive decisions and encourage more rational choices. Richard Thaler, another Nobel Prize winner in economics, and Cass Sunstein, a Harvard Law School professor, in their bestselling 2008 book, *Nudge*, refer to this general

perceptions. At the same time, we do want to make rational decisions to improve our individual situations in the long term. By carefully, deliberately reconsidering our perceptions in an unbiased manner before drawing a conclusion, we can achieve a clearer understanding of a situation. We are more likely to make rational decisions that are in our best interests based on that clearer understanding.

Careful thinking is purposeful, hard work — the brain will not do this



structuring approach as designing “choice architecture.” They focus on how policy makers can use choice architecture to present policy choices in ways that encourage consumers to make more responsible choices that benefit them in the long term, without taking away their freedom to choose.

Almost everyone has a short-term self that wants to be satisfied, which often leads us to make irrational, impulsive decisions based on unexamined mental

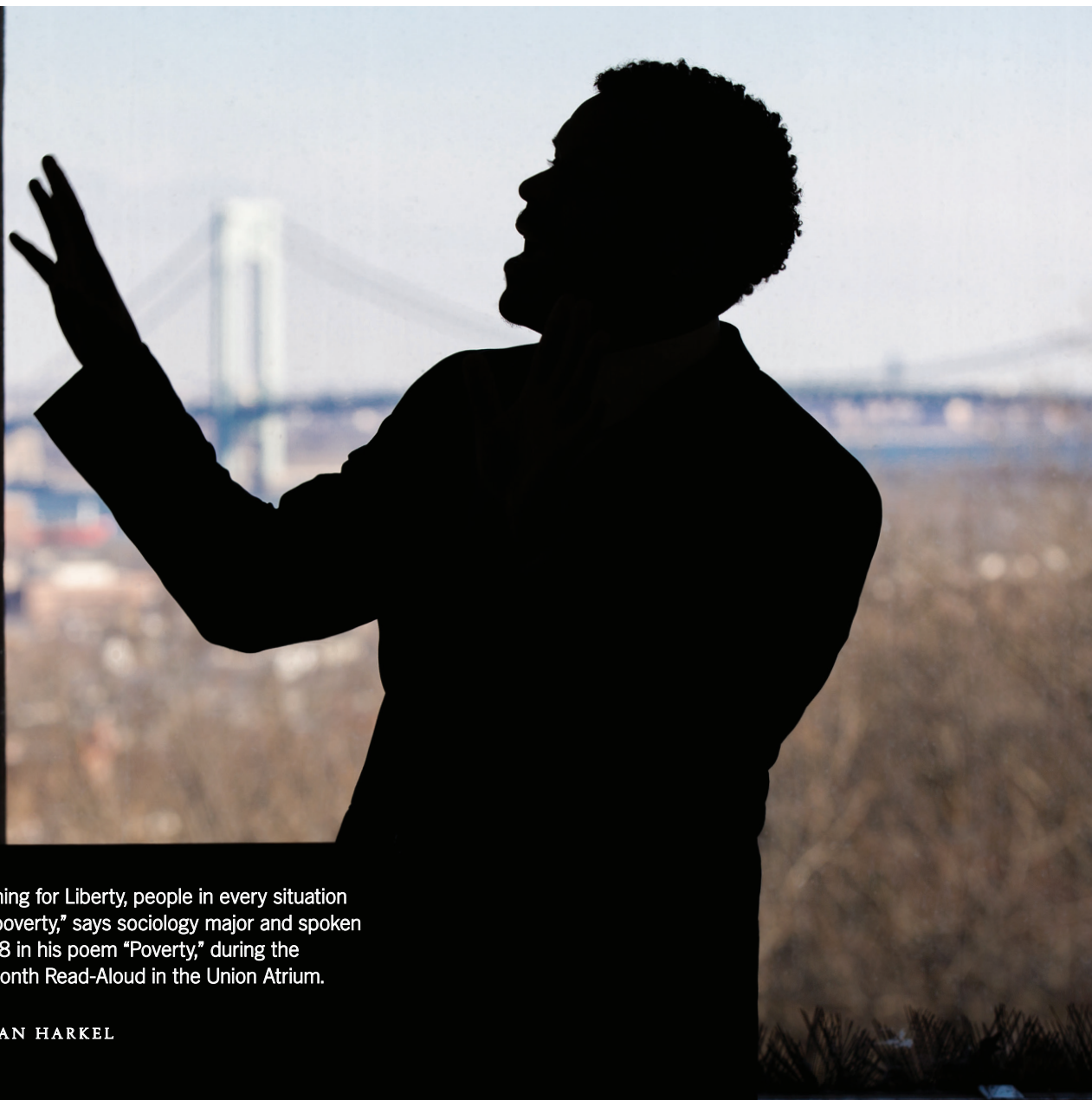
automatically. However, such thinking is necessary to improve one's lot or address problems in the larger society. It is key to responsibly coping in today's complex, changing world.

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### Testimony

"It's not just city folks searching for Liberty, people in every situation fighting to get out of their poverty," says sociology major and spoken word artist Darius Walker '18 in his poem "Poverty," during the February 8 Black History Month Read-Aloud in the Union Atrium.

PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN HARKEL