

THE OWL

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

Vision for Growth

The University
makes a historic
investment in
the future of GS

AI at Columbia

The Joint Program
with JTS Turns 70

Updates from Our
Global Partners

SPRING 2025

THE OWL

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

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Columbia University's record investment of \$30 million will enrich the GS student experience for generations to come.

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LETTER FROM THE DEAN



Dear GS Alumni and Friends,

This May, as GS celebrates the accomplishments of the extraordinary Class of 2025 at our annual Class Day and Commencement ceremonies, we have much to be proud of. In addition to honoring our remarkable new graduates, GS is looking forward to a period of exciting new programs and partnerships, furthering our reputation as the home for innovation in higher education within the Ivy League.

As a school with a large population of nontraditional students, GS has long been committed to making higher education accessible for all. Creating opportunities for students to realize their goals has always been our chief priority. Now, Columbia University has reinforced its support of our unique mission with a historic \$30 million investment in GS (see “Investing in the Future of GS” on page 14). These funds will go toward increased financial aid for GS’s highest-need students, allowing students to pursue their educational aspirations with fewer struggles standing in their way, and will allow GS to launch the NYC Scholars Program with the Borough of Manhattan Community College. In addition to this investment in financial aid for GS students, we announced that planning has begun to create a dedicated residence for GS students, which will help alleviate housing shortages and increase a sense of community among our student body.

This measure of support from the University is especially gratifying as we reflect on how far we have come in the 78 years since GS was founded. Originally established to provide educational opportunities to returning military veterans, GS has grown to be a vibrant, dynamic, multifaceted institution with global partnerships, innovative programs, and a committed and ever-growing alumni network—all while remaining a supportive home for our treasured student veteran community. In this issue of *The Owl*, we take a close look at some of our defining initiatives, including our international Dual Degree Programs offered in collaboration with universities in France, Dublin, Tel Aviv, and Hong Kong (see “Updates from Abroad” on page 26). We also explore how our groundbreaking Joint Program with the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), of which I am a proud graduate, has evolved since it was launched seven decades ago (see “Columbia–JTS Joint Program Celebrates 70 Years” on page 24).

“This measure of support from the University is especially gratifying as we reflect on how far we have come in the 78 years since GS was founded.”

In these pages, we also examine the transformational impact that artificial intelligence (AI) is having on higher education. Columbia is a recognized trailblazer in this field, with scholars, engineers, and multidisciplinary thought leaders advancing the technology while also carefully evaluating its safety and ethical usage. Learn how Columbia is leading the charge—and how GS students and graduates are making significant contributions to the booming field of AI—in “The Genie Is Out of the Bottle” on page 18.

For all these reasons and many others, it’s an exciting time on campus. I am immensely grateful for the energy and passion that make GS unlike any other school, and I am delighted to share some of our stories with you in this issue of *The Owl*.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Rosen-Metsch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent.

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90
Dean and Professor



The GS summer staff and family outing to Citi Field was a grand slam

Dream Team



Everybody's coming down to meet the Mets of New York town—including the entire GS team and family!

From snapping a pitch-perfect photo before the game to enjoying conversations and tasty treats as the Mets took on the Minnesota Twins in July, the annual GS summer staff and family outing was a home run.

Irene Ailin Wang '25 Receives Social Justice Mini-Grant

Irene Ailin Wang '25, an artist and advocate for gender equity, is the third consecutive GS student to receive a Mini-Grant.

Awarded annually to approximately a dozen student-led projects, the Columbia Social Justice Mini-Grants support initiatives that foster equity and community engagement at Columbia.

Wang's project, "Asian Gender Equality: See the Injustice, Say the Injustice," was an on-campus panel held last spring featuring financier and art philanthropist Annie Liang-Zhou '13SIPA and artist and educator Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya '10.

In many ways, the project was a natural continuation of Wang's path to GS.

Wang's first career was in venture capital. "Finance, especially in Asia, is quite a male-

**"I want people to see
what marginalized
voices in the arts can
do together."**



dominated industry," said Wang, noting that despite her success in the field, including becoming a managing partner at a firm in Singapore, she still had to contend with gender prejudice. "My accomplishments were always criticized by men in the industry," she said. "They would wonder, how at your age can you do this? They assume there is a male figure leading the way."

Eventually, Wang pivoted away from finance and returned to her childhood passion for painting. Now, at GS she is majoring in art history-visual arts and concentrating in women's and gender studies.

A participant in the 2023-2024 GS Arts & Research Collective, Wang sees art and advocacy as deeply intertwined. "Art can do many things," she said, "including help people promote their equal rights."

To that end, she founded the Waave Foundation, a community space on New York's Upper East Side focused on uplifting women and nonbinary artists. "I want people to see what marginalized voices in the arts can do together," said Wang. "We are starting a conversation, which is the whole goal."

Honors for NextGen Public Health Scholars Program

Insight Into Diversity, the leading diversity magazine in higher education, awarded Columbia Mailman School of Public Health two 2024 Inspiring Programs in STEM awards. The awards recognize achievements in the recruitment and retention of women and underrepresented students in STEM fields.

One of these awards recognized an innovative collaboration between GS, Columbia Mailman, and Hostos Community College in the Bronx. The three schools are partners in the NextGen Public Health Scholars Program, a six-year scholarship program for diverse undergraduates at Hostos that offers a BA through GS and an MPH through Columbia Mailman's Department of Epidemiology. The program supports students throughout the completion of their degrees, providing them with the educational and professional background necessary for leadership roles in public health. The inaugural cohort of this trailblazing partnership started at GS in the fall of 2023.

Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90
at Convocation with Columbia
University Interim President
Katrina Armstrong.



A Warm Welcome

Incoming class greeted at Convocation 2024

On August 26, 2024, GS welcomed 722 new students to the Morningside Heights campus for Convocation and the start of the fall semester. Columbia University Interim President Katrina Armstrong, along with GS deans, leadership, students, and alumni, addressed the incoming class, highlighting the journey they were about to begin and emphasizing how their diverse backgrounds will enrich their academic experiences.

Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 opened the semester by celebrating the accomplishments of the incoming class and expressing her enthusiasm as they become part of the GS community. "From our admissions process, we know that you are a diverse, highly talented, intelligent, and most interesting class that will bring so much to the Columbia undergraduate classroom," she said. "You are innovators, changemakers, doers, and dreamers—you make things happen. As GS students, you understand

better than most the unpredictable nature of life and the importance of recognizing and embracing diverse, nonlinear paths."

Following Rosen-Metsch's introduction, President Armstrong honored the hard work that GS students and their families have put into getting to Columbia. "You are here at Columbia because you wanted the challenge and exhilaration of New York, a university that is the best in the world, because we are complicated and vibrant and dynamic and will engage you fully," she said.

President Armstrong acknowledged that the past year has been marked by grief, anger, upheaval, and fear, leaving many feeling abandoned or betrayed. "As we look ahead to the new academic year in front of us, we must take time to recognize this history and understand its implications as we redouble our commitment to our future together, the future of this incredible Columbia community. To do so, we have to be clear

about who we are, how we see our mission, and how we define our values."

Among other distinguished speakers, Dean of the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program James Colgrove talked about the diversity of GS students and the experience that begins with embarking on their academic journeys. "Your nontraditional backgrounds don't place you at a competitive disadvantage compared to students who followed a more typical path to the health professions. On the contrary, your backgrounds are a strength."

Elle Littlefield '12, founder of Careerwell and a member of the Columbia Alumni Association Board, highlighted the exceptional student body at GS and the unparalleled learning environment it offers. She urged new students to cherish their time at GS and view it as the beginning of a lifelong relationship. "Believe it or not, you're a student for a very short time," she said. "You are a Columbia and GS alum forever."

Fall 2024 Incoming Class: An Overview

425

Undergraduates

31

Students pursuing a
second bachelor's degree

18-78

Age range

42

Married
students

14%

Military
veterans

35

Represented
states

32%

Eligible for
a Pell Grant

73

Postbac
Premed
students

34%

International
students

69

Represented
countries

13

Students
with children

175

First-generation
college students

*Statistics as of August 29, 2024

803GS students graduated
in 2024**100-plus**GS students honored at
2024 Student Leadership
Awards ceremony**66**Members of the GS Class
of 2024 inducted into
Phi Beta Kappa Honor
Society**220**New students welcomed
at Spring 2025
Convocation**2**GS students
named 2024–2025
Fulbright Scholars

Clarendon Scholar Builds Technology for the Global Good

Last year, Sara Wahedi '24, a tech entrepreneur and human rights activist, received a prestigious 2024 Clarendon Scholarship to study at the University of Oxford. The scholarships, which provide full tuition and a stipend, are offered annually to 200-plus outstanding students. Now enrolled at Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government, she is focusing on technology as a tool for justice and the fundamental human right of access to information.

Wahedi, who was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, and raised in Canada, already has an impressive background in this field.



In 2020, Wahedi founded Ehtesab, Afghanistan's first civic-technology start-up, which she ran throughout her years at GS. "Ehtesab was born out of a critical need for reliable, real-time information during a time of profound crisis," Wahedi said. A platform for crowdsourced reports capturing human rights infringements across Afghanistan, Ehtesab sent over 250,000 alerts during its active period and was a vital resource for many Afghans.

Today, she continues to build on this mission through her most recent start-up, Civaam, which uses "human-centered design and technology" to address global crises. "Unlike conventional approaches that often rely on external consultants, Civaam champions locally driven solutions, empowering technologists in affected regions to design and own sustainable innovations," she explained.

Wahedi has been widely recognized for her achievements, having been named one of *Time* magazine's Next Generation Leaders in 2021, one of *MIT Technology Review*'s Innovators Under 35 in 2022, and One Young World's Entrepreneur of the Year in 2023.

She credits her time at GS, where she majored in urban studies, with helping to shape her journey. "As the recipient of the René Plessner Scholarship—awarded to students who have experienced displacement or refugee journeys—I found immense support in a community that deeply understood and celebrated nontraditional paths," she said. "Attending Columbia had been a lifelong dream, and the friendships I forged at GS, many of whom are now in the tech industry, and the mentorship I received from professors, profoundly influenced my personal and professional growth. GS's unique environment fosters resilience and ambition, and it was a transformative experience that paved the way for the work I do today."

FROM THE NAVY TO THE GRIDIRON



"I think playing football really helped with my transition to civilian life because I get that same camaraderie and bond with my teammates as I got while I was on active duty."

Meet David Garland '26: economics major, defensive lineman for the Columbia Lions football team, and a veteran of the U.S. Navy.

Football has always been a big part of Garland's life. When he came to New York to start his GS journey after seven-plus years in the Navy—he spent most of his time in the Pacific Northwest as an M240 gunner on a harbor patrol boat, achieving the rank of Master-at-Arms Petty Officer Second Class and serving as the Anti-Terrorism Tactical Watch Officer at Naval Base Kitsap in his final six months—he connected with the Lions' coaching staff and walked onto the team in the fall of 2022.

"Football keeps you busy, but I think I do well with structure," Garland said. "My first year in particular I learned that as a football player, you really have to humble yourself and separate age from experience. I've learned to take advice from 19-year-olds with game experience, and that in turn has translated well to the classroom."

For Garland, the student-athlete life came with unique challenges. He not only had to adapt to the rigors of an Ivy League football schedule, but also navigated returning to academia after his service.

"My first semester was a real adjustment," he said. "You learn how to prioritize your time and take care of your body to hold up over the course of the school year. I think it is essential to prioritize your mental health as well," he said. "Student athletes are asked a lot in terms of academics and what they put their bodies through, but you won't find a more rewarding experience."

Garland's mornings are typically full of classes, followed by afternoons at Baker Athletics Complex to practice, watch film, or hit the training room. In the evenings, he's often doing homework in Butler Library until bedtime. The repetition of the student-athlete grind serves him well, as do his experiences as a veteran. "The military is all about discipline, teamwork, and being able to adapt to whatever circumstances life throws at you. Those qualities have helped me immensely during my time here," he said.

The multitude of skills Garland is building at Columbia—leadership, communication,

**Columbia Lions
defensive lineman
David Garland '26
shares how his
experiences in the
Navy serve him on and
off the field**

**In November 2024, the
Columbia Lions won a share
of the Ivy League conference
crown—their first championship
since 1961—in a three-way tie
with Harvard and Dartmouth.**

"and calculus," he joked—are priming him to return to the military as an officer after graduation.

"As a kid from Missouri, how special this opportunity is—not only to play Division 1 football but also to be attending an Ivy League institution in New York City—has not been lost on me. I frequently catch myself looking around Columbia's famous campus, taking in how fortunate I am to be here," Garland said. "General Studies is an amazing school that provides nontraditional students with opportunities no other Ivy League can, and I'm always grateful to see my fellow students in class and hear their stories. I'd love to see even more of you in the stands this year!"

2024 MILITARY BALL

Columbia Honors Its Veteran Community at Annual Gala



In early November, more than 500 veterans, leaders, scholars, and guests celebrated Columbia University's veteran community at the annual Military Ball, held at New York City's Chelsea Piers. Retired Vice Admiral and Chief of Navy Reserve John Mustin was honored with the Peter J. Awn Lifetime Service Award, and Interim Columbia University President Katrina Armstrong thanked the military community for their contributions to University life.

"The experiences you have had, the talents you have acquired, and the values you live align so deeply with what we believe in, with what this institution shall and must stand for: dedicated to diversity of thought and background, to creativity and perseverance, and to community and a commitment to others," Armstrong said. "Thank you for being part of this community."



PHOTOS: SIRIN SAMMAN AND STEVE MYASKOVSKY

GS HOSTS FGLI CONSORTIUM ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM

In March 2024, Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 welcomed professionals from peer institutions across the country to discuss better ways to support and empower first-generation and lower-income (FGLI) students.

The seventh FGLI Consortium Annual Colloquium took place on March 7 and 8 in Butler Library. Student affairs professionals convened to share knowledge and best practices, framing their discussion around the examination of recent scholarship in the field.

The FGLI Consortium is a national organization that provides leadership, expertise, and resources to support FGLI college students at selective universities and colleges. GS has been an active member and participant in this consortium since its founding in 2018.

The FGLI Consortium Annual Colloquium is structured as an advanced seminar through which participants have the opportunity to dive into emerging research. It is designed for scholar practitioners to contribute to critical conversations on the intersections of theory and practice in the field of FGLI student access, belonging, and success.

To open the colloquium, Rosen-Metsch gave welcoming remarks and thanked the 16 campuses and organizations represented. "We are proud to share that the GS undergraduate student body has the highest percentage of first-generation and lower-income students in the Ivy League," she said.

After the welcome, GS Dean of Students Marlyn Delva '98BC, '99TC, '13TC spoke about the importance of the colloquium's theme: Belonging in Context. With the increasing scale of the FGLI student population on campuses across the country and increasing diversification of the FGLI student community, institutions have the increased responsibility to promote belonging and engagement in supportive contexts. Delva invited the participants to



think about how professionals in the field can create spaces for these students to feel belonging on their campuses.

Over the course of the colloquium, attendees had wide-ranging roundtable conversations on topics including supporting transfer and nontraditional students, navigating and leveraging institutional structures, student organizing and activism, and mental health and emotional well-being.

"Research has demonstrated the importance of a diverse workforce, diverse student body, and interdisciplinary teams," Delva said. "Belonging not only enhances the work, but also improves our well-being."

The gathering came to a close with a reflection on how participants can leverage this experience to continue to help FGLI students thrive. The GS team is already developing ways to incorporate ideas from the colloquium into increased support of GS students and looks forward to continued partnership with the FGLI Consortium.

"We are proud to share that the GS undergraduate student body has the highest percentage of first-generation and lower-income students in the Ivy League."

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90



**Four alumni of the Dual BA Program
Between Columbia and Sciences Po
reflect on how it prepared them to
pursue careers in the law**

Lucy Jeffries '20, Jeremy Zhang '23, Blythe Edwards '21, and Lorenzo Lamo '21 (above, from left) came to GS via very different paths, but all share a passion for the law. Now candidates for law degrees, these alumni credit their international experiences and Dual BA education with helping guide their career choices.

What brought you to the Dual BA?

Lucy Jeffries, JD candidate at Columbia Law School: I am half French and half American. This duality meant a lot to me, and I was not ready to give up living in a bilingual environment. I also didn't know if I'd prefer to live in the U.S. or in France, and the Dual BA enabled me to continue my education in an international environment. My favorite moments were those that helped build community. At Sciences Po, I was on the women's soccer team. I also loved the opportunity at Columbia to travel with the Amnesty International student group to the organization's meetings in Boston and Chicago. These trips solidified friendships and enabled us to exchange with human rights activists from across the region.

**“It was the Columbia-
Sciences Po experience
that convinced me I should
launch into an entirely new
educational experience,
knowing how much I
would get out of it.”**

Blythe Edwards '21

Blythe Edwards, JD/LLM candidate in the Joint Program between Harvard Law School and University of Cambridge: When applying to universities, I was torn between programs in the United States and Europe. I wanted both to be part of an internationally minded community and to experience living in the United States. The Dual BA felt almost tailor-made for my background and interests. Attending both Sciences Po and Columbia, you not only get academic rigor, but you must also adapt to two completely different places and pedagogical styles. Sciences Po had a remarkably tight-knit and international community of students. The academic intensity combined with the relatively small, enclosed campus meant that we got to know each other and bonded quickly. Transitioning to Columbia felt like everything had been supersized.

Lorenzo Lamo, JD/LLM candidate at Duke Law School: I'm Colombian and grew up in a predominantly Latin American community in Miami. From an early age, I had a strong interest in languages. In high school, I was very involved in debate and Model United Nations. The Dual BA was a perfect way to immerse myself in a foreign culture, learn a third language, and delve into international relations in a global setting. I loved my two years at Sciences Po. I was president of the Amnesty International branch [Menton campus], and we did a lot of work at the French-Italian border related to refugees and migrants. That was my first exposure to human rights lawyering and seeing the impact lawyers can have. I came out as a very analytical thinker and well-rounded student, which prepared me for the professional world.

Jeremy Zhang, JD candidate at New York University: I was born and raised in Toronto to parents who immigrated from China. Inspired by my parents' international background, I became enamored with the idea of spending time in France during my undergraduate degree. The Dual BA felt like it was perfectly crafted for me. An obvious strength of the program was that I got to take advantage of a natural turning point during the transition from Sciences Po to Columbia. Although I had deepened my interests in policy and law at Sciences Po, I was itching for something more specific to guide how I wanted to make an impact. I soon realized that the sustainable development program aligned with my values. If I was in a more traditional four-year program, I am not sure that I would have had the push to seek out something different.

How did GS's nontraditional educational opportunities prepare you for your law pursuits?

Jeffries: Having been exposed to so many unique students at GS who have inspiring experiences beyond academia allows you to remember that there is more than just studying. Additionally, remembering that people come from different backgrounds helps promote empathy and understanding. This has been central to my client-facing work with Columbia Law School's Immigrants' Rights Clinic, where empathetic lawyering is key.

Edwards: My education at Sciences Po and Columbia prepared me in different, complementary ways. Sciences Po was great preparation for law school, process-wise. The French style trains you to think in a very analytical way. Columbia was an extremely helpful introduction to the American pedagogical style. It also provided a substantive introduction to U.S. legal education. I took [former] President Bollinger's First Amendment class, which he taught as a traditional black-letter law class. That experience helped relieve my anxieties about the cold-calling law school system.

What advice do you have for GS students, especially Dual BA students, who are interested in law school?

Lamo: Really informing yourself about your chosen field to make the best decision possible is so important. A lot of people don't grow up with lawyers in their family, especially first-generation students. I didn't know any lawyers growing up, but once I became interested in this career, I was proactive about reaching out and making use of the Columbia network.

Zhang: I would encourage students to explore the things that excite you. Ask yourself what classes get you out of the bed, what projects you're excited to work on. More specific to Dual BA students, I would advise you to embrace the uniqueness of your path through undergrad ... You bring something so special to the table because you may have learned about a specific legal issue others have never considered, or you may have seen a legal solution in action that hasn't been implemented elsewhere. Emphasize these parts of your story, because they will help demonstrate the value you can bring to the law school community.

“The most important thing I found heading into law school was having a ‘why.’ ... You just need to find the problem you want to learn how to solve, the people you want to learn how to help, or the movements you want to learn how to support.”

Jeremy Zhang '23

COVER FEATURE

Investing in the Future of GS

Columbia's historic \$30 million investment in GS will have a transformative impact on the student experience, now and for generations to come

By Nancy J. Brandwein

"Our school is the school of the doers and dreamers," said Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 of GS's student body. Yet she readily acknowledges how these students—whether they are veterans, community college transfers, performing artists, or entrepreneurs—often see their aspirations sidelined as they struggle to pay for tuition and housing.

Now, in a powerful acknowledgment of GS students' need, worth, and potential, Columbia University has made a historic investment of \$30 million to bolster financial aid and build the GS endowment. Announced publicly on September 26, 2024, this multi-year investment commenced in the summer of 2024 along with a plan for the first dedicated housing for GS students and the launch of the New York City Scholars Program, which will formally begin with an exciting new partnership between GS and the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC).

Making the Case for GS Parity

From the moment she became dean in January of 2018, Rosen-Metsch made financial aid and fundraising for GS students a top goal. "Because of all the wonderful things about being a student at Columbia," said Rosen-Metsch, "students were prioritizing their education, being able to cover tuition often at the expense of taking care of themselves and their families."

While GS students and Columbia College (CC) and School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) students all have access to the same "wonderful things" about Columbia, GS students have 63 percent of their financial needs met compared to the other schools, which have 100 percent met. Compounding the discrepancy, only 19 percent of CC and SEAS students are recipients of Pell Grants, a hallmark of low-income status, while 44 percent of GS students qualify. In the face of this disparity, a group of first-generation and low-income GS students formed Equality for GS in 2022 to fight for equity and transparency in how the University disperses aid. The dean said the group played a crucial role, along with GS Student Council leaders, as "partners in making the case to get us this historic unprecedented opportunity."

The financial difficulties GS students face became even more apparent in March 2023, when GS conducted a survey on the college experience of the entire student body. The survey, which had a phenomenal 67 percent response rate, showed that 80 percent of GS's student body have financial distress that interferes with their academic experiences—whether that means changing majors, dropping credits, or postponing graduation. Rosen-Metsch shared



this survey with then-University President Minouche Shafik, who subsequently met with a representative from Equality for GS during an August 2023 roundtable of students from all schools. The dean credits Shafik, along with President Emeritus Lee Bollinger and a number of Columbia administrators and trustees, with spurring this historic University-driven investment.

The Student Support Initiative

The movement within the University to bolster GS's coffers actually began three years before this fall's announcement. GS and its budget sit within Columbia's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, where Dean Amy Hungerford is a steadfast ally. "The investment is rooted in our great pride in GS," she said, "and our understanding that it is really exceptional among Ivy League schools to have a school like GS with so many flexible options for students who do not quite fit the mold."

Hungerford cited the pandemic as spurring the University to realize that its students benefited enormously from the direct infusion of government aid. "The knowledge gleaned from COVID, the bedrock commitment to GS within Columbia, and the need to keep building the endowment as a sound foundation for student support" inspired the most ambitious school-wide fundraising campaign to date: the Student Support Initiative of 2021.

As part of its goal to raise \$1.4 billion for financial aid for all schools by 2025, the University gave GS \$6 million to use as matching funds. At the same time, Larry J. Lawrence '69, who chaired the GS-led part of the campaign, made a historic \$5 million gift to the school, which was also leveraged to raise funds. The endowment increased by 34 percent in that one year alone.

Compared to Columbia College, which has grown its endowment over hundreds of years, GS—only 78 years

"The investment is rooted in our great pride in GS and our understanding that it is really exceptional among Ivy League schools to have a school like GS with so many flexible options for students who do not quite fit the mold."

Amy Hungerford

old—is understandably not currently on the same financial footing. Yet over the course of Rosen-Metsch's tenure, GS's endowment has grown by an impressive 92 percent. In fact, fundraising has tripled since she started in 2018, when, she said, "we were raising about \$5 million a year; now we are raising up to \$15 million every year." To make this happen, Rosen-Metsch doubled the size of GS's board and brought Jill Galas Hickey, now Senior Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations, into the school's leadership team.

The goal of fundraising is always twofold: to grow the endowment for perpetuity and to realize pressing needs. As an example of the latter, Rosen-Metsch mentioned the five-year, \$5 million gift from the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Foundation in 2023; a significant portion of the annual \$1 million allotment has been slated for "Finish-Line Scholarships" for students who have depleted all their resources to get them to graduation. And then there is the Program for Academic Leadership and Service (PALS), which Rosen-Metsch called "one of our treasures at GS." PALS scholarships award full tuition for students who are first-generation and have the highest need. The Cohen gift also opened up slots for more PALS recipients, and Columbia's historic investment will open up even more.

Launching NYC Scholars

Perhaps nothing speaks to GS's mission of access and social mobility more than its partnerships with community colleges. A full 40 percent of GS students come to the School from two-year community colleges. Now, in addition to offering financial aid to students of highest need, GS is using the historic investment to launch an exciting new collaboration with BMCC, one of the most diverse two-year schools in the United

States. In the spring of their freshmen year, qualifying BMCC students will be invited to enroll at GS as NYC Scholars with full-ride scholarships. Much like the students in GS's pioneering Dual Degree Programs, these NYC Scholars will be equal and concurrent members of the BMCC and Columbia communities. In this way, these students avoid "transfer shock"—the academic and social challenges many community college students face when transitioning to a more rigorous academic environment. NYC Scholars receive comprehensive advising with help setting long-term goals, choosing the right preparatory courses, and taking full advantage of the academic and research opportunities at both institutions.

Dr. Anthony E. Munroe, president of BMCC, hailed NYC Scholars—in the works since 2020—as "transformative, a game changer. It is a pathway to prosperity. I really tip my hat to the leadership at GS and at Columbia. Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch and Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers have been true partners."

Not only is Dr. Munroe pleased with the flourishing partnership between the two schools, but he is also proud of the performance of BMCC students who have gone on to GS. "Our students are capable, they have determination and grit, and the student outcomes speak for themselves," he said. "They work hard, and they will continue to do us proud."

According to Hungerford, the special place GS has in relation to New York City and its community colleges was a crucial factor in the University's decision to make such a substantial investment in its students. "We have such a diversity of students on our campus and a very outward-looking orientation to the world. GS is a big part of that. To be open to students that have had this nontraditional path, that brings them through careers, through hard times, just a

different life experience than we see in our typical undergraduate—it is a privilege to have them in our classrooms. ... The new financial aid gives us a chance to support those students in a really substantial way.”

A Dedicated Residence

Being part of the vibrant life of a world-class city exacts a high price. Median rents in New York City are double the national average and the cost of living in New York City is 77 percent higher. Again, there is a wide gap between GS students and their peers in CC, SEAS, and Barnard who are guaranteed a room in the University’s stock of subsidized housing when they begin their Columbia careers. Currently, only 44 percent of eligible GS students are housed, and housing for GS meets only 50 percent of demand; 799 GS students are spread over 70 different Columbia buildings. Concurrent with the University’s \$30 million investment in GS is a plan for the first dedicated GS residence in the School’s history. Not only will the new residence have about 330 beds, but it will also be designed with GS students in mind, accommodating students who are parents, for instance.

The leadership of Kikka Hanazawa ’00 as

a Columbia Trustee has been instrumental in driving the school forward to secure this groundbreaking housing initiative. Hanazawa’s experience as a transfer student from Japan during the 1980s led her to feel passionately about both financial aid for GS and housing. She remembers crashing at friends’ apartments because she didn’t have a stable place to live while working full-time at a Japanese trading company and studying at night.

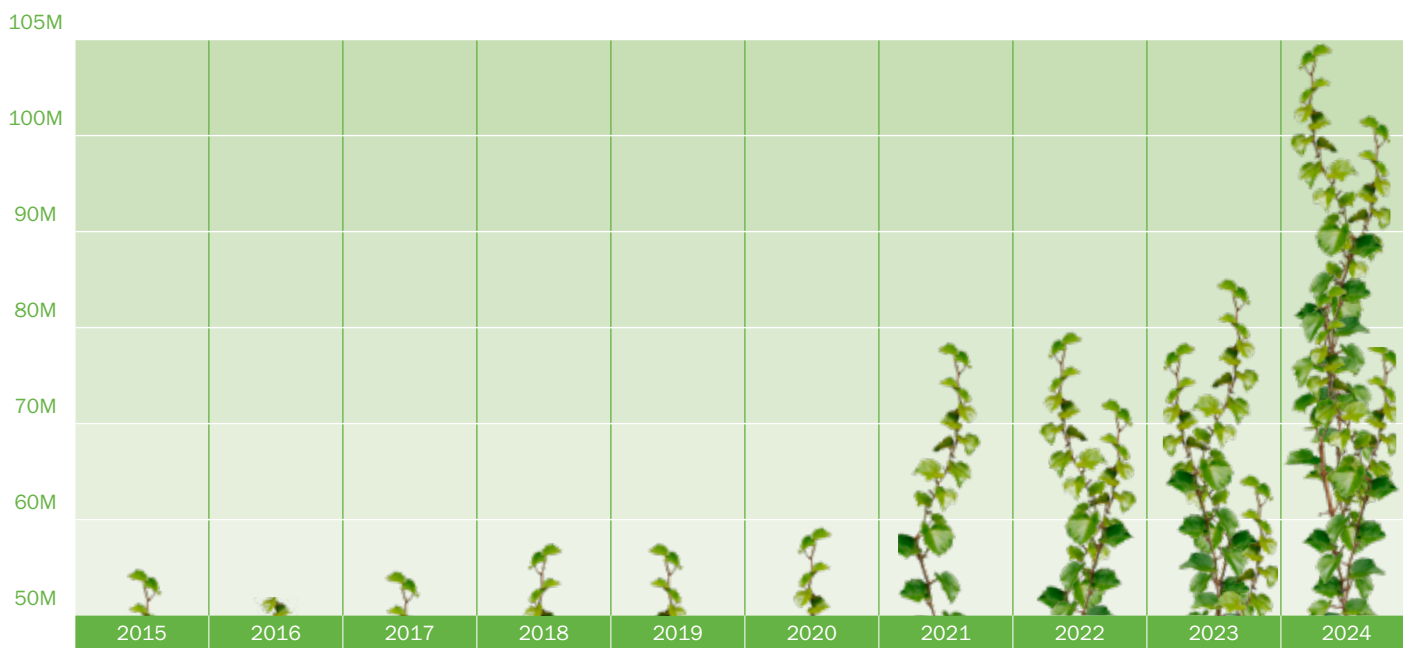
“There are many students who, like me, couldn’t really complete [in time],” she said. “My case is really rare in that I was able to raise enough money to finish GS. [But] it took me 10 years!” Now the cofounder/CEO of digital fashion marketplace and library Yabbey and cofounder of Fashion Girls for Humanity, Hanazawa met with the late Dean Peter Awn 15 years after graduating to express gratitude for her GS experience. She asked what she could do to help, and he said two words: “financial aid.” Hanazawa has since established two scholarships and is excited to make this push for GS housing with the full support of her fellow trustees—and she especially emphasized the financial savvy that Columbia’s Executive Vice President for Finance, Anne Sullivan, and Columbia Trustee Dean Dakolias brought to the table.

Changing the Narrative Along with the Balance Sheet

Historically, GS and its students have sometimes felt in the shadow of the founding college, which dates back 270 years. Yet Columbia’s decision to invest \$30 million specifically for financial aid, along with substantial commitments toward dedicated GS housing, offers a powerful counternarrative: This place, and these students, matter. Equality for GS students were elated by Columbia’s demonstrable commitment to expanding educational access for nontraditional students. Still, as the group’s current leader, Humberto Romero Gonzalez ’25, emphasized, additional support is needed to help close the gap in aid. “We need to put the message out there that alumni can help,” he said. “Their donations will help students graduate with less debt, and they can give back to GS.”

For her part, Rosen-Metsch tempered her enthusiasm with the recognition that there is still much to be done. “Our goal every day is to keep making a better GS, and each year we are able to do more for the School than we did the year before,” she said. “But we recognize that there is still a long way to go to be able to support GS students the way we need. I am very open and transparent about that.”

Growth of GS Endowment from 2015 to 2024



As artificial intelligence radically
transforms how we teach and
learn, innovators at GS and across
Columbia are exploring how to
harness its potential

By Carrie Kirby





THE GENIE OUT OF THE BOTTLE

Studying in a grand 17th-century edifice, in a town flanked by champagne vineyards, Ashish Dubey '24 spent a lot of time thinking about artificial intelligence.

As a student in the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po, Dubey would start at Columbia GS after two years in Reims, France. As might fit this nontraditional college track, Dubey's research was interdisciplinary, sending him after obscure sources in both English and French. Too often, traditional keyword-based search tools failed to turn up what he needed.

So Dubey created a research assistant tool that harnesses artificial intelligence to evaluate and summarize sources based on natural language queries, using feedback to fine-tune its searches and deliver customized results. Best of all for Dubey's needs, he was able to make the AI assistant multilingual, so it could sum up reams of French documents in English.



Ashish Dubey '24

Once in New York, Dubey shared his tool with Columbia University Libraries and worked to integrate it into the Columbia Libraries Catalog (CLIO) search system.

Dubey credits GS and the Dual BA Program for empowering him, an economics and political science major, to follow his imagination into machine learning.

"Thanks to GS, I had this very untraditional route where I was given the message that I could be experimental, be different, be unorthodox," Dubey said.

As the AI revolution sweeps through Columbia and all institutions of learning, most changes will not be unique to GS or to any one school. Indeed, as GS students participate in majors across many Columbia departments, they will experience the changes AI brings alongside other students.

"AI is going to be transformative for university activity in every dimension," observed Shih-Fu Chang, Dean of Columbia Engineering and a renowned expert in multimedia, computer vision, and artificial intelligence. "I think students and stakeholders in GS are in a wonderful position to really embrace AI, because they are in all different positions in society."

Amid this onslaught of change, a number of GS students, alumni, and faculty who are at the frontier of AI, like Dubey, thank the School's embrace of the nontraditional for giving them the freedom to explore.

AI Will Permeate Higher Education

The implications of machine-learning technology reach far beyond the students and faculty who are actively engaged in creating new AI tools.

"Higher education in itself is being impacted by AI," said industrial engineering Professor Garud Iyengar, who serves as the Avaneessians Director of the Columbia Data Science Institute and coleads Columbia AI, the University's artificial intelligence initiative, along with Dean Chang and Executive Vice President for Research Jeannette Wing.

Announced in February 2023, Columbia AI pulls together and amplifies the university's broad range of efforts in machine learning. One of the initiative's major components is "AI+X," which will bring AI experts into collaboration with faculty in other fields, from medicine to archaeology, to find new ways for computers to help advance human knowledge.

Iyengar sees two distinct challenges facing Columbia as it moves into this new age.

The first: "How do you teach in the age of AI? What expectations do you have of students when you know that they will be using tools that are assistive in a big way?"

The second: "How do we use these tools to improve the learning outcome for students?"

Columbia is supporting students and faculty on all fronts as they confront those questions.



Dean Shih-Fu Chang

"AI is going to be transformative for university activity in every dimension. I think students and stakeholders in GS are in a wonderful position to really embrace AI, because they are in all different positions in society."
Shih-Fu Chang

One way Columbia is helping students understand the wave of change is through classes. AI in Context, a new interdisciplinary undergraduate class, invites faculty from English, music, computer science, and even philosophy, as well as speakers from outside Columbia, to cover what AI is, how it works, and how people can best use it.

“The genie is out of the bottle, so we need to learn how to accommodate generative AI into our classes and into education more broadly,” said Columbia Engineering’s Adam Cannon, one of the faculty members who developed AI in Context.

On another front, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has been working with faculty on everything from setting guidelines for student use of AI to incorporating AI tools into their teaching.

“Everyone is at a different place when it comes to thinking through AI,” said CTL Executive Director Amanda Irvin. “We try to meet people where they are.”

The CTL recently unveiled a new website, Teaching and Learning in the Age of AI, which provides faculty with resources including a tutorial on using AI to generate quiz questions. The site also highlights how Columbia professors in areas as diverse as business, medicine, and writing are approaching AI now.

The CTL, in collaboration with Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT), is also hosting a pilot of an AI tool that teachers can choose to use to create custom chatbots to help students engage with the course material.

Iyengar sees promise in AI chatbots for tutoring.

“Students can engage more than they do with a human tutor, who is primarily available through office hours,” Iyengar said. “With a machine, you have 24/7 access and are not being evaluated.”



Professor Garud Iyengar

Students in All Fields Harness AI

Dubey, who since graduating has continued working on AI research assistance through a fellowship with Columbia Research, is far from the only undergraduate outside of computer science to harness the power of AI to his own ideas.

“We have people transforming the entire gamut of professions, from business to social work, to film and art history. AI at Columbia is impacting all of these,” said Iyengar.

Louai Allani '25 is one of them. Like Dubey, Allani is part of GS’s Dual BA Program with Sciences Po. When participating in the United Nations’ global climate summit, Conference of the Parties (COP), Allani found the negotiations both painfully slow and inequitable. He saw delegations from developed nations using their superior resources to dominate the outcomes.

Allani’s solution was to create Solimen, which he calls “an AI climate diplomacy lab.”

“I believe that as humans, we often struggle to see our own problems clearly; AI can,” Allani wrote for the GS website. “Solimen’s ambition is to level the playing field by giving all countries, and particularly those who have been relegated to a secondary position in negotiations, the power to be fully informed and engaged as things happen with access to predictive analyses regarding specific environmental events, policy developments, and public sentiments.”

“We have people transforming the entire gamut of professions, from business to social work to film and art history. AI at Columbia is impacting all of these.”

Garud Iyengar



CTL Executive Director Amanda Irvin

Alumni Advance AI in Industry

In 2015, Thomas Reardon '08, '13GSAS, '16GSAS, teamed up with two other new Columbia neuroscience PhDs to cofound CTRL-labs (now part of Meta) to create a neural interface—basically a wristband that enables the wearer to operate a computer using their mind. Although the company does not have “AI” in its name, Reardon says that AI—and machine learning, defined as using algorithms to allow AI to learn like humans do—is at the heart of CTRL-labs’ focus, computational neuroscience.

“Computational neuroscience is a huge part of the fabric behind modern machine learning,” Reardon explained.

In September, Meta unveiled Orion, augmented reality glasses that include the wristband developed by Reardon’s team.

Nontraditional does not even begin to describe Reardon when he arrived at Columbia. He had already founded and sold a start-up, then worked for over a decade at Microsoft, where he started the project that would create the Internet Explorer browser. When he decided in his early 30s to pursue a college degree, Reardon wondered if the right academic fit existed for him.

“I stumbled into the School of General Studies at Columbia,” which he calls “probably the best four-year investment I will ever make.”

While completing his bachelor’s degree in classics, Reardon discovered neuroscience and began working with the Center for Theoretical Neuroscience, part of Columbia’s Zuckerman Institute. He credits the freedom afforded by Columbia and GS to work with this lab as an undergraduate student with setting him on the path he is still following today.

“Very few universities really indulge nontraditional students [in that way],” Reardon said. “They were just like, Columbia

is here for you. Take advantage.”

Today, Reardon continues a close relationship with Columbia, serving on the boards of GS and the Zuckerman Institute. Through those roles, he has been able to observe the exploration of AI across Columbia.

One initiative Reardon finds especially interesting is the NSF AI Institute for Artificial and Natural Intelligence (ARNI), a multisite project in which the Zuckerman Institute and Columbia Engineering are key partners. Bridging artificial and natural intelligence, ARNI’s approach to AI is ultimately the same as Reardon’s: “What can we, in the end, understand about our own intelligence by trying to approximate it with machines?”

Another notable GS alumnus in AI is Andrew Satz '15, '18SEAS, who is using machine learning to discover new therapeutic antibodies. Like Reardon, Satz had already founded and sold a company before enrolling in GS. Also like Reardon, the passion that led Satz to become an AI entrepreneur started at Columbia. During his time in GS, he became president of the Columbia Organization of Rising Entrepreneurs and helped found the Columbia Data Science Society. After getting his master’s, Satz went into business with classmate Brett Averso '18SEAS.

After applying AI to a number of health care projects, the pair founded EVQLV (pronounced “Evolve”), with a mission of using AI to streamline the drug discovery process, which could in turn make lifesaving treatments more affordable. In 2020, EVQLV made headlines by using AI to accelerate the search for COVID vaccines and treatments.

Finding the Right Role for the Human Mind

While much talk about artificial intelligence in higher education has focused on its potential pitfalls, these projects in the Columbia and GS community show the flip side: the vast promise of a technology that is almost certainly a permanent part of higher education and research.

Much of AI’s promise blooms from its potential as a booster rocket for human innovation.

“AI is playing a key role in the speed of innovation, in the lab, in industry, and in every pipeline of the innovation process,” Chang said.

These early days will doubtlessly bring growing pains, as everyone involved searches for the sweet spots in using AI to augment, not replace, what human minds can accomplish.

The CTL is helping guide that search, hosting conversations examining the challenges and promise of learning to work with AI. One, Irvin said, was titled “Are Humans Still Relevant?”

“We all decided yes,” Irvin reported.

Reassuring news.

“What can we, in the end, understand about our own intelligence by trying to approximate it with machines?”

Thomas Reardon '08

Unlocking the Brain

Professor Lydia Chilton uses AI to foster human creativity



By Carrie Kirby

For Lydia Chilton, the path to a career in human-computer interaction started with childhood piano lessons.

By the time she headed to MIT for college, Chilton was already a skilled pianist. But there was one musical challenge she could not overcome.

"I didn't understand how I'd spent all this time playing the piano, but didn't know how to compose anything," Chilton recalled.

Then, in a required undergraduate humanities class, the future Columbia professor learned that there are basic rules composers follow to create original works of music.

"Mozart knew these rules! It definitely took the mystery away," she said.

As she labored to create her first compositions, Chilton had another revelation: Composing a piece that adheres to all the rules of music theory is a complex task to manage. She thought: "I bet a computer could help me do this."

It's an idea that propelled Chilton through a master's degree in electrical engineering and a PhD in computer science, and through seven years of research and teaching as an

assistant professor in Columbia's Computer Science Department: Creative tasks can be broken down into basic steps much like those used in software design. What's more, computers can help humans identify and follow those steps to get creativity flowing.

Chilton has applied the concept to humor—in the 2016 paper "HumorTools: A Microtask Workflow for Writing News Satire," she and coauthors created an algorithm that helps people come up with jokes based on a format popularized in humor publication *The Onion*. More recently, Chilton led a team helping student journalists use artificial intelligence tools to create newsy TikTok videos.

"I have created a cottage industry of making workflows that help people get started creating," Chilton said.

In her work, artificial intelligence never replaces human creators. Instead, it's reframing content and ideas to "help unlock your brain."

As a teacher, Chilton has enjoyed helping students find novel ways to apply artificial intelligence to challenges in their own lives. Some of the students who have come up with the best-use cases are in General Studies.

"I really love the GS students because they often have a lot of life experience. Many of them have worked in real-world organizations," she said. For example, one entrepreneurial GS student came up with an AI algorithm that would allow any employee of his company to query their software's underlying code, making it easier for new programmers to get up to speed.

This year, Chilton is one of a team of Columbia professors from different departments teaching AI in Context, a course that introduces the basics of AI as

well as the philosophical and ethical issues associated with the technology.

For Chilton, the course is a perfect blend between her research interests and her love of getting to know students from all walks of life—and helping them figure out how computer science can help them reach their goals.

"I like to find ways to leverage [each person's] unique abilities and knowledge," she said. "Everything is relevant to computer science and AI."

Current position

Assistant Professor of
Computer Science

Faculty member since 2017

Education

BS, MIT (2006 and 2007);
MEng, MIT (2009); PhD,
University of Washington
(2016); Postdoc, Stanford
(2017)

Hobbies

Trying to cook meals my
toddlers will eat that aren't
entirely made of cheese

Quote

"Sometimes limits are just
perceptions."

COLUMBIA-JTS JOINT PROGRAM CELEBRATES 70 YEARS

By Kathrin Havrilla-Sanchez

**The groundbreaking
program allows
students to earn two
bachelor's degrees
while experiencing the
best in both secular
and Jewish studies**

The Columbia School of General Studies recently celebrated the 70th anniversary of its groundbreaking Joint Program with List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). This rigorous and highly selective program allows qualified students to earn two bachelor's degrees simultaneously: one in liberal arts at Columbia GS and one in Jewish studies at List.

"The Joint Program is like no other in the world, giving students a rich and immersive experience in two worlds simultaneously," said Amy Kalmanofsky, Dean of List College and Kekst Graduate School, as well as Blanche and Romie Shapiro Professor of Bible. "This partnership enables students to take advantage of all the options of secular studies at Columbia while also getting a deep education in Jewish studies, the primary texts, and histories of the tradition."

From Rabbinical Preparation to Committed Jewish Leaders of Industry

Founded in 1954, the Joint Program was originally created to educate well-rounded rabbis in post-World War II America.

"The country had a tremendous need for rabbis after the war, and at the time a lot of them were children of immigrants and first-generation college students," said Shuly Rubin Schwartz, the eighth Chancellor of JTS and former Dean of List College for 25 years. "There was a broad awareness and desire to make sure that American-trained rabbis had a broad liberal arts background. The Joint Program was the ideal way to give them both an intensive Hebrew and Jewish studies education and a high-level undergraduate education."

Over the years, the Joint Program slowly evolved from a pre-Jewish professional training program to a more secular one.

In the 1980s, interest in Jewish studies was booming; many colleges and universities

had added their own undergraduate majors and minors, which drew interest and applicants away from the Joint Program and brought admissions to an all-time low. When Schwartz became dean of List in 1993, she set about to reinvigorate interest.

"People had lots of Jewish studies options at the time, and the fact that ours was a better program was not a good enough reason for many of them to attend," said Schwartz. "I felt that Conservative Judaism—a stream that was birthed at JTS—was very good at creating fantastic Jewishly educated and committed professionals, and that was our strength. My mission for the program at the time was to create responsible Jewish citizens and leaders with diversity in their other academic interests and goals. With that shift in mindset, the school then doubled in size."

Today, that emphasis on diversity continues, with students in the Joint Program focusing on everything from law, medicine, and finance to politics, journalism, and education. Joint Program students take on an impressive number of credits—64 at Columbia and 82 at List. To tackle this task, they must often be intellectually curious about both their secular and Jewish studies as well as excellent and highly organized multitaskers.

"Continuing to work with JTS to support our Joint Program students and to work to take the Joint Program to even greater heights is one of the best parts of my role as Dean," said Columbia School of General Studies Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, who studied sociology at Columbia and modern Jewish studies at JTS during her time in the Joint Program.

Building on the Joint Program's Success

As the first of GS's collaborative offerings, the JTS Joint Program also served as an inspiration for further Joint and Dual Degree Programs. The school also offers four



PHOTO: BRUCE GILBERT

innovative international Joint and Dual Degree Programs open to all students, including those applying directly from high school. Within these dual degrees, students immerse themselves in two distinct academic, social, and cultural environments—at Columbia and campuses in France, Dublin, Tel Aviv, or

“Continuing to work with JTS to support our Joint Program students and to work to take the Joint Program to even greater heights is one of the best parts of my role as Dean.”

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90

Hong Kong—while earning two undergraduate degrees in four years.

“Joint and Dual Degree Program students are nontraditional by choice, making a deliberate decision to pursue an education that exposes them to diverse cultures, customs, and contexts,” said Curtis Rodgers, Vice Dean of the School of General Studies. “These exceptional programs attract motivated students with a willingness to learn from different perspectives and adapt to changing environments.”

“For me, I can trace everything in my life—as an academic scholar, as a professor, and personally—back to my four years in the Joint Program,” said Rosen-Metsch. “Intellectually it was where everything started, and socially I got the best of both worlds: living and learning closely together with other students in the program while also having access to everything Columbia had to offer. I met my best friends; my husband, Ben '89; and professors that continue to serve as mentors today, and I developed a habit of learning and research that has stayed with me throughout my life.”



Top: JTS Chancellor Shuly Rubin Schwartz, GS Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, List College and Kekst Graduate School Dean Amy Kalmanofsky. Above: Dean Rosen-Metsch's 1990 graduation from the Joint Program.

NEWS AND NOTES FROM GS'S UNIVERSITY PARTNERS AROUND THE WORLD

Updates from Abroad

Sciences Po, France: Welcoming a New Campus

Over a decade after the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po was inaugurated with representation from the Le Havre, Menton, and Reims campuses, a new campus has joined the program: Poitiers, home of Sciences Po's Latin American and Caribbean minor. Poitiers joined the roster of participating campuses in 2022 to provide a wider range of opportunities for students interested in pursuing the Dual BA. The number of enrollees has doubled year after year, leading to the biggest incoming Poitiers class yet in Fall 2024.

To be sure, Poitiers is still a fledgling campus in the Dual BA portfolio, with six incoming first-year students, but the growth demonstrated in both applications and accepted offers since adding Poitiers to the program stands as a testament to both its appeal and the GS Admissions team's efforts to get the word out. Additionally, the Dual BA is no stranger to the highly successful students to come out of Poitiers, as many have joined the program over the years via the 3A entry

process. This procedure allows Sciences Po students to apply to join the Dual BA in their third year rather than choosing a further one-year study abroad program elsewhere in the world, as required of all Sciences Po undergraduates.

Poitiers remains a unique location in the Sciences Po network, as it is the only campus to require students to speak some Spanish before enrolling, as well as have a baseline level of French-speaking abilities. Sciences Po reports that 30 percent of the Poitiers student body is international, which is reflected in the incoming Fall 2024 Dual BA Program first-years, who hold citizenship from France and the United States, as well as the United Kingdom, Spain, South Korea, Thailand, Germany, and the Philippines.

Additionally, Poitiers is one of three Sciences Po campuses to offer a seas and oceans certificate, which allows students to focus on the impact of marine and environmental issues on the social sciences. As increasing numbers of students in the Dual BA Program choose to major in sustainable development at Columbia, this certificate option will likely gain increased attention from Dual BA students.

City University of Hong Kong: Honoring a Class Leader

The GS Class of 2024 is proud to call Xuezhen Wang its valedictorian. A graduate of the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong and Columbia University, Wang studied computer science at both institutions.

During the program, Wang distinguished himself as an exemplary student. He was the recipient of the prestigious Hong Kong Jockey Club Scholarship and was recognized as a Jockey Club Scholar. He was an active participant at CityU in various roles: president of the Computer Science Department Student Chapter, mentor for the freshmen in the CS department, a teaching assistant, and a PALS (Peer-Assisted Learning Scheme Using Supplemental Instruction) leader.

Similarly, Wang's record of personal and academic excellence continued upon his arrival at Columbia. He worked as a teaching assistant and in the Operation Division of the Columbia China Forum. His achievements were recognized through the Columbia GS Dean's Scholarship, the Peter K. Bloch



Scholarship, and a GS Service Award, highlighting his leadership and dedication to the community. Wang graduated summa cum laude and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Upsilon Pi Epsilon, and the GS Honor Society. He is currently pursuing his PhD in computer graphics at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Wang is not the only student from the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong and Columbia University to be celebrated for his achievements. In fact, five of the top 10 graduating student GPAs in the Class of 2024 hailed from the CityU Joint Bachelor's Degree Program.

As the program now enters its second decade, representatives from GS and CityU have been in talks to offer a first-year admissions pathway, with the goal of offering this to the Fall 2025 entering class.

Tel Aviv University, Israel: Celebrating a First

The Class of 2024 marked the first full graduating class for the newest international dual degree program within GS: the Dual Degree Program between Tel Aviv University (TAU) and Columbia University. Launched in December 2019, the TAU-Columbia Dual Degree Program has an enrollment of over 130 students and is growing steadily each year.

The May and October 2024 graduating cohorts include 17 students from the inaugural incoming class, many of whom participated in the Class Day ceremony held at Baker Field in May. These students are celebrating four years of academic achievements since beginning the program at the height of the pandemic in September 2020. From becoming campus ambassadors to holding positions within a wide range of clubs and organizations, these students contributed to all aspects of campus life at both institutions over their four years, in addition to completing two rigorous liberal arts degrees at the same time.

The most popular majors for the first group of graduates were political science and



Opposite, from left:
Sciences Po's Menton
campus; City University
of Hong Kong. This
page, from top: Tel Aviv
University; Trinity College
Dublin.

information science, with the full cohort boasting an average GPA of 3.89, with nearly a third of graduates earning GPAs over 4.00. GS is proud to welcome the first graduating cohort into the alumni community and looks forward to where they go from here.

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland: Seeing Record Growth

Seven years after the inauguration of the Dual BA Program between Trinity College Dublin and Columbia University, the program is stronger than ever, with the Fall 2024 application cycle generating the most applications and largest incoming class ever. Just over 470 applications were submitted by the Jan. 2, 2024, deadline, which is almost 100 more applications than

were received for the Fall 2023 incoming class. Ninety exceptional students ultimately accepted the offer of admission.

Consistent with previous years, the two most popular major tracks continue to be neuroscience and behavior, and European studies. The program also continues to internationalize, with increasing representation from countries in Asia as well as across the EU.

This largest incoming class ever follows on the heels of a highly successful joint Admitted Students Day for all of GS's international dual degree programs, held last April at the Casa Italiana. This celebratory and informative event gave newly admitted Dual BA students their first opportunity to mingle with fellow new admits as well as GS and Trinity staff, several of whom flew in from Dublin for the occasion.



On May 13, GS celebrated the outstanding accomplishments of the 803 members of the Class of 2024. Featured speakers included Senior Class President Faith Grady '24, keynote speaker Troy Murphy '16, and Xuezhen Wang '24 who was the first GS valedictorian from the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between City University of Hong Kong and Columbia University.

PHOTOS BY DAVID DINI

CLASS DAY 2024



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5

1. Graduate and Campbell Award winner Ebonnie Goodfield.
2. GS Senior Class President Faith Grady delivers opening remarks.
3. Class Day keynote speaker Troy Murphy '16.
4. Valedictorian Xuezhen Wang addresses his fellow graduates.
5. Graduates pose during the Class Day procession.

6. GS Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90.

7. Graduates Leah Ten Eyck and Peter Brown.

8. A group of graduates pose for a photo.

9. Liam Etti '24 lines up for the Class Day procession.

10. Samantha Anderson '24 and her daughter, Sunday.

11. The GS Class of 2024.



POSTBAC PREMED CLASS DAY 2024

On May 10, the Columbia University Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program celebrated the extraordinary achievements of the 80 exceptional members of the Class of 2024, marking a momentous occasion filled with pride and promise for the future of medicine.

PHOTOS BY APRIL RENAE



1. The Postbac Premed Class Day crowd.
2. Student speaker Wesley Rivera.
3. Postbac Premed Dean James Colgrove '01MSPH, '04GSAS.
4. Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 congratulates a graduate.
5. Class Day speaker Dr. Judith H. Tanenbaum '83PBPM (center) with her daughter Kayla and son-in-law Elliot.
6. Graduates and guests celebrate during the Class Day reception.
7. Graduate Stephanie Schrage and guests.



GS Bachelor of Arts Recipients

NEW GRAD NOTES

PHOTOS BY

DAVID DINI, LUCAS HOEFFEL, AND APRIL RENAE



A decade ago, **Hass Agili** was a medical student in Libya when threats to his safety forced him to flee his home. He supported himself through research positions and inter-

preting in hospitals, all while navigating the complexities of a new life in New York City and restarting his academic journey at GS. Agili has become a powerful LGBTQ+ and refugee advocate and plans to integrate his degree in psychology with his medical background, focusing on mental health and patient care.



After a long and successful career in digital games, **Behrang Garakani** came to GS after a failed start-up pushed him to pivot. At Columbia, his intellectual curiosity and tenacity took him

far, and he returned to Columbia's campus this fall as a newly appointed assistant professor at the School of the Arts. Garakani graduated with a degree in film and media studies, and holds a leadership role in the technology team at the Whitney Museum of American Art.



U.S. Navy veteran, first-generation college student, and single working mom **Ebonnie Goodfield** made a huge impact on GS during her time at Columbia. An advocate for women veterans,

Goodfield served as the vice president of MilVets, cocreated and was a fellow of the Intrapreneurial Leadership Fellows Program between GS and Barnard, and coordinated the Dean's Women Veteran Roundtable events. She graduated with a degree in psychology and was awarded the Campbell Award in recognition of her exceptional contributions. She is pursuing a master's degree at the Columbia School of Social Work.



While at GS, U.S. Navy veteran **Davey Liu** was both an academic and community leader. As chair of inclusion for the University Life Events Council and president of GS Alliance, among other roles, he has

been a passionate advocate for LGBTQ+ and nontraditional students. As a scholar, Liu bridged the gap between the medical and social sciences. He received the 2024 Miami Center for AIDS Research Symposium's "impactful clinical project" award for research conducted with Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90. Liu graduated with a degree in medical humanities and is pursuing a master's degree in population health science at the University of Cambridge.



After spending over a decade as a Montessori educator, **lynul Rizwan** decided to change her career path and embrace her own potential as a student, first at Bergen Community College and then at GS. Rizwan graduated with a degree in sustainable development and cofounded an urban farm in New Jersey where she will continue to use her educational experiences to combat climate change and food insecurity.



Before joining the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po, **Ana Valeria Vázquez Navas** had spent her whole life in the same house in Puerto Rico. Despite having no prior French

language experience, her leap of faith into the Dual BA paid off. From working as a GS Social Media Ambassador to participating in the 130th Columbia Varsity Show, Vázquez Navas made the most of her time at GS. She graduated with a degree in sustainable development and is now a business analyst at McKinsey & Company.



Brooklyn native **Judah Wahba** grew up just a borough away from Columbia, but as a member of the inaugural class of the Dual Degree Program between Tel Aviv University and Columbia, he had to

travel halfway across the world before arriving at Columbia's Morningside campus. Wahba graduated with a degree in information science and now works as an investment banking and growth equity analyst at merchant bank Berenson & Co.

Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Graduates



After a successful corporate career, **Wesley Rivera** was inspired to pursue medicine by his experience facing cancer and his sister's journey with multiple sclerosis. A graduate of Harvard College, Rivera served as president of the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Student Council at GS and conducted clinical research

in psychedelic medicine at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry. Rivera, who was the student speaker for the 2024 Postbac Class Day ceremony, is preparing to apply to medical school.

Hamid Usman came to the Postbac Premed Program with a wealth of health care experience, from serving as a volunteer EMT and working with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene during an AmeriCorps service



year, to working on the front lines of COVID-19 vaccination efforts in New York City. During his time at Columbia, Usman deepened his knowledge through coursework on the cutting edge of medical innovation and is preparing to apply to medical school.



LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

By Nancy J. Brandwein

“Ever since I was a child, something inside me has kept me moving forward,” said Joan Bolanos Martinez ’21. Yet in 2007, at age 22, that momentum seemed to stop abruptly. Bolanos Martinez, a passionate soccer player from Venezuela, was in a serious car accident. After surgery, he contracted a life-threatening infection, leading to the amputation of his left leg. “If only I can make it to tomorrow, if only I can make it to the next step,” he recalled wishing at the time. “I thought, ‘If I ever get a chance, I’ve got to take it.’”

And Bolanos Martinez didn’t just take the chance—he ran with it. He moved to the U.S. and enrolled in Suffolk Community College, where he graduated with the highest distinction. While there he discovered amputee soccer and reignited his soccer dreams. In 2016, he joined the U.S. Men’s National Amputee Soccer Team and later served on its board of directors. By the time he enrolled in GS in 2018, he was sprinting ahead in sports, business, and academics. “GS adopts you like a family,” he said. “I felt they were invested in my success.”

That investment paid off. As the Students with Disabilities representative, Bolanos Martinez helped students access video and audio class recordings during the pandemic, winning the Columbia GS Change Agent Award in 2021. Since graduating, he has continued his advocacy, always asking himself: “What can I do to help people with ‘diversabilities’ have more opportunities?”

To that end, in 2023 he founded the United States Amputee Football Federation (USAFF) to create opportunities for women, men, and children with limb differences and to introduce the sport internationally. Bolanos Martinez also participated in the FIFA 2023 Women’s World Cup in Australia—all while working full-time as a senior financial

analyst at Amazon. Last fall, he began studying for his MBA at the NYU Stern School of Business as a Consortium Fellow. He also recently became a member of the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA) Board.

“I am here because so many people support me,” he said, “but I also feel like I don’t see people like me at the top of the mountain. That’s why representation matters.” Whatever path he takes, Bolanos Martinez aims to “show that someone with a ‘diversability’ may not fit one role but can excel in many others.”

**Joan Bolanos
Martinez ’21 is
determined to
create opportunities
for athletes with
“diversabilities”**



**Yuko Merchant '98
finds a fulfilling
balance as chief of
internal medicine**

By Eric Buttermann

HEALTHY PERSPECTIVES

"I wanted to take care of patients, not just interview them about what they had been going through," said Yuko Merchant '98. While working in Japanese media, she covered the story of hemophilia patients who contracted HIV from contaminated blood products. She was deeply moved by the patients' resilience and the dedication of the clinicians. It was then that she began to question her role—not just as a storyteller, but as someone who could make a direct impact.

That realization grew stronger over time. Eventually, she decided to change paths, enrolling in the Postbac Premed Program at GS. "It was a leap into the unknown," she recalled, but she found herself surrounded by classmates from all walks of life—a jazz musician, a chef, a teacher—each drawn to medicine for their own reasons. "That shared sense of purpose was incredibly powerful," she reflected. "Today, they're all doctors, each bringing their unique experiences to patient care."

Merchant found the GS program rewarding from the start. "I had a feeling with the other students that we were all in it together," she said. "I had an opportunity to work at Columbia Presbyterian as a research assistant and was part of a lab, all as a premed student. You just felt you could learn and grow in the program."

Her journey in medicine took her to the United Kingdom, Africa, and Japan before bringing her to Boston, where she studied the effects

of NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) on cancer cells. After completing her residency in Connecticut, she returned to New York and now serves as chief of internal medicine at Mount Sinai Doctors Brooklyn Heights. She also serves on the board for population health management as a peer-elected member.

In her current role, she focuses on both patient care and optimizing clinical operations. "A huge part of my job is figuring out how we serve patients and help them get back to their lives. It means analyzing multiple data points and gathering input from many different avenues. I also see patients in both inpatient and outpatient settings, which makes for a challenging but fulfilling balance," she explained.

"It was the same with figuring out how to make my career work with family," she added. "I worked part-time when my kids were smaller, but now my part in medicine has grown and I enjoy its multiple levels."

She also enjoyed attending new student orientation at GS last year and having the opportunity to speak before incoming Postbac students.

"It was an amazing experience that brought up terrific memories of my time there," she said. "I was inspired by the students' energy and passion. To be able to share my experience and what is possible meant so much. GS made a difference for me, and it can for them. I feel lucky to have been a part of it."

**Ashley Tan '23
draws on her
experiences in the
Dual BA Program
to enhance her
work in public
affairs and crisis
communications**

PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Born and raised in Singapore, Ashley Tan '23 knew from an early age that she wanted to study political science. She recalls how that country's landmark 2011 election—in which opposition to the longtime ruling party gained unprecedented ground—was a turning point for her. "Singapore has essentially had a one-party system since the 1960s," she said, "and in 2011, I was totally enthralled by the news. That's when I realized I wanted to focus on political science."

When a recruiter for the Dual BA Program Between GS and Sciences Po visited her high school in Singapore, Tan said "it felt like serendipity, like it was meant to be." Intrigued by the opportunity to study politics through different cultural lenses, she applied to the program and went on to spend two years at the Sciences Po campus in Le Havre, France, followed by two years at GS.

By the time she arrived in New York, she was brimming with fresh ideas for how to apply international perspectives to timely subjects. At GS, she founded Policy 360, a foreign policy roundtable under the *Columbia Political Review*. "We would gather as a group of three to five students and pick a topic," she said. "Each student would write about the issue from the point of view of a different country's foreign policy. Through our pieces, we sought to expand American-centric narratives and push past geographical boundaries to evaluate global policies." Tan graduated in 2023 summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa.

Today, Tan is a full-time associate at BerlinRosen, a public relations and strategic communications firm. "I deal with political and national security issues, and I help a variety of clients with their media strategies," she explained. "The work marries my interests in political science and business, which makes it so interesting for me."

Tan also remains actively involved with GS and recently joined the General Studies Alumni Association Board. "I want to give back because the Dual BA Program has given me so much," she said. "If I had stayed in Singapore, my life would have been very different. I always say that I will be the biggest ambassador for the Dual BA Program because it changed my life. That's why I want to have a meaningful impact in any way I can."





Arthur Bingham '84

2023-2024 GSAA Board Cochair

Why was your GS education so meaningful to you?

GS is a school that takes people who have diverted from the customary path, either through life circumstances or their personalities, or who have chosen slightly different timing. People achieve because they want to achieve, not because they are in a competition. They want to improve their lives and have a real desire to do something. It is a unique undergraduate experience, and it is a highly joyful place. I remember being blown away when I first visited GS. It was absolutely the right place for me because it offered me an education I could pursue on my terms. I was an economics major, and there were Nobel Prize-winning professors there, so not a bad faculty.

Current position

**Managing director
of New York Private
Finance LLC**

Free-time interests

**Serving on the board
of Little Sisters of the
Assumption Family
Health Service, skiing,
the performing arts**

What did you do after graduating?

I still wanted to see the world, so I did a variety of things, including moving to Vermont and practicing martial arts. Eventually, I decided the best fit for me was finance. I got offered a job on the trading floor at Nomura, and that was the start of a great adventure. I later formed a firm called Boxwood, where we advised high net-worth individuals, and I am now the managing director of New York Private Finance, which is a subsidiary of Emigrant Bank.

How did you get involved with the General Studies Alumni Association (GSAA)?

I was approached to be on the annual fund development committee in 2002 or so. Under Dean Awn, there was a concerted effort to expand the number of things the GSAA board did, beyond fundraising and program development. It was a great opportunity for me to become more involved with Columbia and advocate for the School, and to be involved with an impressive team of engaged, thoughtful people. And through GSAA, I was introduced to the Columbia Alumni Association and other bodies within which alumni participate. There are brilliant people here, from faculty and administrators to students and alumni, and they continue to teach you.

Why are you so passionate about supporting GS?

Why do I do this? Because they let me. Because it is so much bigger than yourself.



The annual **Celebration of the Performing Arts at Columbia** showcased some of the world-class talent found among the Columbia community, including a showstopping solo by renowned dancer Alicia Graf Mack '03, outgoing dean and director of dance at the Juilliard School, incoming artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and GS Board of Visitors member. Following the performances, actress Rachel Ticotin '19, also a member of the GS Board of Visitors, hosted a conversation with Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 exploring what makes the arts so essential during challenging times.

The annual **Reunion Lunch** featured a panel discussion on student research experiences hosted by GS Dean of Academic Affairs Caroline Marvin '16GSAS. Participating Class of 2024 graduates included Jennifer Odum, Sasha Newman-Oktan, and Sinziana Stanciu.

Reunion programming included a celebration of the grand opening of the **Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI)** inside Kent Hall and featured a panel discussion on how CVTI empowers organizations to better serve and support veteran and military-connected communities.



REUNION RECAP

Alumni connect and celebrate during Columbia Reunion Weekend

PHOTOS BY DAVID DINI

Over 200 alumni, students, and friends of GS gathered on the Morningside campus last May for Columbia's annual Reunion Weekend. The festivities began with the **GS Tea Party**, where guests from all class years mingled while enjoying tea sandwiches and jazz music, kicking off the weekend in style.



Top: Alicia Graf Mack '03. Above: Catriona Lemerique '24, Maleny Grace Roman '25, Ebonnie Goodfield '24, Crystal Stephanie Martinez '25. Left: Daniel Young, Philip Junquera '20, Kimberly Brooks '24, Piragathesh Subramanian '20.



Reunion Weekend concluded with the annual **GS Reunion Dinner**, held in Lerner Hall's Roone Arledge Auditorium. An elegant cocktail reception preceded dinner, which featured remarks from Dean Rosen-Metsch '90 and the presentation of the Owl Award to Columbia University Trustee Kikka Hanazawa '00. The evening, and the weekend, wrapped up with a gathering of alumni from all schools for the **Starlight Celebration** on Low Plaza.



Top left: Alexander Hiller '21, Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, Gianna Paniagua '19PBPM, '24SPS. Top right: DeAngelo Hunter '24, Amy Porter '80, '04LAW. Above left: Sumar Frejat '22, Nick Marziani, Antongiulio Foti. Above right: Mike Introini '19, Dilia (Barboza) Introini '17. Right: Yasmeen Ibrahim '16, Vice Dean Curtis Rodgers, Kikka Hanazawa '00.



YEAR-ROUND EVENTS CONNECT THE ALUMNI COMMUNITY

West Coast Gatherings

The Development and Alumni Relations team headed west this summer to connect with alumni, students, and family members in the Golden State. Hosting events from Berkeley and San Francisco to Palo Alto and Beverly Hills, students who were home for the summer enjoyed getting to know the parents of GS students, as well as GS alumni who live in the area. “Leaving New York is an important part of the work we do,” explained former Senior Director of Alumni Relations Aviva Zablocki. “The GS community should know that the connection to Lewisohn Hall is not limited to the gates of Morningside Heights.”



Right: GS alumni and students connected in Beverly Hills. Far right: GS community members convened in Palo Alto.



GSAA Hosts Welcome Back Reception for Students

As the fall semester began, new and returning students enjoyed a welcome reception at Le Monde hosted by Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90 and the board of the GS Alumni Association. The event kicked off the school year and connected students with alumni leaders, who welcomed them into the GS community.

Far left: Serengeti Timungwa '22, Salvatore Cocuzza '22. Left: Joey Baer '21, Sarah Walker '95.



GENERAL STUDIES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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

ALUMNI BENEFITS

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

Homecoming Events

In late October, GS celebrated Homecoming with a full day of programs. From an engaging public health lecture by Dean of the Postbac Premed Program James Colgrove '01PH, '04GSAS to the annual Homecoming lunch uptown, over 100 GS alumni, students, and guests showed enthusiastic school spirit and enjoyed the festivities. After lunch, Columbia went on to face Dartmouth at the annual Homecoming football game.

Above: Attendees enjoy Homecoming activities.
Below: Sherri Wolf '90CC, Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90, Brittne Rivera '14, Doug Wolf '88CC.



ALUMNI AWARDS CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

RECOGNIZE A GS ALUMNA OR ALUMNUS

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

SAVE THE DATE

A Celebration of the Performing Arts
FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2025

Don't miss this special evening of live music and dance performances at Columbia University's Miller Theatre.

To learn more about attending or participating in this Reunion Weekend celebration, contact gsalumni@columbia.edu.

GSAA Officers

GSAA Board
Cochairs:

Joshua Kraus '93
Brittne Rivera '14

Executive
Committee:

Serena DeStefani '15
Ohad Klopman '22
Sylvia Oberwager '18

Karlee Rodrigues '18, '20SOA
Michael Rovner '18
Zhaxi Shan '22
Serengeti Timungwa '22
Cole Wagner '22
Sarah Walker '95

GET IN TOUCH!

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

gsalumni@columbia.edu | 212-853-7850
Visit us online at gs.columbia.edu/alumni

  Follow us @ColumbiaGSAlumni

Class Notes

1960s

Columbia Alumni Professor Emeritus of Tax Law **Michael J. Graetz '61** (below) explores the far-reaching impact of the anti-tax movement in his latest book, *The Power to Destroy: How the Antitax Movement Hijacked America*.



1980s

Ellen Bryson '89 hosted the Paris Writers Workshop last summer, the longest-running literary program of its kind. The workshop was held at Columbia University's Reid Hall campus in Paris.

1990s

Producer **Eric Drath '94** premiered his film, *The Dream Whisperer*, on PBS. The documentary tells the story of basketball great Dick Barnett's struggle to get his college basketball team, the Tennessee A&I Tigers (now known as the Tennessee State Tigers), properly recognized by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

Craig Wilson '95 of CBS News won his third Writers Guild of America award for TV news writing and was named executive producer of CBS *Weekend News*.

GS at Sundance

Three alumni premiered their films at the Sundance Film Festival in February 2025

Elegance Bratton '14 directed *Move Ya Body: The Birth of House*, a documentary that follows a group of South Side Chicago friends as they turn a new sound into a global movement. The story revolves around the Disco Demolition Night of 1979, referred to as one of the darkest times in American music history.

Isaak Popkin '24 and **Arielle Friedman '24** worked as producers on *Unholy*, a short film by Danielle Friedman '24BC. In *Unholy*, Noa, a college student with a gastrointestinal disorder, attends her family's Passover Seder for the first time since being put on a feeding tube.



Elegance Bratton '14



Arielle Friedman '24

2000s

Last April, the Times Center hosted the opening night of the ReelAbilities Film Festival, led by **Isaac Zablocki '03**. ReelAbilities is the largest festival in the U.S. dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities.

Dawson Her Many Horses '04 was featured in an ABC interview highlighting the need for Native American representation in finance.

Aries Dela Cruz '09 was recently named to the City & State 2024 "NYC 40 Under 40" list, which celebrates rising stars in city politics and government. Dela Cruz is the executive director of public information at the New York City Emergency Management department.

2010s

New York magazine's The Cut featured a profile of **Sara Ziff '11** (below) when the Fashion Workers Act that Ziff and her nonprofit, the Model Alliance, had been lobbying for since 2022 passed the New York State Legislature.



Elle Littlefield '12 was named to the Columbia Alumni Association board of directors.

The San Quentin Film Festival—the first film festival held inside a prison—took place in October at the San Francisco Bay Area maximum correctional facility. Writer and director **Elegance Bratton '14** served on the inaugural jury.

Justice Faith Betty '18, cofounder of Révolutionnaire, served as the moderator at the opening session of the 2024 United Nations Youth Forum.

c. Craig Patterson '18 was named winner of an Academy Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting.

Karlee Rodrigues '18, '20SOA and her team at film distributor Kino Lorber received an Academy Award nomination for Best Documentary for their film, *Four Daughters*.



Elias Forneris '20 Sets Sights on Career in French Government

A graduate of the Dual BA Program with Sciences Po, Elias Forneris was one of the youngest candidates in the French Parliamentary elections of 2024. He is pursuing his PhD at the University of Cambridge.

Why did you choose the Dual BA Program with Sciences Po?

As someone of Francophone background who grew up on the East Coast, it seemed like the perfect combination.

What motivated you to run for the French National Assembly?

For a long time, I agonized about how to make an impact on politics. I wanted to find the "perfect" moment in the perfect place. Eventually, events made the decision for me. When President Macron called a snap parliamentary election in June 2024, I didn't know if I would have another chance to run as a candidate. The French National Assembly has a constituency for expatriates living in North America. And since this is my home, it made sense.

What were your goals in doing so?

My goal was first and foremost to enter the arena and put up a good fight. There's a lot to be said about simply trying to raise the level of political debate and contributing good ideas. My next goal was to win—but you rarely win on the first try, and that was difficult to accept. Out of nine candidates in this constituency, I ended in sixth place. The party I represented, Nouvelle Énergie, is relatively new, so I laid the foundations for future elections. I will keep working at it so I can represent French people in North America and make sure they're not forgotten in metropolitan France.

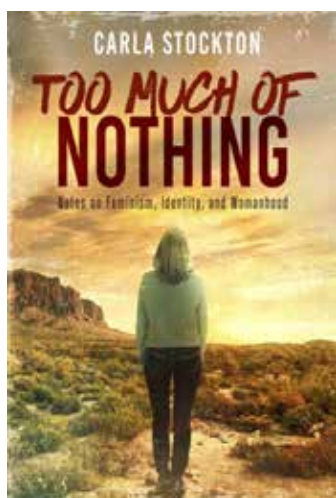
What will you do next?

My aim is to finish my PhD in history and then publish my thesis. In the meantime, I will continue to work on my passions—politics and foreign affairs—with the objective of serving France in the near future.

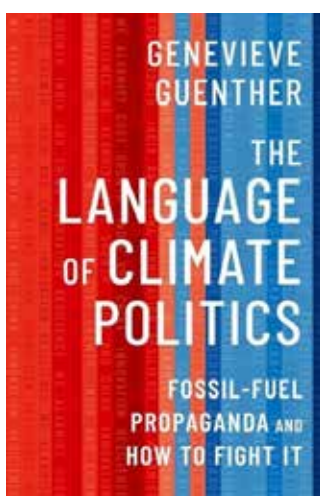
Alumni Bookshelf

Meet five GS graduates making a splash in the literary world

Carla Stockton '73, '16SOA is the author of a memoir titled *Too Much of Nothing: Notes on Feminism, Identity, and Womanhood*. As publisher Mountain Ash Press wrote, "Stockton's story is a meditation on the meaning of survival, the importance of family, and the power of self-discovery."

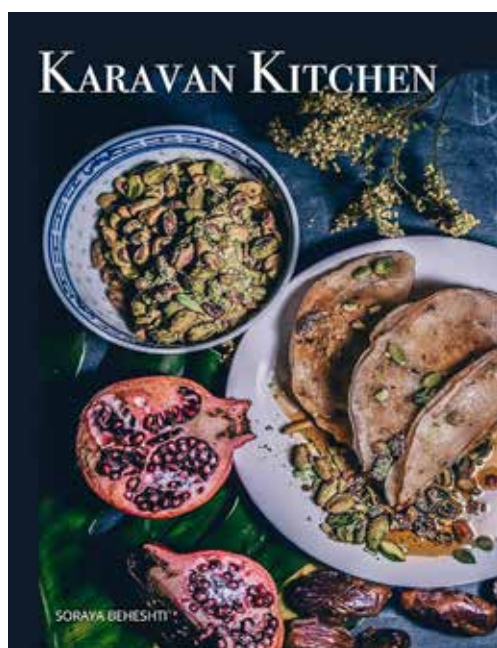


Genevieve Guenther '94 recently published an acclaimed book with Oxford University Press titled *The Language of Climate Politics: Fossil-Fuel Propaganda and How to Fight It*. A celebrated Renaissance scholar, Guenther changed her scholarly focus to the climate crisis in 2017. *The Language of Climate Politics* was called a "revelatory study" by *Publishers Weekly*.

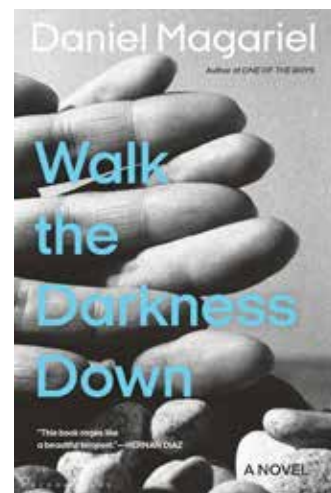
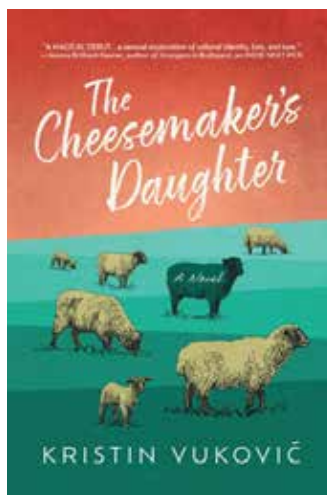


Kristin Vuković '06, '09SOA recently published her debut novel, *The Cheesemaker's Daughter*. Vuković draws from her Croatian heritage in the book, which follows the homecoming of a Yugoslav refugee and New Yorker who finds herself confronting personal, cultural, and historical legacies.

Daniel Magariel '08 published his sophomore novel, *Walk the Darkness Down*, in August 2023. As publisher Bloomsbury described it, the novel provides "an unflinching portrayal of love in the margins of twenty-first century America." Magariel has taught advanced writing courses at Columbia.



Soraya Beheshti '19 is the author of *Karavan Kitchen*, a cookbook featuring Middle Eastern and African vegan recipes. The cookbook was produced in support of the nonprofit Karavan organization, which Beheshti founded to aid refugee communities.



In Memoriam

Laurence Shute '57 passed away on Feb. 12, 2024.

George Zanis '57 passed away on May 31, 2023, at the age of 94. He earned an engineering degree from GS, which served him well as a contractor for the U.S. Navy, designing fire systems for submarines. He went on to work for the Travelers insurance company for many years.

William E. Burrows '60, '62GSAS died on June 29, 2024, at the age of 87. He was an accomplished journalist and author, covering air travel, space technology, and other subjects for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. He wrote 14 books and established a graduate program in science writing at New York University, where he taught journalism. His 1998 book, *This New Ocean: The Story of the First Space Age*, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in history. He was a founder of the Alliance to Rescue Civilization (it has since been folded into the Lifeboat Foundation), which promoted the establishment of a base on the moon stocked with DNA samples of all life on Earth, as well as a compendium of human knowledge. In 2001, the International Astronomical Union named an asteroid in his honor.

Sheri G. Leonard '85 passed away on March 14, 2024, at the age of 80. After raising her family, Leonard, who was born in Holland, obtained her bachelor's degree from GS in her early 40s. At the age of 50, she embarked on a successful career working for Ameriprise Financial as a certified financial planner.

Adil Karpykov '15, '23SIPA passed away on Jan. 21, 2024, in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Karpykov was a regulatory affairs manager at BAT (British American Tobacco).

Soliman Elcheikh '17 passed away in December 2023. Elcheikh was a graduate of the Dual BA Program Between Columbia University and Sciences Po, where he studied at the campus in Menton, France. He went on to work as a commodities trader, most recently at Fortuna DMCC, a commodities trading house based in Dubai.

Miriam Warner, the wife of former GS dean Aaron Warner, passed away on May 24, 2022. Born in 1927, Miriam attended Oberlin College and worked for many years as an editor for Cambridge University Press. Aaron, whom she married in 1971, was associated with Columbia University for more than half a century, as a professor of economics, dean of GS from 1969 to 1977, and director of the University Seminars program. He passed away in 2000 at the age of 92.

SERVICE
MINDED

PHOTO BY SIRIN SAMMAN

Paul F. Nace Jr. Scholar
Isaiah Nagelkerk '25 and
Sally Jackson '70 at the 2024
Columbia University Military Ball.

**Sally Jackson '70
honors her late husband
by funding the Paul F.
Nace Jr. Scholarship for
military students at GS**

"When my husband and I were drafting our wills a decade ago, we wanted to include Columbia," said Sally Jackson '70. "I thought the bequest would be activated after both of us had passed, but then it would just have been a sentence or two in my will. However, Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch and the development team at GS told me that it could be activated now." As a result, Jackson said, she was able to establish a scholarship fund in the name of her late husband, Paul F. Nace Jr. '66BUS.

"This allowed me to experience the joy of honoring Paul's memory," Jackson said. "I even got to meet the first Paul Nace Scholar," an active-duty Marine named Isaiah Nagelkerk '25. The Paul F. Nace Jr. Scholarships are earmarked for GS military students, with a slight preference for the Navy and Marine Corps.

Jackson learned that Nace's dear friend and Navy comrade, former Secretary of State John F. Kerry, was slated to give the keynote address at the 75th anniversary gala of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Low Library on Feb. 1, 2024. At the event, Kerry announced the scholarship program and spoke glowingly of Nace's distinguished military service and their 50-year friendship.

"Paul was a brilliant guy, but he never sought the spotlight," Jackson said. "I was so proud that John recognized him. It might just have been the greatest thing of my life."

Nace's service as a naval officer defined him, Jackson said, and he had an overarching sense of honor, duty, and integrity. After earning his MBA and serving in Vietnam, he spent a decade running Democratic political

campaigns both domestically and abroad. His best stories came from his work with Israeli president Shimon Peres, and his deepest loyalty was always tied to his work for Kerry's campaigns.

Nace then moved into real estate development and built medical buildings in New England. More recently, his passion turned to alternative energy, and he was a partner in an entrepreneurial biofuels company at the time of his death in 2017.


Jackson's time at Columbia overlapped with Nace's year in Vietnam, though they didn't meet until 1984. "During those tumultuous times, I was always torn between the campus anti-war protesters and the soldiers who were enduring unimaginable hardship," Jackson recalled.

After several years working in the classical music business, Jackson started a public relations firm in Boston that focused on entrepreneurial companies. Her firm, Jackson & Company, launched Staples, among other companies. In 1984, founder and brewer Jim Koch hired her firm to launch the Boston Beer Company's first (then unnamed) product, Samuel Adams Boston Lager. That consulting relationship continues to this day.

Jackson and Nace married when they were in their late 40s, each for the first time. As a joke, she issued a press release headlined, "Boston Spinster Finds Good Apple at Bottom of Barrel."

"This scholarship arrangement has been beneficial both to Columbia and to me," she said. To solidify the bequest, she assigned her IRA to Columbia, which strengthened her bond with her alma mater. Plus, it allowed friends and family to promote and support the fund.

"Columbia created an opportunity for me to solidify my devotion to the University in a way that does good for others," Jackson added. "I am so grateful."



“I feel so blessed to have
had a Columbia education
and to now be able to
give back.”



Laurie Marsden '98 '99SW
1754 SOCIETY MEMBER, GS 1754 SOCIETY CHAIR

Open More Doors, Transform More Lives Through Matching Gifts

Grateful for the financial support she received and the education that launched her career as a successful psychotherapist, Laurie is giving back to Columbia School of General Studies (GS) with a beneficiary designation in her retirement plan.

Through the **Student Support Initiative*** and current matching opportunities at GS, you too can open doors and transform lives for future GS students. To learn more, visit www.gs.columbia.edu/content/alumni.

*Documented bequests at a certain level are matched immediately by GS with endowed scholarship funding. Please contact **Jill Galas Hickey** at jg426@columbia.edu or **212-853-2444** for more details.

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