

# GW


THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY  
MAGAZINE  
FALL 2023

## LEADING TOGETHER

---

As she sets a course for the future, **President Ellen M. Granberg** wants the GW community to know that she views herself as an advocate and a partner.





Barley shows off his  
“ruff-and-blue” school  
spirit on campus.

# GW MAGAZINE FALL 2023

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

## CONTENTS

### FEATURES

#### 12 / **Leading Together**

As GW's new president, Ellen M. Granberg is drawing on a wealth of experience and energy to chart an ambitious course for the university's future. She's not doing it alone.

/ By John DiConsiglio/

#### 18 / **When the Giving Gets Tough**

Whether your loved ones have a sweet tooth, Lego obsession or a passion for design, we have you covered in our annual alumni gift guide.

/ By Caite Hamilton/

#### 26 / **From Synapse to Silicon**

GW faculty are on the forefront of a revolution in computer hardware innovation—designing and fabricating computer chips inspired by the human brain.

/ By Sarah C.P. Williams/

#### 32 / **Dreaming Bigger**

Lisa Sugar, B.A. '98, is the founder of the mega-popular pop culture, lifestyle and beauty website POPSUGAR. It's difficult to achieve that level of success simply by following your whims—but that's exactly what Sugar has done her whole career.

/ By Caite Hamilton/

### DEPARTMENTS

4 / **GW News**

10 / **Bookshelves**

44 / **Impact of  
Philanthropy**

50 / **Class Notes**

ON THE COVER: Ellen M. Granberg became the university's 19th president in July. Photo by Abby Greenawalt.

GW



APRIL 3-4, 2024

**GIVING DAY**



**SAVE THE DATE**

**GIVINGDAY.GWU.EDU**

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

WASHINGTON, DC

# GW MAGAZINE

**Fall 2023**

**Volume 30, Issue 2**

---

**EDITOR // Rachel Muir**

**ASSISTANT EDITOR // Lisa Conley-Kendzior**

**UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHER // William Atkins**

**DESIGN // GW Communications and Marketing**

**ART DIRECTOR // Dominic N. Abbate, B.A. '09, M.B.A. '15**

**ART DIRECTOR // John McGlasson, B.A. '00, M.F.A. '03**

**CONTRIBUTOR // John DiConsiglio, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences**

**CONTRIBUTOR // Brook Endale, GW Today**

**CONTRIBUTOR // Greg Varner, GW Today**

---

**Ellen M. Granberg**

**PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY**

**Donna Arbide**

**VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT  
AND ALUMNI RELATIONS**

**Ellen Moran**

**VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING**

**Michelle Stone, M.B.A. '10**

**ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

**Patty Carocci**

**ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF  
ALUMNI RELATIONS AND ANNUAL GIVING**

**Rachel Muir**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
FOR EDITORIAL SERVICES**

"GW Magazine" (ISSN 2162-6464) is published by GW's Office of Communications and Marketing, 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, 300, Washington, D.C. 20006. Phone: 202-994-9029 email: magazine@gwu.edu

© 2023 The George Washington University. The George Washington University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.

Opinions expressed in these pages are those of the individuals and do not necessarily reflect official positions of the university.

POSTMASTER Please send change-of-address notices to GW Magazine, GW Alumni Records Office, 1922 F Street, NW, Suite 202, Washington, D.C. 20052. Notices can also be sent via alumni.gwu.edu/update, email to alumrecs@gwu.edu or 202-994-9350. Postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

# Prelude

NEWS AND INSIGHTS FROM CAMPUS AND BEYOND



President Ellen M. Granberg on Nov. 3 delivered her inaugural address at an investiture ceremony at the Charles E. Smith Center.



## INVESTITURE

# ‘GW, We Are Here Because We Know the World Needs Us’

**Ellen M. Granberg’s inaugural address outlined her vision for GW to create change for the betterment of itself and society.** By Nick Erickson

**As she formally assumed leadership of the George Washington University, Ellen M. Granberg acknowledged the incredible foundation she stands upon as the 19th president of a proud institution with a 200-plus-year history of exceptional education and groundbreaking research.**

Granberg noted that GW’s legacy, created by prestigious and accomplished faculty, staff, students and alumni, is something that should always be celebrated. It’s now her task, she said, to work with the GW community to ensure that legacy carries into the future.

And that future, she said, is now.

Granberg gave that pledge while delivering her inaugural address during the official investiture ceremony Nov. 3 at the Charles E. Smith Center in front of current and former university leaders, alumni, trustees, and friends and family, including her wife, Sonya Rankin.

While each member of the GW community is unique, Granberg sees a connection through one common goal: changing the world.

It’s because of this shared aspiration that she feels confident that the university is ready to answer some of society’s greatest callings as GW and the world have reached a set of critical and defining moments.

“We are here at the George Washington University because we know the world needs change and can change,” said Granberg, who for the first time donned the GW chain of office worn by the president of the university as a symbol of authority. “GW, we are here because we know the world needs us. It’s this passion for change, this innate desire to see through the darkness and stay focused on the opportunity that defines us.”

Granberg has already seen these principles put into action and believes a quick look around GW’s campuses right now shows how students, faculty and staff are actively working to tackle present challenges while preparing for those in the future.

In response to world events that have stoked passions and highlighted

divisions, she has seen the community come together to combat hate

and deepen a collective understanding by creating spaces for healing, discussion and productive engagement. GW faculty have hosted panels featuring schools and experts in leading the community in modeling civil discourse and disagreement, and schools and colleges are banding together to create new curricula in contextualizing present conflicts and current affairs.

Granberg is proud that GW is co-leading the National Science Foundation Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society, which is addressing the challenges presented by AI and rapidly evolving technology. She also noted the launch of the Global Food Institute with renowned chef, restaurateur and humanitarian José Andrés to address issues of climate crisis, public health, hunger and poverty.

“As a university, we are resilient, and GW is here today because we know how to use these moments to recommit to our strengths, animated by the idea that the world needs GW to continue striving to solutions to all our grand challenges,” Granberg said.

The GW president is also eager to continue breaking down disciplinary silos and encouraging cross-collaboration across the university’s 10 schools and colleges, leading to more opportunities for the community to come together to “create new knowledge and unlock bold solutions.”

Her commitment to research and innovation has already been well received.

“President Granberg has a true and deep understanding of the many areas of scholarship



**Former GW presidents, faculty, staff, students and family filled the Charles E. Smith Center on Nov. 3 for the investiture ceremony for Ellen M. Granberg, the 19th president of the George Washington University.**

and teaching that are vital to a preeminent research university,” said Ilana Feldman, professor of anthropology, history and international affairs as well as the chair of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, at the investiture ceremony. “Notably, she brings experience across the humanities, social sciences and STEM fields.”

Granberg’s tenure coincides with the GW’s newly minted membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU), cementing the university’s status as a top-tier institutional leader in research, education and innovation.

Board of Trustees Chair Grace Speights, J.D. ’82, said strong leadership is pivotal right now as the university ushers in a new era at the beginning of its third century.

“With our aspirations greater than ever, we needed a leader who understood those aspirations and would champion our commitment to academic excellence, enhance the impact of scholarship and help us build on our preeminence,” Speights said. “We needed a leader who could unite the GW community and inspire us to raise together. President Granberg ... is definitely that leader.”

Other speakers included Provost Christopher Alan Bracey, who delivered welcome remarks; GW Staff Council President Bridget Schwartz; GW Alumni Association President

Maxwell Gocala-Nguyen, M.A. ’16; Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Islamic Studies Mohammad H. Faghfoory; alumna Gideon Zelermyer, B.A. ’97; and Multicultural Student Services Center Director Dustin J. Pickett.

Additionally, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Arati Prabhakar, a friend of Granberg, provided remarks and reflected on when she first learned of Granberg’s fervor for teaching and helping students.

“I asked her what drew her to [academic administration], and this is what she told me: ‘I was hooked the first time I was able to make it possible for someone to do the work that they were passionate about,’” Prabhakar said. “That’s what drives Ellen.”

Esteemed poet Richard Blanco, who read at President Barack Obama’s second inauguration in 2013, shared his original work “Teach Us, Then.”

Former GW presidents Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, Steven Knapp, Thomas J. LeBlanc and Mark S. Wrighton were also in attendance.

Though Granberg is inspired daily by the diverse group of talented students from across disciplines, she also noted education’s rising price tag and that the next generation of Revolutionaries cannot be created without reasonable access and opportunity. While highlighting partnerships with

organizations, alumni, and local and federal governments to give critical financial aid to students from across the country, she has an ambition to do more.

As president, she said, she is committed to finding new and bold ways to make a GW degree a reality for everyone who has the talent, desire and determination that defines the university.

GW Student Association President Arielle Geismar, a senior international affairs major, noted that Granberg’s willingness to do the hard work creating change matches the spirit of the GW student body, and she expressed her confidence in GW’s leadership and future.

“President Granberg will not shy away from difficult conversations, and neither will the community of GW, and this way she will always be a revolutionary,” Geismar said. “She’s available, accessible, interested, amenable and strong.”

To conclude her speech, as she answered the Board of Trustees’ charge to be GW’s next president, Granberg repeated that this moment is not about her. It’s about the community coming together to chart a path forward in changing the world through research, service and impact.

“We are a community of Revolutionaries committed to excellence,” Granberg said. “And as a community, we will raise higher, together.”





RETURN TO CAMPUS

# GW Community Comes Together to Celebrate Alumni & Families Weekend

**The university invited its people both past and present to campus for a weekend of fun, reconnection and inspiration.**

By Nick Erickson

**The nostalgia had already started to set in even before GW double alumna Maley Hunt, B.A. '13, M.P.H. '16, arrived back on the Foggy Bottom campus—with an all-important first stop at GW Deli.**

Coming into Washington, D.C., from Wallingford, Connecticut, where she is chief operating officer and residential services administrator at LiveWell, Hunt could feel her buff-and-blue pride build as the Washington Monument came into view.

“When you start to see the monuments, you just get this sense that you’re in such a special place,” said Hunt, who is a member of the GW Alumni Association Executive Committee. “There’s no feeling like it.”

Hunt and hundreds of other GW alumni returned to campus as the university held its annual Alumni & Families Weekend (AFW), Sept. 29 to Oct. 1. GW alumni, friends and families participated in a slew of activities, showing off the best the university has to offer—including a sold-out kickoff party at Potomac Square, a conversation with President Ellen M. Granberg, a multicultural alumni reception, the Vern Harvest on the Mount Vernon campus and residential neighborhood showcases.

“I just love coming back for these events,” said Anjuli Desai, B.B.A. '03, while posing her two young sons for a photo with mascot George at the kickoff

**GW alumni, families and friends gathered for a celebratory kickoff party during Alumni & Families Weekend.**

party. Desai, who was back to celebrate her 20-year reunion, met her husband, Jimin Desai, B.B.A. '05, at GW and was excited to take a stroll through University Yard.

On Friday night, actor and comedian Jimmy O. Yang, best known for his roles in “Silicon Valley” and “Crazy Rich Asians,” headlined the GW Program Board’s Annual Fall Comedy Show at the Charles E. Smith Center. The GW Classes of 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018 all celebrated reunions on Saturday night.

Also on Saturday, the university recognized four notable individuals for their contributions to society and raising the standard of

excellence and generosity within the university community at the Spirit of GW Awards ceremony.

Joseph Wright, M.P.H. '94, a visionary in the field of health care and equity, was recognized with the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award for his promotion of health equity as a national policy and for his care for children impacted by gun violence. Recently named the chief health equity officer for the American Academy of Pediatrics, Wright has also served as professor and chair of pediatrics at Howard University College of Medicine, as an executive leader at Children’s National Medical Center and as Maryland state pediatric medical director.

Steven V. Roberts, the J.B. and M.C. Shapiro Professor of Media and Public Affairs, was recognized as this year’s recipient of the GW Philanthropy Award. The Cokie and Steven Roberts Student Support Fund, which he created with his late wife, journalist Cokie Roberts, aids students facing financial hardship. In collaboration with a former student, Ted Segal, B.A. '03, Roberts also set up the Roberts & Segal Fund for Food Security in 2019, providing funding for the Store, a campus food bank.

Nassirou Diallo, B.A. '18, was honored with the Recent Alumni Achievement Award for his dedication to improving the health of people in West Africa and creating an organization, Clinic+O, that brings health care, primary medicine and telemedicine to rural Guineans.

Christine Brown-Quinn, M.B.A. '92, an international finance expert with an extensive career in advising and promoting women in business, was honored with the Alumni Outstanding Service Award. She is the author of “The Female Capitalist” and other best-selling books on business and is the former president of the GW Alumni Association. 

GW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

# Get to Know GWAA President Maxwell Gocala-Nguyen

**Maxwell Gocala-Nguyen, M.A. '16, was initially drawn to George Washington University due to its welcoming and diverse atmosphere.** Today, as the president of the GW Alumni Association (GWAA), he is driven by a powerful vision—to cultivate an environment that champions inclusivity, enabling everyone to experience the same sense of belonging that he felt upon joining the GW community.

Gocala-Nguyen spent his formative years in Youngstown, Ohio. He pursued his undergraduate studies at Youngstown State University, where he openly embraced his identity as a gay man. However, as he contemplated graduate school, he yearned for a more diverse environment, which ultimately led him to the vibrant city of Washington, D.C., and more precisely, GW.

Upon arriving on campus, Gocala-Nguyen immediately immersed himself in the GW community. He assumed a role on the Finance Committee of the Student Association and took the lead in advocating for the establishment of a campus food pantry, now known as The Store.

His passion for service continued to drive him even after graduation, leading him to dedicate three years to the GWAA Executive Committee before taking up the presidency this summer. “GW Magazine” caught up with Gocala-Nguyen to learn about how he envisions his role as GWAA president, his

favorite only-at-GW moment and the words of wisdom he lives by.

**Why is staying connected to the university important to you?**

Education has a unique ability to allow people to change themselves in a positive way. GW was really that place for me where I was forced to make changes, because I didn't know anybody here and I was stepping outside my comfort zone as newly out. GW allowed me to grow in my education, my leadership and myself. I want to be able to give that opportunity to the next generation, and not only the new faces that are coming in but also those people who are returning to school and looking to make that change within themselves and their lives. As GWAA president, I hope to keep that spirit alive beyond graduation and foster an inclusive community built upon the many experiences we've all shared at GW.

**What is your favorite only-at-GW moment?**

When I graduated in 2016, we were on the Mall for Commencement, and President Obama and Michelle Obama were going on a trip, so Marine One flew over the ceremony and stopped above us. I'm not going to say I could see

**“GW allowed me to grow in my education, my leadership and myself. I want to be able to give that opportunity to the next generation.”**



them waving, but it certainly looked like they were, so it was a very nice moment just to see the Obamas looking down at our celebration and hopefully cheering us on.

**What do you hope to accomplish as GWAA president?**

We have a large alumni network. There's over 325,000 individuals, which speaks to not only the history of GW and the vast expanse that we've been around but also the unique perspectives that our university can share. So it's about reengaging people who may not be engaged, but also keeping people engaged and creating a more cohesive community. I want people to know that they shouldn't feel afraid to stop me and say, “Hey, you're Max, let's have a conversation.”

**Do you have a favorite quote or words of wisdom that you live by?**

The old adage that there's beauty in everything and that everybody has something to offer and teach you that you may or may not know already. Hearing people's stories and what they're passionate about and why allows me to get a new perspective and try to be a better person. At the end of the day, if I can learn something from someone new and meet a new face at least once a day, it's my small way of trying to make the world a better place. ☑

# INTRODUCING THE NEWEST MONUMENTAL ALUMNI

To commemorate the historic occasion of inaugurating GW's 19th President Ellen M. Granberg, five GW alumni were recently honored with the Monumental Alumni Award – the highest form of recognition given by the university to outstanding alumni for their monumental achievements. These distinguished graduates join an esteemed group of only 73 alumni who have received this accolade to date.

To honor GW's Bicentennial Celebration in 2021, the university proudly introduced the Monumental Alumni Award as a special recognition of GW's living alumni who have made an impact on the world through their work and service and who embody the ideals of the university. Recipients of this award have made enduring contributions that offer inspiration and exemplify the potential of a degree from GW.



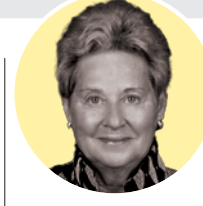
**AICHA EVANS**  
B.S.'96

Aicha Evans is a distinguished leader in engineering and technology. As CEO of autonomous mobility-as-a-service company Zoox, she is at the forefront of delivering safer, cleaner and more enjoyable transportation experience for all. In June 2020, she led the acquisition of Zoox by Amazon. Evans has decades of experience leading teams that make an impact on the world, managing thousands of engineers at high-profile companies including Intel, Rockwell Semiconductors, Conexant and Skyworks. In 2021, she was named to Forbes' "50 Over 50."



**EMILIO FERNANDEZ**  
M.E.A.'76

Emilio Fernandez is an accomplished inventor, holding 28 patents across various fields. One of his most notable patents defined key elements of e-reading devices and became the most cited U.S. patent at the time. While pursuing his undergraduate studies, Fernandez co-founded Pulse Electronics, a leading global provider of electronic products and digital solutions for the rail industry. He is retired vice chairman of the board of directors of Wabtec, managing director of Pulse Capital LLC, and serves on numerous corporate, philanthropic and cultural boards.



**ELLEN ZANE**  
B.A.'73

A renowned health care leader, Ellen Zane was the first woman to run Tufts Medical Center and Tufts Children's Hospital in its 226-year history. Prior to her work at Tufts, she held leadership positions at top hospitals including Mass General Brigham and Quincy Hospital. A respected leader, she holds multiple faculty appointments where she educates the next generation of health care professionals at Tufts University School of Medicine and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and serves as the distinguished global leader in residence at High Point University.



**HOSSEIN FATEH**  
B.B.A.'90, M.S.'97

Hossein Fateh is a pioneer in digital infrastructure with over two decades of experience developing and operating data centers. He is one of the original developers of the new wholesale asset class of data centers and serves as a veteran in the industry who continuously helps shape the field as new data needs evolve. A multifaceted entrepreneur, Fateh has founded numerous companies that span from data and investing to real estate and renewable energy.



**MICHAEL REGAN**  
M.P.A.'04

A dedicated public servant, Michael Regan has devoted his career to advocating for environmental protection. He currently serves as administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is the first Black man and second person of color to lead the agency. He previously served as secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, where he secured the largest coal ash clean-up in United States history. Throughout his career, he has been guided by a belief in forming consensus, fostering an open dialogue rooted in respect for science and the law, and an understanding that environmental protection and economic prosperity go hand in hand.

# 'Pushing the Boundaries of Knowledge'

**A new book from former longtime National Geographic executive Terry Garcia, J.D. '80, examines the future of exploration through essays from leading scientists, researchers and adventurers.**

Whether it's outer space, the ocean, understanding animal species or uncovering the mysteries of past civilizations, we've only begun to explore. And the 21st century, thanks largely to leaps in technology, promises to exponentially further human knowledge.

In "The Future of Exploration: Discovering the Uncharted Frontiers of Science, Technology, and Human Potential" (Earth Aware Editions, 2023), Garcia and his co-author, National Geographic photographer Chris Rainier, are joined by more than 35 of the world's top explorers and scientists to discuss the future of exploration. Contributors include Jane Goodall, Richard Branson, Bob Ballard, Louise Leakey, Zahi Hawass and Sylvia Earle.

"GW Magazine" talked to Garcia about his understanding of exploration, what the future bodes and why he and Rainier are donating the book's profits to fund early-career researchers.

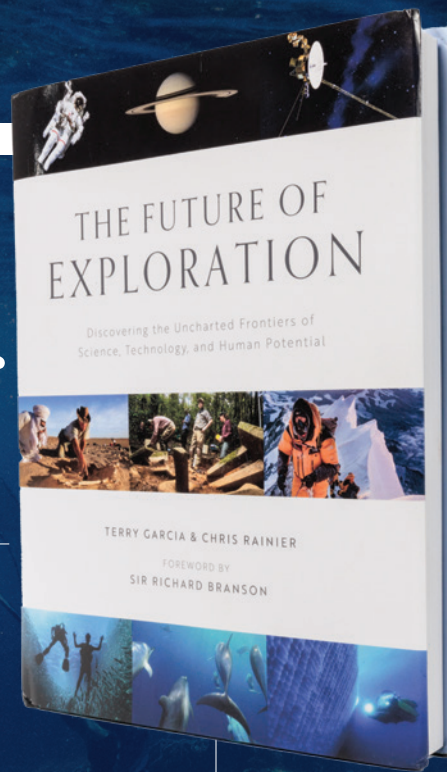
**Q: How did you first get interested in exploration? And how does your law degree fit in?**

**A:** When I left GW Law, I was recruited by a firm in Los Angeles and practiced there for about 14 years. I was a financial institutions lawyer, but I had a subspecialty in political law and represented political candidates. In 1994, I was recruited by the Clinton administration to be the general counsel of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That's where my interest really kicked into high gear because of the agency's mission, both exploring and being a steward of natural resources.

At the end of the president's second term, I was offered an opportunity to join National Geographic as the executive vice president for what was then called mission programs. I oversaw all the field research, exploration, education and conservation programs of the society. And I just fell in love with it. It was incredibly varied, and I traveled extensively around the world. I left National Geographic in 2016 but continue to do the same kind of work, particularly focusing on conservation.

**Q: What does exploration mean to you?**

**A:** My definition of exploration is very broad. Exploration is any time,



**"The Future of Exploration: Discovering the Uncharted Frontiers of Science, Technology, and Human Potential" (Earth Aware Editions, 2023) By Terry Garcia, J.D. '80**

any way and anyone who might be pushing the boundaries of knowledge. It can be the pith-helmeted explorer stereotype, but it also might be a 21st-century educator who is preparing the next generation. In the book, we have a mix of people and disciplines. In exploration, sometimes it's not just finding something new; sometimes it's new eyes seeing the familiar from a different perspective.

**Q: You write in the book that the 21st century will be the greatest age of exploration in human history. Why?**

**A:** In good part it's because of technology, which is providing the keys to unlock doors that we had assumed were permanently closed to us or, in some cases, doors we didn't even know existed. In many cases, we've only just begun to explore. Take the ocean, for example. We've explored maybe 5 percent. We think there may be 2 million species of plants and animals in the ocean, but we don't really know.

We also showcase in the book a new generation of scientists, explorers and researchers who are going to be assuming the roles of leaders in their respective fields, people who are from different regions and ethnicities and have different perspectives. That is going to provide us with new insights into many disciplines, whether it's conservation, biology or archaeology.

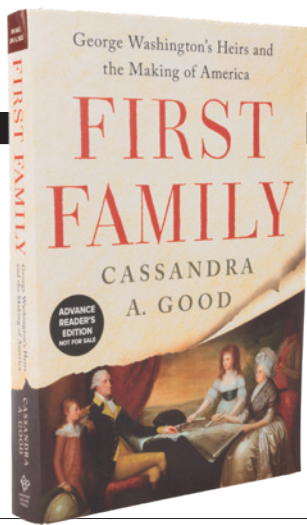
Another thing that's driving exploration is a sense of urgency propelled by climate change and the need to study and understand systems, organisms, cultures, languages before they're gone. Many of the things that make this planet such an interesting, amazing, beautiful place are under threat.

**Q: What do you hope readers will take away?**

**A:** We hope they come away knowing that there are people like the contributors in our book who are leaders in various scientific fields willing to bear unimaginable hardships to expand the boundaries of our knowledge. It's also our hope that readers develop a deeper understanding of the critical role of exploration in our lives and experience the excitement that goes along with it. And finally, we would like readers to come away with hope. We face many challenges, but here's the good news: We know what needs to be done, and we know how to do it. It's just a matter of will. To me, that's a hopeful message, because we do have the ability to determine our destiny.

**Q: You're donating the book's profits to fund early-career scientists and explorers. Why was it important to do that?**

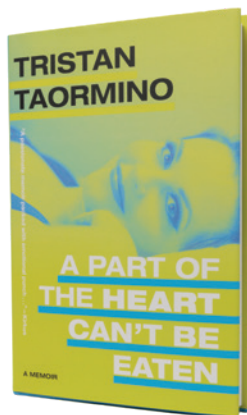
**A:** Large funding organizations tend to be conservative. They want certainty or near certainty of results. The people we want to fund have a credible hypothesis, but we don't require the level of proof that, say, the National Science Foundation does. What's the point of exploring if you already know the answer? — Rachel Muir



**“First Family: George Washington’s Heirs and the Making of America” (Hanover Press, 2023)**

**By Cassandra A. Good, B.A. ’04, M.A. ’05**

While George Washington famously had no biological children of his own, he helped raise Martha Washington’s children as well as her four grandchildren through her son John Parke Custis. Good, a historian, examines America’s first “First Family,” Washington’s role as a father figure and the complicated legacy of the Custis family who depended on slave labor and used Washington to enhance their own power and status. “We continue to see George Washington as the father of our country, but few Americans know about the children he raised,” writes Good. “As enslavers committed to the American empire, the Custis family embodied the failures of the American experiment that finally exploded into civil war—all the while being celebrities in a soap opera of their own making.”



**“A Part of the Heart Can’t Be Eaten” (Duke University Press, 2023)**

**By Tristan Taormino, M.P.H. ’23**

In this no-holds-barred memoir, Taormino, a sex educator, filmmaker and podcast host, writes about the influence that an “extraordinary queer father-daughter relationship” had on her coming of age and queer identity as well as the pain of losing her father, Bill Taormino, to AIDS in the 1990s. “He was my best friend, my mentor, my teacher,” she writes. “He instilled in me a belief that drives me:

I can do anything I set my heart to, and I can make this world better for people like us.” Weaving together excerpts from her father’s unpublished memoir, she reflects on the bonds, losses and mental health struggles that have defined her.

**“Unwaving: The Wives Who Fought to Ensure No Man Is Left Behind” (Knox Press, 2023)**

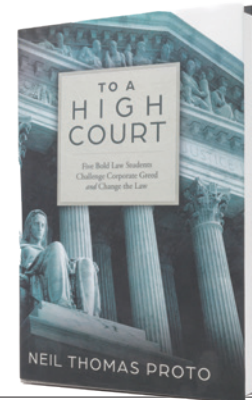
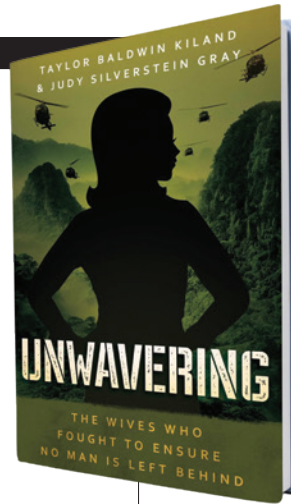
**By Judy Silverstein Gray, M.P.H. ’15, and Taylor Baldwin Kiland**

Gray and Kiland, both veterans, highlight the resilience and determination of a group of military wives in the 1960s, an era when women were often denied basic financial rights and military wives were warned to keep quiet. Against the backdrop of antiwar protests and the civil rights movement, the authors recount the stories of women who refused to remain silent when their husbands were declared missing in action during the Vietnam War. Sybil Stockdale, Candy Parish, Pat Mearns, Carol McCain and their fellow military wives became accidental activists, uniting to raise awareness about the plight of their captive or missing spouses.

**“Cosmonaut: A Cultural History” (University Press of Florida, 2023)**

**By Cathleen S. Lewis, Ph.D. ’08**

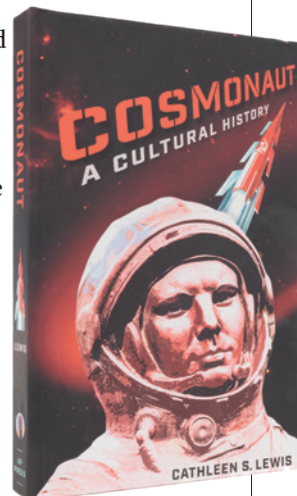
Lewis, a curator at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, explores how the image of the Soviet Cold War hero, the “cosmonaut,” emerged in the 1950s and has evolved in the decades since. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Lewis writes, “the Russian population experienced the stress of choosing between nostalgia for a romantic and hopeful past and a need to blame someone for the failure to fulfill the promises of postwar life. As a result, two images of the cosmonaut exist today—that of the hopefulness of youth and that of the forlorn victim of a cynical state.”



**“To a High Court, Five Bold Law Students Challenge Corporate Greed and Change the Law” (Friesen Press, 2023)**


**By Neil Thomas Proto, M.A. ’69, J.D. ’72**

In fall 1971, five GW Law students created the Students Challenging Regulatory Agency Procedures (SCRAP) to address the corporate greed of the nation’s railroads and the failure of the government to protect the environment. Drawing on contemporaneous notes and transcripts, Proto, the group’s chair, details SCRAP’s eight-month legal fight that ultimately reached the Supreme Court. “Providing definition in facts and in crafting legal arguments for a controversy that led to the Supreme Court of the United States is a special experience in law. It is uniquely so for a law student,” writes Proto. “Yet that is precisely what we did, in our own name, in an era of tumult, especially in the nation’s capital.”





Leading  
Togge



Granberg greets first-year students at an orientation event on the National Mall.

Story // John DiConsiglio

Photos // William Atkins

---

**In the midst of her first weeks on the job, Ellen M. Granberg, George Washington University's 19th president, walked a half mile down 23rd Street from Foggy Bottom to a corner of the National Mall for a new student orientation event.**

Overlooking the Lincoln Memorial, crowds of students kicked soccer balls, tossed cornhole bags and laid out on the grass under the hot August sun. Granberg's plan was to walk up the east side of the field, chatting with students along the way, before turning back down the west side. She thought it would take about an hour.

She barely made it five feet. That's when the first wave of students surrounded her and pleaded for a selfie. Within moments, more raced toward her—and snapped more selfies.

Every few steps, another student approached Granberg—a sophomore public health major who said meeting the university's first woman president made her "happy"; a senior business major who'd shared a dessert with her at an earlier ice cream social; and incoming students who'd just arrived at GW from homes in France, China, Puerto Rico and Dubai. To each, Granberg introduced herself as "Ellen," shared handshakes and hugs and, along with her wife, Sonya Rankin, posed for selfie after selfie after selfie. ▶

together

▶ Two hours later, Granberg had yet to make it up one side of the Mall when a pack of Taylor Swift super fans in concert T-shirts and tie-dye quizzed her on her favorite Tay tune. As the new president thumbed through her Spotify, the first-years debated whether she should download “Hits Different” or “Don’t Blame Me.”

“We adopted her as an honorary Swiftie,” laughs first-year finance student Daniel Litescu. “She is definitely not like any kind of university president I thought I’d meet.”

Genuine. Approachable. A listener. That’s how students described Granberg again and again—whether she was knocking on their residence hall doors as they unpacked on move-in day or dancing with the men’s basketball team at a pep rally. “I really feel like she cares about what I’m saying,” says junior public health student Orlando Gonzalez.

And the raves weren’t confined to students. In her first weeks since coming to GW after serving as the provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Granberg has met with faculty at Foggy Bottom, government officials on the Hill and alumni across the country. At each stop, she’s been “an absolute hit,” says GW Provost Christopher Alan Bracey. She has impressed the community with what Professor of English and presidential search committee member Gayle Wald calls her “empathetic and extraordinarily authentic personality.”

“She’s a rock star,” says junior fine arts major Sydney Clarke, who was studying at Science and Engineering Hall when Granberg strolled by and stopped for a chat. “You can tell when you speak with her—something special is happening here.”

## Big Expectations, Bigger Goals

Granberg smiles at the compliments and explains that she’s sincerely interested in meeting people and hearing their stories. “GW is a big community. That can feel impersonal sometimes,” she says. “I want to create the feeling that we’re a small place within a big place.”

Still, Granberg is well aware that she faces big expectations. She inherits a university at an inflection point, succeeding Mark S. Wrighton, who had served as GW president on an interim basis since 2022. Wrighton was tasked with stabilizing the university as it emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. Granberg’s role, Bracey notes, will be to chart an ambitious course for the future. “We’re looking to take off and accelerate into our third century,” he says. ▶







**“She is definitely not like any kind of university president I thought I’d meet.”**

---

**Daniel Litescu**

First-year finance student

**Clockwise from top left: Granberg talks with GW community members; Granberg and Rankin lend a hand at Move In; Granberg with students at GW Welcome Day of Service.**

➤ According to voices across the GW community, Granberg is poised to be the right leader in the right place at the right time.

Bracey points to her extensive record of accomplishments—as an innovative business executive, a skilled sociologist, a dedicated educator and a strategic thinker who has guided institutions while strengthening infrastructures and supporting diverse cultures—as examples of why she is an ideal fit for leading a large university with numerous stakeholders.

“She brings energy and experience to developing strategic priorities for [GW] that reflect the future state of the university and the future state of the world that the university must be prepared to serve,” he says. “She’s able to communicate who she is as a president, what she aspires to do as a president and how she can bring us together and move the university forward.”

Maxwell Gocala-Nguyen, M.A. ’16, president of the GW Alumni Association, cites the excitement Granberg has already generated on campus and among alumni. He notes that her experience and communication skills make her uniquely prepared not only to connect with people across the university but also to engage in “tough conversations” over topics such as the recent moniker change, climate questions and political divides.

“She is very well-informed. She’s a very knowledgeable person. She has extensive history in leadership in higher ed,” he says. “She’s the right person to be at the helm of our very unique, prestigious institution.”

And staff members have embraced Granberg’s arrival, as well. During her first weeks in office, for example, she met with senior leadership at the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement and impressed them with her excitement about their work.

“She’s conversant about the topic, she’s eager to engage and she’s deeply curious about the needs of different constituents within our community,” says Caroline Laguerre-Brown, vice provost for diversity, equity and community engagement and a member of the presidential search committee.

Granberg has continued her connection with the office. During the annual Convocation and Welcome Day of Service, she “rolled up her sleeves,” Laguerre-Brown says, and joined students renovating a Northwest Washington elementary school. At a meeting of student citizen leaders, she quizzed young people on their summer volunteer activities. And at each stop, she acknowledged Laguerre-Brown’s staff for its hard work and commitment.

“She recognizes the contributions of people across the institution to make the institution strong,” Laguerre-Brown says. “That makes people feel validated. It lets them know they are seen.”

## Catalyst for the Possible

As she settles into her position, Granberg has set her sights on major goals—among them defending the value of higher education against critical headwinds; invigorating the alumni base and encouraging them to connect with students; and leveraging GW’s expertise and impact throughout D.C. and beyond.

Still, she emphasizes that her primary role is to bolster the efforts of the community around her. She describes herself as “a catalyst for what’s possible to ensure that our people have the resources, infrastructure and support they need to truly make a difference.”

Speaking to alumni, families and donors in Philadelphia during her “GW Together” national tour of university constituencies, she outlined several directions she’s prioritizing in the early phase of her presidency. They include making a GW education more affordable for everyone and enhancing the quality and depth of the student experience.

“We have opportunities to take advantage of our proximity in new and exciting ways, provide robust career-advising services that prepare students for the changing future of work, and enhance our athletics opportunities and experiences,” she says.

She also aims to build on the momentum from GW recently joining the nation’s top-tier research institutions in the Association of American Universities. And she pictures herself as a champion of the faculty—“the heart and soul of any university,” she says—as they push toward future breakthroughs.

“I feel there is a hunger here to be innovative, to bring our research infrastructure up another level, to really allow our faculty to do what they’re capable of doing,” she says. “I hope people will remember my administration as a time when we took some chances—and we made progress as a result.”

Indeed, Gayle Wald is confident that both faculty and students will view Granberg as an advocate for their research and a partner in promoting how the ideas they generate in labs, libraries and studios impact the world.

“Students and faculty are looking for someone who always keeps the educational mission of the university at the forefront,” Wald says. In Granberg, she believes they will see a president who “embodies their

aspirations for GW and their sense of what leadership looks like in the 21st century.”

Meanwhile, as Granberg and Rankin continue to introduce themselves to the GW family—Granberg recently joined chef José Andrés, HON ’14, at a sustainability class to discuss global food solutions while Rankin rode a 7 a.m. bus with the gymnastics team for a practice in Chantilly, Va.—the couple hopes their energy and enthusiasm will be felt throughout the university.

“This is a community with a lot of hope, a lot of optimism and a lot of excitement,” Granberg says. “I want them to know that they are amazing. Part of my job is to hold up a mirror and remind people how good this place is and how good they are.”

## The Family Business

For Granberg, education has always been “the family business,” she says. Both her mother and stepfather were university professors in San Francisco, where Granberg grew up. She still recalls her mother—her role model—speaking fondly about the Christmas gift her father bought her when she was 16: a slide rule. “That was like getting a MacBook in 1955,” Granberg laughs. It was a signal from Granberg’s grandfather, who was forced to drop out of college during the Depression, that he believed in his daughter’s potential—at a time when educating girls wasn’t always a priority.

“She was a very strong person who would roll up her sleeves and get the work done,” Granberg says. “She wrote four books and raised six children.”

Granberg remembers being a shy, bookish child. She had aspirations to be a fashion designer—until she discovered she couldn’t draw. In the Watergate era, she considered following in the journalism footsteps of her heroes Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein and even wrote for the school newspaper while earning her B.A. in history at the University of California, Davis.

Granberg then took an untraditional path to higher education—through the corporate world. After graduation, she joined the management training program at the Fortune 500 telecommunications firm Pacific Bell. She expected to spend a year or two in business before going to graduate school. But she stayed 11 years, energized by the high-octane environment as she led large-scale system conversions and honed her skills in decision making, team building and communication.

Granberg could have held on to her secure corporate career, but she was inevitably

drawn back to the family business. She knew she was taking a risk when she left California for Nashville, Tenn., where she studied for her Ph.D. in sociology at Vanderbilt University. “But I asked myself,” she recalls, “when I look back in years to come, will I be more disappointed if I tried this and it didn’t work out or if I never tried at all?”

Academia offered Granberg a satisfaction she’d missed in the business world. As a sociology professor at Clemson University, she was enlivened by what she calls “the joy of discovery”—whether it was in the classroom where she helped students grasp difficult concepts or in the research arena where she led studies in self, identity and mental health issues.

At Clemson, Granberg initially became a “reluctant administrator,” as she put it, when her retiring department chair asked her to take over. She was hesitant to leave

students, faculty and staff; designing and implementing two major strategic plans; and collaborating with stakeholders to drive change and increase institutional prominence.

“Ellen is a brilliant and strategic thinker, an accomplished planner and a committed doer,” says RIT President David Munson. “Her collaborative and engaging personal style will serve her especially well as she leads GW.”

Granberg’s return to academia altered more than just her professional life. While at Vanderbilt, she met Rankin by chance at a mutual friend’s party. The pair had such different temperaments, Rankin says, that none of their friends ever considered matching them up. A sales executive and the first in her Memphis family to go to college, Rankin describes herself as “proactive” as opposed to the “even keel” Granberg. When

differences with complementing each other and strengthening their relationship.

“I have learned so much from Sonya over the years,” Granberg says. “We encourage each other, we support each other and we both have a sense of adventure.”

In fact, when Granberg first broached the idea of coming to GW, it was Sonya—“the analyzer,” Granberg says—who spent a day online researching the university and D.C. before giving an enthusiastic thumbs-up to the move. “It didn’t take long to figure out that this was a place where we could be happy,” Rankin says. After living together or apart across the country—California to Atlanta, upstate New York to Tennessee—“I knew this could be a home for us.”

## ‘I can’t do it alone’

Even before settling in Foggy Bottom, Granberg knew the strengths of the institution she was about to lead: a storied history in the heart of the nation’s capital; a comprehensive university where her experience advocating for STEM and engineering disciplines complements robust scholarship in the arts, medicine, law and international affairs; a dedicated and active alumni base around the globe.

But within days of arriving on campus, Granberg says she quickly saw what truly makes GW special: its people. She’s on a mission to meet them all, she insists—from faculty who have been eager to discuss their research to staff who stop her and Rankin on their daily walks and wish them good luck to the talented students who “come to GW to change the world.” Already, she jokes, she’s learned to leave extra time on her way to appointments for selfies.

“I am someone who believes that leadership is not just about me—it’s about the community,” she says.

It’s a message that Bracey expects to resonate with the university as more people get to know her.

“Our faculty, our students and our staff crave authentic leadership,” he says. “She has the ability to bring people together.”

For their part, Granberg and Rankin say they’ve been warmly welcomed into the GW family. Several students have told Rankin that they cried when they learned the university would have its first female president. One mother hugged her at a sporting event and said she was proud to send her daughter to GW.

“I want the GW community to know how excited we are about being here,” Granberg says. “I want to do a great job for GW—and I know I can’t do it alone. I want people to look back and be glad that I was here. I want them to feel good about what we did—together.”

“I am someone who believes that leadership is not just about me— it’s about the community.”

---


## President Granberg

the classroom. But when she first helped an anthropology professor acquire a crucial piece of equipment for her research, she realized that she found fulfillment in advocating for her colleagues’ success.

Her leadership skills flourished as senior associate provost and associate provost for faculty affairs at Clemson and as provost at RIT. Her RIT colleagues praised her long list of achievements: bolstering teaching excellence across disciplines, including expanding doctoral programs; promoting a research infrastructure and investing in state-of-the-art facilities; supporting a diverse and inclusive community of

they first went to a sporting event together, Rankin, a die-hard football fan, cheered loudly—while Granberg brought a book.

But the couple, who will celebrate 25 years together in November, also share common passions—including sports, which, Rankin says, Granberg has embraced over time. “She’s put the book aside and now she studies games like a statistician,” she says. Both have enjoyed meeting GW athletes, and Granberg praises “a healthy athletics program” as an important component of a thriving university. The pair are also strong boosters of theater and the arts. And while they don’t always agree, they credit their



When the  
giving gets  
tough...



# Eight bright ideas for your holiday shopping list.

BY CAITE HAMILTON

**Innovators, artisans, activists—GW’s alumni are indeed multi-faceted. Lucky for us, many of them channel their expertise into products we can eat, drink, create with and use as decoration. This year’s gift guide features the best of your fellow Revolutionaries’ brainchildren, from a savory marshmallow to a bottle of vodka made with 100 percent America-farmed corn to a monthly box of Lego bricks.**

*Happy shopping!*



# Brick by brick

Plenty of 9-year-olds have opinions: about what they eat, what they wear, what they play with. But **Parker Krex** took his opinions one step further—by starting a business that would continue to thrive even as he entered college.

“When I was 9 years old, I asked for a subscription box for my 10th birthday,” Krex, a GW sophomore, says. As it happened, the box arrived during a garage sale Krex was holding to earn money for more Legos. When he opened it, he found a comic book, a pair of socks and an air freshener. “I was very disappointed with the items included. I thought a brick-themed subscription box would be much better.” Luckily, he had two

very supportive parents with an entrepreneurial spirit. They invested in his idea and, in 2014, Brick Loot was born.

The company’s bread and butter (brick and butter?) is its subscription boxes: Choose a one-, three-, six- or 12-month subscription, and a box will show up in the mail with four to eight themed Brick Loot items, many of them exclusive to the company: Lego minifigures, custom Lego kits designed by famous Lego designers, accessories, Lego-compatible products and then some. The website, [brickloot.com](http://brickloot.com), also offers a robust product line that includes light kits, accessories and building sets—from Titanic (a bestseller, Krex says) to an astronaut (a new release licensed by NASA).

With a business built around Lego, it’s a natural assumption that Krex is himself a master at the craft. Not so, he says. In fact, as the founder of the company, he doesn’t have much time to toy around with Lego anymore at all. But there is a true Lego pro on staff: Tyler Clites, who won the first season of Fox’s “Lego Masters,” serves as the company’s

creative director.

“I really enjoy the endless possibilities and creativity that is required,” Krex says. “There are many builders who are able to use bricks in ways you would not expect to create amazing things. It’s just versatile, and it really is for all ages.” In fact, Krex says, around half of Brick Loot’s customers are adults buying for themselves.

Knowing the multigenerational appeal of Lego, in 2019, Krex pitched one of his idols: businessman Marcus Lemonis of CNBC’s “The Profit.” The hour-long meeting with Lemonis’ Camping World buying team included Lemonis himself and resulted in small Brick Loot sets on shelves in every Camping World in the country. Lemonis liked Brick Loot’s ideas about how to combine the toy market with his brand—and he liked the company’s custom sets. Sometimes, 9-year-olds’ opinions are worth exploring.

**For 15 percent off subscriptions and purchases at [brickloot.com](http://brickloot.com), use code **GWMAG**.**

# Plush it good

**Genna Tatu, B.S. '20**, had been a knitter all her life—her mom introduced her to it at an early age—but always seemed to start projects and lose patience before they were finished.

“Fast forward to Christmas 2021,” she says, when her mom gifted her a cat sweater crochet kit. “She knew I didn’t know how to crochet and thought the kit would be a great place to start.”

Turns out, mother knows best (“I was immediately ‘hooked’ on crochet,” Tatu jokes). She finished the cat sweater and was soon on to bigger and better projects. She discovered the world of amigurumi—a Japanese form of the craft that, instead of producing two-dimensional items, produces 3D figures like plushies. That appealed to Tatu in particular because, as a child, she loved her collection of stuffed animals.

“Being able to create my very own plushies was a dream come true,” Tatu says. “My childhood self would be very happy and very proud.”

She spent most of January 2022 crocheting a stack of stuffed creatures—chickens, bees, axolotls, turtles among them—and by the end of the month was ready to launch her Etsy store, Crochet by Genna. Since then, she’s had more than 8,000 sales at [crochetbygenna.etsy.com](https://crochetbygenna.etsy.com), including an early bulk order from a professional flutist who regularly performs in Beyoncé’s music videos (a pinch-me moment Tatu will never forget).

The store offers a range of plushies big and small—Tatu says her bestsellers are her mini turtles and her jumbo sunflower turtles—but she creates and sells her own digital patterns as well, releasing two new ones every month, for anyone from beginner to advanced levels. (“I always let people

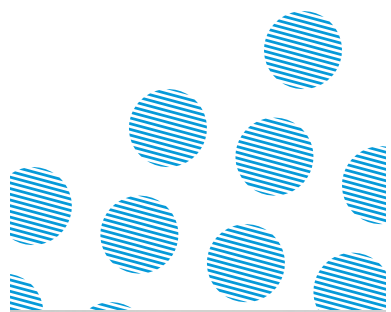
know the stitches that will be used in the pattern, so they can determine whether or not the pattern will be something they can complete,” she says.) If a customer gets stuck on a tricky step, Tatu encourages them to reach out. She’ll send them a message to guide them through it with pictures and occasionally even videos.

Crochet by Genna is a side hustle for Tatu, who by day is a risk and financial advisory consultant at Deloitte in Meridian, Mississippi. At day’s end, she says, she switches roles, putting on her crochet hat and getting to work.

“Crochet is super manual and labor intensive—everything is handmade by me,” she says. “It can’t be mass-produced, unlike knitted pieces, so it truly is unique and handmade.” And Tatu takes it a step further, offering custom orders—a rarity in the crochet community.

“I always give the option because people are always looking for a specific plushie to be made,” she says. “It’s very rewarding to bring a customer’s vision to life and know that you created something from scratch for them.”

Use code **RAISEHIGH23** for 15 percent off your order at [crochetbygenna.etsy.com](https://crochetbygenna.etsy.com).



# Not just desserts

Bite into a macaron—that elegant French pastry that resembles a tiny, almost spherical sandwich—and your senses delight in myriad ways: The crunch of the meringue crust gives way to a chewy interior before your tongue searches for the smooth, sweet filling. Today, they can be found nearly anywhere, from Paris—at iconic bakery Ladurée—to Trader Joe’s, where they’re offered in a pack of 12 with flavors like apricot, coconut and fig. But in 2014, the macaron trend was just starting to gain traction throughout the United States—or, at least, most of the United States.

“They didn’t really exist yet in a substantial way in the Midwest,” says **Patrick Moloughney, B.A. ’99**. He had spent a decade in brand management for Procter & Gamble before striking out on his own to start a business with his husband, Nathan Sivitz. Together they traveled the world—Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Brussels—and saw the popularity of the macaron growing. Eager to utilize their talents (Sivitz holds a degree in biology and a passion for baking; Moloughney has business and marketing experience), they started Macaron Bar.

Within a year, they’d opened three Cincinnati locations, offering boxes of 12, 24 or 36 pastries in flavors like birthday cake, salted caramel and cookies and cream (three of their bestsellers, Moloughney says).

In 2015, **Mark Santanello, B.A. ’02**, joined to oversee employee and HR matters, and



COURTESY OF MACARON BAR



## So delicious

Like so many people during the pandemic, **Sonia Mansukhani Nandwani, B.B.A. ’18**, found herself out of work in 2020. A pastry chef who’d started working in bakeries after graduating from GW, she decided that, rather than scramble to find something new, she’d take the opportunity to figure out her next move.

“As a fun project for myself, I decided to make assorted cookie boxes for my friends and ship them out,” Nandwani says. “Everyone was still getting used to working from home, and I wanted to give some comfort to them.” It wasn’t long after that so dessert—a cookie box gifting company—began in earnest, but the idea formed long before. In fact, Nandwani reserved @sodessert on Instagram in college, after her mom suggested it as a future business name. (“Dessert” refers to the cookies, while “so” references a shorthand her mom uses to address her in text messages.)

This sort of foreshadowing is a theme for the pastry chef. “I always knew I was going to start a business eventually because I come from a family of business owners and merchants on both sides,” she says. “It felt like the right path for me.” She enrolled at GW with a goal of a degree in business administration but by her junior year had decided that the finance concentration wasn’t going to cut it. She switched to entrepreneurship and turned a longtime hobby—baking—into a true passion, planning to start working in the pastry industry professionally after graduating.

“My mom taught me to make cakes when I was really little, and I was always interested in learning how to bake more things,” she says. “Every time the opportunity to bake something new or read a new recipe came up, I would take it.” Nandwani says she’d tear recipes from the family’s magazine

subscriptions and save them to make later. Eventually, the collection of recipes turned into a collection of cookbooks, which turned into a mental backlog of inspiration that still influences her recipes today.

But back to the cookies. The core product line—which includes boxes with unique creations like Earl Grey cookies, chocolate cherry biscotti and toasted coconut lime shortbread—remains the company’s gold standard, but Nandwani says the most popular product every year is the gingerbread painting kit.

“We’ve seen this product gifted to little kids, seniors in nursing homes and corporate offices for a team activity,” she says. “It’s amazing to see how customers choose to use your products in ways you never thought of yourself.” The box includes three soft-baked gingerbread cookies with a white icing canvas, an edible paint palette and brush, an extra-large made-in-house marshmallow and hot chocolate mix.

Each so dessert gift box, available online at [sodessert.shop](http://sodessert.shop), can include a handwritten note and special packaging (“to make each item look and feel like a luxurious gift,” Nandwani says). But the best part is, of course, the cookies.

“All our products are made-to-order with the highest quality ingredients, chef-driven and with no preservatives,” she says. “I’ve never sold a product that I wouldn’t eat myself.”

Use code **GWGIFT** for \$5 off your order through Dec. 15 at [sodessert.shop](http://sodessert.shop).





in the intervening years, the partners have grown a collaborative team of bakers to develop new ideas and flavors, like those that are released seasonally.

"There are usually about 14 or 15 flavors available to try at any given time," Moloughney says. "Many that are popular will return each year, but the fun part of our jobs is working with our talented bakers to come up with new and exciting flavor ideas a couple times per year." Peppermint and gingerbread, chocolate orange blossom, strawberry lemonade, churro and spiced pumpkin are among the seasonal offerings, and are indicative of what appealed to the shop's owners about macarons in the first place. "Macarons are a premium pastry with an infinite range of colors and flavors that has allowed us to craft a fun yet sophisticated customer experience in our stores," Moloughney says.

That experience includes not only eating but learning. From day one, the Macaron Bar business plan included baking classes, which are offered weekly at most locations and often sell out weeks in advance. They're perfect for beginners and advanced-level bakers alike, and they even offer a class for kids.

"Macarons are notoriously difficult, especially in the home kitchen," says Moloughney. "We wanted to share our experience with everyone who was curious. We knew it would be a great way to engage with the community and welcome them into our kitchens."

**Macaron Bar ships across the U.S. For 10 percent off your order, use code **GWSAVES** at [macaron-bar.com](http://macaron-bar.com).**

COURTESY OF WARREN BROWN



## Just add a spoon

As if he could forget, **Warren Brown, J.D. '98, M.P.H. '98**, says he still remembers the day he shared the stage with Oprah Winfrey 20 years ago—as a guest on her TV show. The theme of that episode was "What should I do with my life?" and Brown had been tapped for an appearance because he'd recently left practicing law to open what was quickly becoming a very successful bakery.

Brown has never been afraid of a challenge—he quit law, learned to bake and opened CakeLove within the span of just a few years. The Washington, D.C.-based pastry shop served as the jumping-off point for Brown's baking career, prompting four cookbooks (two with "CakeLove" in their name and two others on pie and food traditions in every state), a hosting gig on Food Network's "Sugar Rush" and, eventually, Don't Forget Cake.

"I began with CakeLove way back in 2002 and really enjoyed it, but winds of market changes began once online shopping became a thing and retail began to hint that it would look like it does today. Not dead, just different," Brown says. "What I really enjoy about baking is making product. Innovative items. It just thrills me."

With Don't Forget Cake, Brown figured out a way to put the beloved dessert...in a jar. Each of the containers, which are available at [dontforgetcake.com](http://dontforgetcake.com) as well as Giant and some Wal-Mart stores, serves three to four

people (technically, though Brown says he can't comment on how many people down one on their own) and comes in flavors like red velvet (a bestseller), tres leches (Brown's personal favorite), cookie dough and key lime. Oh, and there's birthday cake, too.

"There's magic in cake," Brown says. "It's fantasy. It's guilty pleasure. It's a hidden gem before it's sliced. It's heavy with anticipation before the first bite--will it be good, and worth it? But it's also simple revelry in youth. It always makes me think of turning 5; that's the earliest birthday cake I remember. All of that makes for a fun lane to be in."

And what about the name? Brown says that came from his retail days, when customers would call with last-minute cake orders.

"A lot of times the party was happening later that day, but no one had ordered a cake," Brown says. "Lots of party prep and planning, but the cake got overlooked. I like to warn people: Don't forget cake!"

**Use code **GWGW** for 20 percent off your order at [dontforgetcake.com](http://dontforgetcake.com) through Jan. 31, 2024.**



# Pillow talk

How can you use a marshmallow? Let **Amy Hughes, M.B.A. '12**, count the ways: as a frothy garnish for coffee, tea or cocktails (“if you can stop yourself from stabbing them and just eating them before they melt completely!” she says), as an extra layer atop fresh-from-the-oven brownies, transformed into a flavorful fondant for cake, as a twist on meringue for pies. And, of course, they’re a key component in gourmet s’mores.

Hughes spreads the gospel of marshmallows daily with her business, MarshmallowMBA, which she started on a whim after a friend she’d gifted marshmallows for Hanukkah said, “I don’t know why you’re not selling these things. You could be the marshmallow MBA.”

Hughes already had a business degree and more than 20 years as a federal consultant under her belt when, as she puts it, she “blew up her life” and got her new business underway.

The risk has paid off. In 2022, the company won the Best Innovation Award from Retail Confectioners International for its Bee Kind marshmallows, a collection that uses no corn products and is infused with natural herbal blends that enhance relaxation. Wait, what?

“We like to say, ‘Forget everything you think you know about marshmallows’ when inviting potential customers to sample our confections,” Hughes says. Indeed, the shop’s offerings are unconventional by design (“I love having the opportunity to play with candy as a ‘more than’ concept,” she says), from flavor to texture. To date, she’s developed an energy marshmallow and an

athlete performance/recovery marshmallow in addition to the award-winning Bee Kind line. She’s even invented a s’more on a fork, er, a s’mork. (“Think gourmet candy apple, but replace the apple with an extra-large gourmet marshmallow,” Hughes says.)

Popular with retailers, as well as for wedding and special event favors, the s’mork started as a vanilla marshmallow dunked in chocolate and covered in crushed graham crackers but has evolved to include flavors like birthday cake, double-chocolate sea salt, and—Hughes’ dad’s favorite—chocolate peanut butter pretzel. MarshmallowMBA offers a range of flavors for the entire product line: family-friendly, cocktail-inspired and even savory flavors they refer to as “weirdly delicious.”

It’s the savory ones that Hughes’ own palate prefers—the bourbon marshmallow (her current favorite, though Old Bay caramel and mocha frappe are also vying for the top spot) has a “smoky grown-up vanilla flavor.”

Still, the more traditional options are MarshmallowMBA’s most popular: sea salt caramel, birthday cake, blood orange, cinnamon roll,

raspberry rosé and Naughty Girl Scout. In all, the company has a library of more than 150 flavors, all gluten-free, with no egg, soy, fat or preservatives. And they have a texture that will surprise those of us most familiar with store-bought brands.

“They have been described as pillow and cloud-like,” Hughes says. “People often expect them to be hard, so that surprises them. And even though they are light in texture, they are rich in flavor.”

With an already robust product line, found online at [marshmallowmba.com](http://marshmallowmba.com), where does MarshmallowMBA go from here? Not surprisingly, onward. Hughes plans to increase manufacturing capabilities with new facilities and is considering the possibility of a food truck or marshmallow café. She’s also on the hunt for collaborators—companies with products that can be used in marshmallows or that complement them.

“In the near term, however,” says Hughes, “I am focused on the unique opportunities I have to expand people’s ideas of what marshmallows can be.”

**For 10 percent off your order on [marshmallowmba.com](http://marshmallowmba.com), use code RAISEHIGH.**

# Form and function

“Dreamy décor with a purpose.” That’s what **Melissa Moriarty, B.A. '07**, says is the “North Star” of her company, Azulina Home. The word “purpose” is twofold: The products must be useful, but they must also have a broader social influence.

“I have seen firsthand the positive long-term impact of supporting small-batch makers, and that’s the kind of impact I would like to have in my lifetime,” Moriarty says. “I believe it’s important to support and invest in heritage techniques and traditions—it results in a richer experience and also ensures that those time-honored weaving techniques get passed down to the next generation.”

Azulina Home offers a core product line of bath mats, doormats, runners and pillows, all handmade by Colombian artisans. In fact, Colombia was the inspiration for the whole company. Moriarty moved there in 2011 after falling in love with Medellín on vacation (“I sold all my stuff and booked a one-way ticket, thinking I would live there six to 12 months max. ...I was there for six years!” she says) and, more specifically, while on a trip to El Carmen de Viboral in search of a gift for the wedding of her best friend, Maggie Weiss Maloney, B.A. '07. A little town east of Medellín, it’s known as La Perla Azulina del Oriente (“the blue pearl of the east”), famous for its beautiful ceramics.

“I was in complete awe of the artistry and pottery-making tradition,” Moriarty says. “Next thing I knew, I was shipping a 20-foot container of blue-and-white hand-painted ceramics to the U.S., and that’s where Azulina began!”



Though she pivoted away from ceramics and into soft goods in 2017, she kept the core tenets of the business intact: working with artisans in Colombia to create textiles and rugs “to be a part of creating a beautiful, calm home, filled with goods that are well designed and thoughtfully produced.” Moriarty meets each artisan personally, and never works with an intermediary, which ensures that 100 percent of the payment goes directly to the weaver.

The “Cali” bath mats—100 percent cotton and loom woven—have remained Azulina’s No. 1 bestsellers for the last three years. Moriarty says customers love them because they’re sturdy and easy to clean (machine-washable!). But the company’s owner says she’s partial to the chunky wool pillows.

“They have a modern, organic look that instantly elevates a room,” she says. “That is what I currently have on my bed.”

She has some hand in the design of the products—which are sold at azulina.com and in more than 30 stores across the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean, including Jenni Kayne, Restoration Hardware and Shoppe Amber Interiors—and will often weigh in on color edits, but she relies on the traditional weaves the Colombian artisans have perfected over the years.

“When I set out to create Azulina, I purposefully chose to design and produce handmade items (as opposed to machine made),” she says. “I much prefer to fill my home with beautiful, handmade pieces, and we want to work with customers who prefer the same.”

**For 20 percent off sitewide at azulina.com, use code GW2023.**



## Good in a glass

People sometimes throw around the phrase, “Put your money where your mouth is.” **Dan Simons, B.B.A. ’92**, takes it literally. A founding partner of Farmers Restaurant Group, Simons has built his career around supporting farmers and promoting food that’s locally sourced and made from scratch. Head to the Farmers Restaurant Group website, and the first thing you see is a giant number: 53,090 at the time of this writing. That’s the number of farmers who own a stake in the company.

“Truly, the farmers own the majority, which means they get the majority of the profit that we produce. This affects us deeply—we run the company ‘through the eye of the farmer,’” Simons says, a phrase they’ve trademarked. “We think long-term, we prioritize stakeholders in addition to profit, like community, people, the environment—because farmers need these things to survive, and they think about giving their business to the next generation.”

The concept continues to thrive. As a “Forbes” article noted in 2017, restaurants under the Farmers Restaurant Group umbrella consistently show up at the top of the list on Washington, D.C.’s corner of Open Table—a good indication that guests like what they taste—and a quick search suggests that’s still true today.

Of course, like a lot of people in the restaurant industry, Simons didn’t start at the top of the food chain. He started working in bars and restaurants while attending GW, working the door and washing beer mugs at the Exchange Saloon on G Street. He learned to bartend and was hired at TGI Fridays in 1990.

“I fell in love with the biz from the ground up,” he says, “and that feeling has never left me.”

In 2017, the brand launched Founding Spirits, a liquor line that includes vodka, dry gin, bourbon, rye and three types of rum—each one utilizing ingredients (wheat, barley,

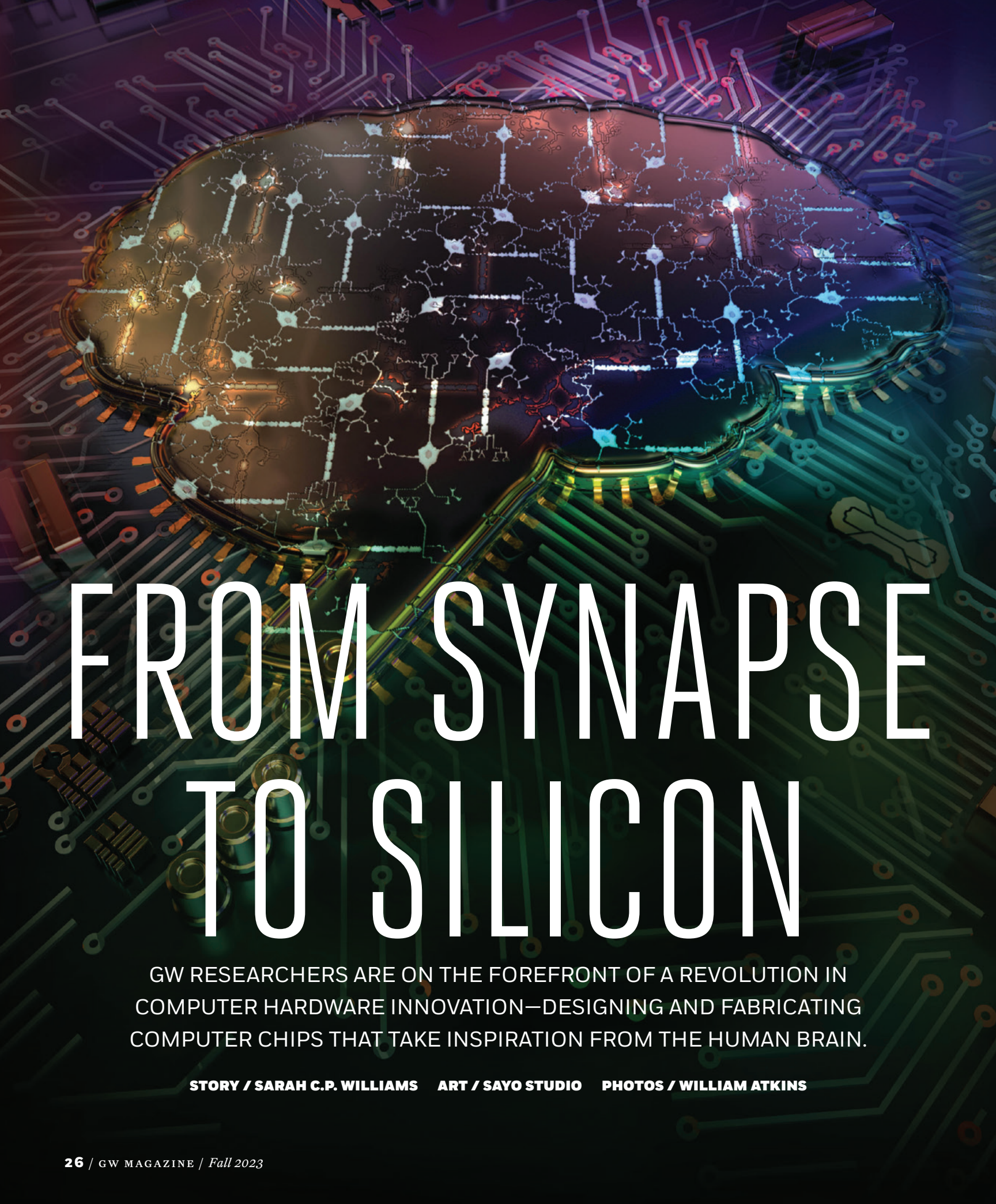
corn) from family farmers.

“As a restaurant owner, and specifically, one that is partnering with American family farmers, I’m always on a quest to use more family-farmed product,” Simons says. “This means unbundling the supply chain, avoiding the corporate producers.” Figuring out how to distill their own alcohol, he says, is part of the company’s natural evolution to bring transparency to the supply chain. They use the spirits in their restaurants’ cocktails, too.

“Vodka pays the bills, as we say in the booze business,” Simons says, but the restaurateur’s favorite is the company’s new dark rum, one of three versions of rum Founding Spirits just added to its lineup. Plus (“Shhhh!” he says), a collaboration with a producer in Mexico and a tequila are on the way. Find Founding Spirits online for nationwide shipping at [foundingspirits.com](http://foundingspirits.com), or pick up a bottle at one of the Farmers D.C. locations.

**GW alumni can receive a 10 percent discount when you order online for pickup at one of their D.C. locations. Use promo code GW10 when ordering at [order.farmersrestaurantgroup.com](http://order.farmersrestaurantgroup.com). Their D.C. locations include Founding Farmers DC on Pennsylvania Avenue near GW; Founding Farmers & Distillers on Massachusetts Avenue at 6th Street, NW; and Farmers Fishers Bakers on the Potomac at Washington Harbour in Georgetown.**





# FROM SYNAPSE TO SILICON

GW RESEARCHERS ARE ON THE FOREFRONT OF A REVOLUTION IN COMPUTER HARDWARE INNOVATION—DESIGNING AND FABRICATING COMPUTER CHIPS THAT TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THE HUMAN BRAIN.

**STORY / SARAH C.P. WILLIAMS   ART / SAYO STUDIO   PHOTOS / WILLIAM ATKINS**



## IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND, LEI ZHANG, A FOURTH-YEAR ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING DOCTORAL STUDENT, HOLDS A SQUARE COMPUTER CHIP. IT'S SMALL ENOUGH THAT WHEN HE COVERS IT WITH THE TIP OF A FINGER, IT DISAPPEARS.

To the naked eye, it looks like any other microchip—it began as a wafer of silicon, on which millions of microscopic wires and electrical components were created by successively depositing and carving away thin layers of material. But the chip designed by Zhang has a special use: to be part of an interconnected network of chips in a future implantable device that can detect the heart's electrical signals, differentiate a healthy heartbeat from an abnormal one, and trigger tiny electrical pulses to coax the heart's abnormal rhythm back into its usual lub-dub-lub-dub rhythm.

Most devices that can analyze a person's heart function and help maintain a normal heartbeat are larger—the size of at least a penny for simpler heartbeat analysis or much larger, such as a wearable vest, for more complex cardiac mapping. These devices also require multiple microchips to process and store data. Zhang's device, though, is so small that dozens of them could be implanted onto the surface of a human heart at once to deliver precisely coordinated shocks from all directions. That is in part because some of its underlying technology takes inspiration from one of the most energy-efficient and powerful computers known to mankind: the human brain.

"This is a completely new generation of technologies, and they're useful for all kinds of applications beyond just real-time sensing and therapy in the human body," says Zhang. "And GW is one of the best places to be working on this."

Computer chips are the basis for nearly every electronic device produced today. The tiny circuits that compose them can carry out computations, make decisions and store information. Simple chips power the repetitive reasoning of a calculator; more

complex combinations of chips let massive computer systems learn how to predict the weather, the direction of tomorrow's stock market, how millions of human genes are associated with a disease or the potential origins of a new virus, like COVID-19.

At GW's School of Engineering and Applied Science, researchers are trying to push the limits of how fast and efficiently computer chips can operate. One of their tactics is designing chips that function more like a living brain. Their work has implications in not only shrinking and speeding up consumer devices like cellphones and smart watches but also in allowing powerful artificial intelligence programs to run more quickly and smoothly—a major change that could revolutionize fields from economics to health care.

"Right now, there are tasks that humans are still much better than computers at," says Tarek El-Ghazawi, chair of electrical and computer engineering at GW. "The brain can analyze things brilliantly, weighing all kinds of information to make decisions while consuming almost no power. How can we mimic this in computer hardware?"



A standard computer chip has billions of transistors on its surface; these vast networks of on-off switches shuttle streams of electrons through large, complex circuits. Everything you see and hear on an electronic device is encoded in the on-off states of those transistors—represented as zeros and ones in computer language.

"The computer chip is one of the most advanced and astounding things that humankind has created," says Gina Adam, an assistant professor of electrical and computer

engineering whose lab is developing next-generation computing hardware. "It amazes me that this feat of engineering is just everywhere in our lives today."

In recent decades, electrical engineers have shrunk, again and again, the size of transistors. In 1947, a single transistor measured a few millimeters across; by 1990, it was less than a micrometer (at least 10 times smaller than the width of a single human hair). Today, the transistor channel has shrunk down to a few nanometers—a nearly unfathomable size of just a few atoms. This downsizing has allowed chips and, in turn, computing systems to become smaller and more powerful.

Today's transistors, however, are nearly as small as they can possibly be—any smaller and they wouldn't be able to physically control the electrons that must pass through them. Researchers have also discovered that the tiniest transistors tend to have flaws; they fail more often and, packed together by the billions, can generate immense heat (this explains why your cellphone feels warm after a long call).

"We're approaching the physical limits of how small we can make transistors using current technologies," says El-Ghazawi. "But every time people think we have reached a limit, someone comes up with a new trick to extend the life of an existing technology or create a new enabling technology altogether."

Even if transistors can't be made smaller, he says, electronic circuits made out of transistors can still be organized in new architectures to make chips more powerful. In addition, many researchers are creating new specialized devices as helpers to stack on top of computing chips—these so-called accelerators can use different innovative ways of processing and storing data to boost the power of existing chips.



The accelerators and chips that Adam designs move beyond the transistor technology of zeros and ones. Today, computing systems generally process information on one chip (a processor) and store large amounts of information on another chip (the memory). Moving data between these chips requires time and energy.

"It's been very challenging because as processors have become faster and memories have become bigger, there are a lot of mismatches; the processor needs to constantly wait to fetch data from the memory," explains Adam, a National Science Foundation CAREER awardee and recipient of the Young Investigator Program Award from the Air Force Office of Scientific



# FROM SYNAPSE

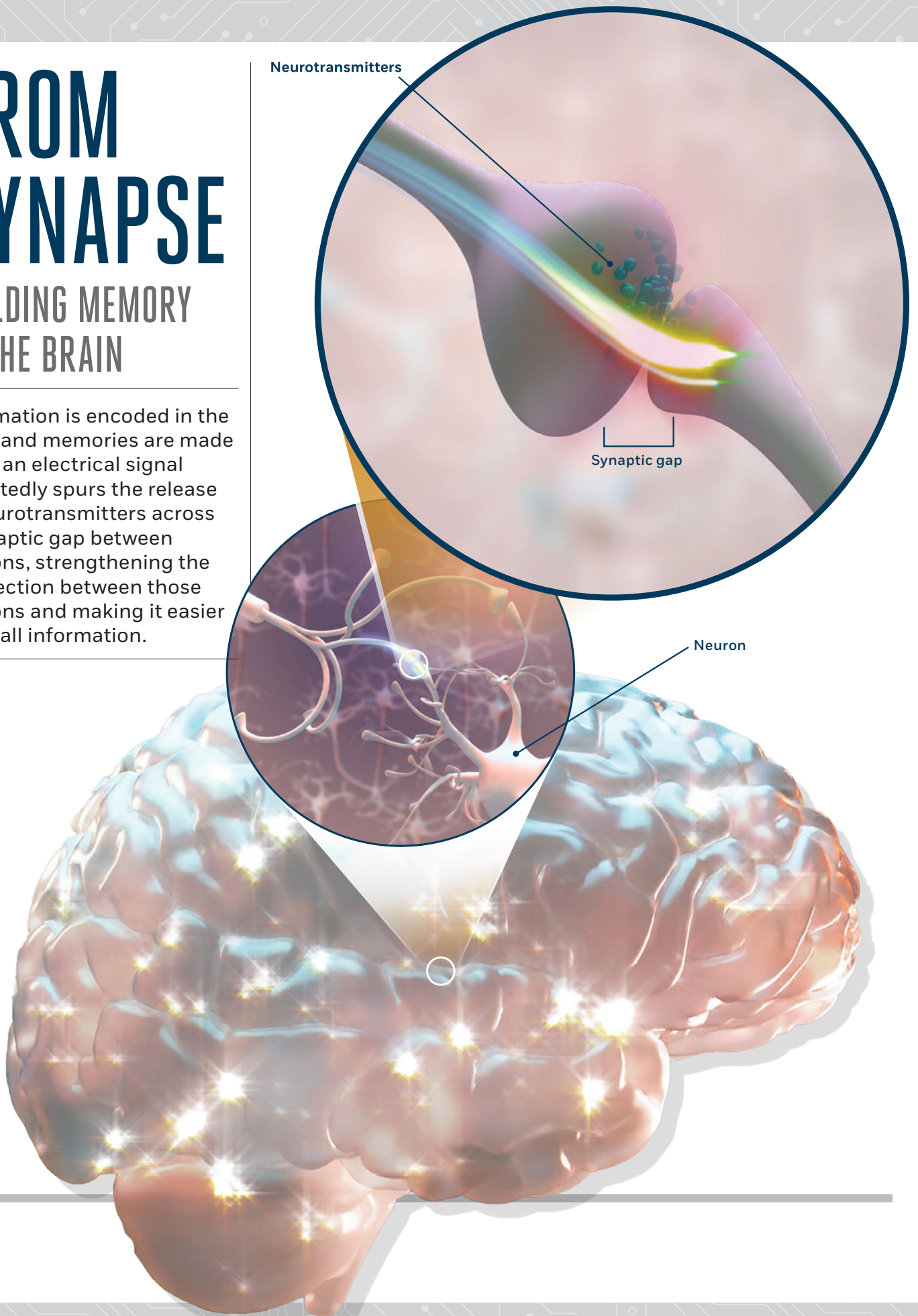
## BUILDING MEMORY IN THE BRAIN

Information is encoded in the brain and memories are made when an electrical signal repeatedly spurs the release of neurotransmitters across a synaptic gap between neurons, strengthening the connection between those neurons and making it easier to recall information.

Neurotransmitters

Synaptic gap

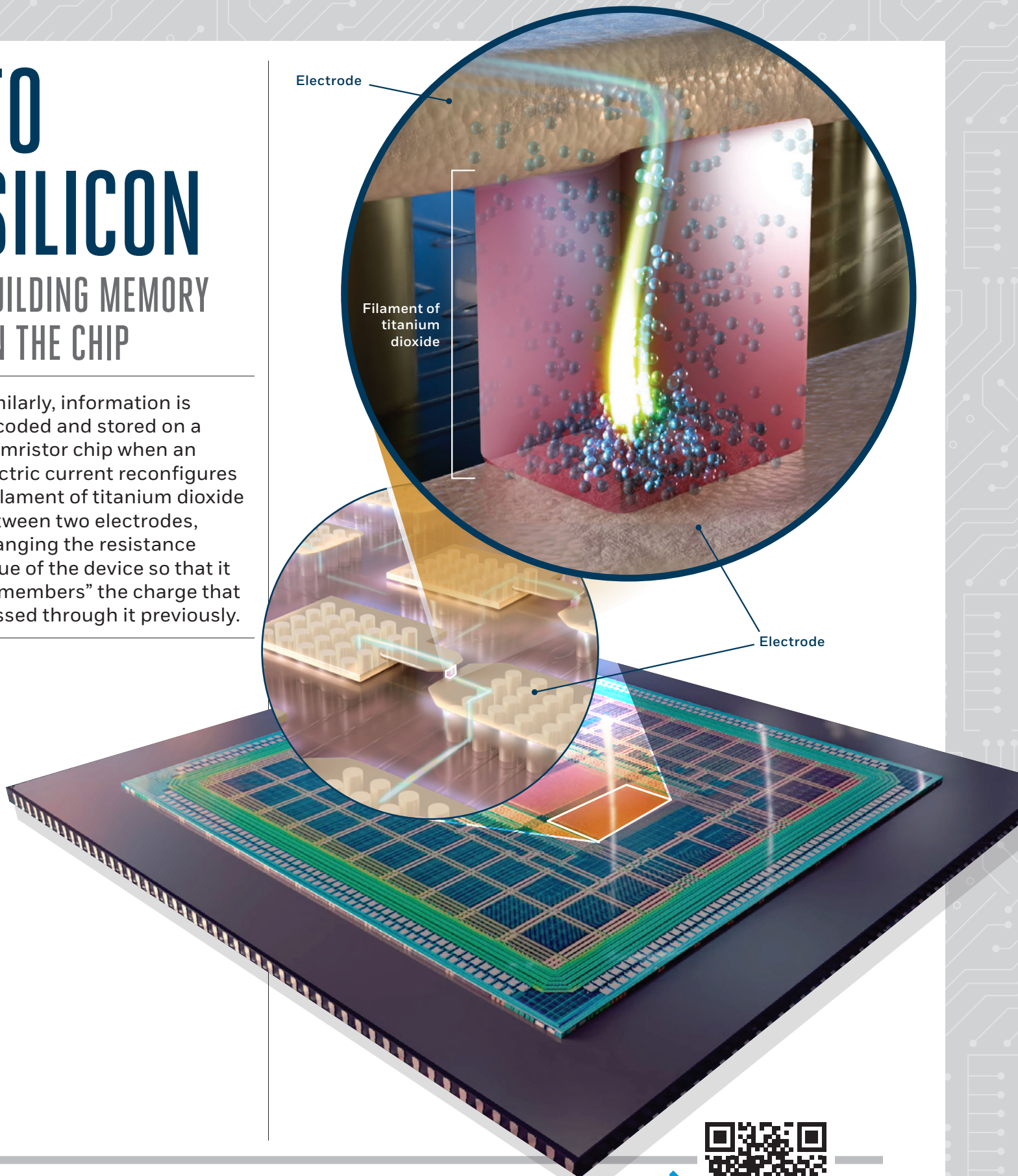
Neuron



# TO SILICON

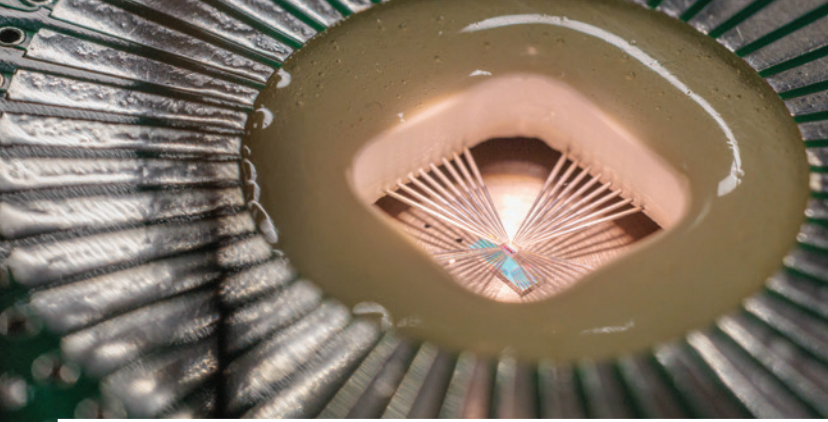
## BUILDING MEMORY ON THE CHIP

Similarly, information is encoded and stored on a memristor chip when an electric current reconfigures a filament of titanium dioxide between two electrodes, changing the resistance value of the device so that it “remembers” the charge that passed through it previously.



Watch the animation sequence by scanning the code or visiting [go.gwu.edu/synapsesilicon](http://go.gwu.edu/synapsesilicon).





**TOP LEFT: The memristor-based microchip here is being designed to differentiate a healthy heartbeat from an abnormal one and trigger electrical pulses to coax the heart back to its normal rhythm. TOP RIGHT: Hossen (left) and Gina Adam (right) have been fine-tuning the design and fabrication of memristor devices to be compatible with the chip underneath. Other lab members then test the chip with the integrated memristors. BOTTOM LEFT: Doctoral student Juliana Curry with Ahmed Louri at the High-Performance Computing Architectures and Technologies Lab.**

➤ Research. “But in the human brain, we don’t separate memory into a different area. The same neuronal circuitry that processes information also stores it.”

Adam is collaborating with neuroscientists to better understand how the brain accomplishes this and how different neurons and supporting cells function and connect.

“We want to know why there is so much diversity of cell types in the brain, and how much of this diversity needs to be translated into our devices and neuro-inspired hardware systems,” she says.

Now Adam is using her neuro know-how to build new types of devices that eliminate the distance between the processor and memory. Among those devices are memristors, short for “memory resistors,” which behave like artificial synapses by “remembering” the amount of electric charge that has passed through them.

Rather than moving electrons as transistors do, memristors involve the rearrangement of ions. Ions are charged atoms, much larger than electrons. When an electric current is applied to a memristor, heat is generated and those bulky ions start to move. As they move, the internal structure of the memristor changes, modifying its resistance value—how much the device resists the flow of electrical current. When the heat is removed, the ion motion halts, yet the new structure of the memristor freezes in place, giving the device a new resistance value. With each change in resistance, ions

flow through the device differently when an electric current is applied again.

“What this means is that a memristor can actually learn. Like synapses in the brain, it changes gradually based on signals it has received,” says Adam.

It also means that a memristor synapse can communicate in shades of gray, strengthening or weakening the connections between artificial neurons, rather than being limited to the black-and-white zeros and ones of transistors. A memristor has numerous states, each subtly different, depending on the arrangement of ions in its structure.

What does this look like at a practical level? Memristors could contribute to faster, more powerful data processing, computers that don’t lose information when they shut down, and systems—like Zhang’s implantable chip for the human heart—that can work for years, consuming little battery power. Their resemblance to a human brain, with shades of gray and memory integrated into processing, also means they are useful for the massive computing power needed in AI and machine learning platforms that aim to mimic human learning and reasoning.



Another member of Adam’s lab—third-year doctoral student Imtiaz Hossen—designs and fabricates memristors in the GW Nanofabrication and Imaging Center’s clean room, a state-of-the-art facility that houses the equipment needed to produce novel devices and computer components. A small

square chip he holds in his tweezers—nearly identical in appearance to Zhang’s chip—has 20,000 tiny memristors on it.

“The way these 20,000 memristors behave gives us really important information,” says Hossen. “But we’ll actually want to scale the system up to the range of a million memristors on a chip or more for real-world applications. That translates to more storage and more data analysis capabilities.”

Hossen has been fine-tuning the design and fabrication of these memristor devices so that they mesh perfectly with a chip underneath. Now he’s begun handing off the chip with integrated memristors for testing by other lab members.

In 2022, GW became one of five academic research centers to partner with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Google and chip manufacturer SkyWater Technologies to create a new supply of chips for research and development. As part of the agreement, SkyWater will fabricate test chips based on designs from Adam’s team and the other academic partners and ship them to researchers in the broader community who will integrate their own memristor or other emerging-device technologies. They can then use the chips to test how memristors or other accelerator devices work in conjunction with the standard transistor technology.

“This lets us benchmark technologies,” says Adam. “We have the same underlying hardware, the same software, the same



codes, and we can test how different devices stack up against each other.”

NIST, the national lab affiliated with the Department of Commerce that’s just a short drive from GW, helps lead and coordinate much of the new CHIPS and Science Act initiatives aimed at supporting computer chip innovation in the U.S. It’s these types of university-industry-government collaborations that drew Adam to GW.

“Collaborations are very important in this field,” says Adam. “We want to be able to quickly weed out materials and technologies that are not working and focus on those technologies most likely to perform the best and make it to market.”



Ahmed Louri, the David and Marilyn Karlgaard Endowed Chair Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, also draws inspiration from the human brain in his research and collaborates with neuroscientists around the country who study the inner workings of the hippocampus—the brain’s center of emotion and memory. Already, computer algorithms called neural networks try to mimic the structure and functioning of the hippocampus to make decisions and recognize patterns. But processing such algorithms requires a significant amount of processing power and consumes excessive energy.

“What we want to do is design chips that optimize how neural networks can run efficiently,” says Louri, who has dedicated his career to developing high-performance, energy-efficient and versatile AI chips. “That means emulating the brain in functionality with much higher speed and energy efficiency: Neurons become processing elements, synapses that connect the neurons become physical wires, and the way these processing elements are connected at the physical level is completely different from that in conventional chips.”

Louri envisions an ideal AI chip, which he calls a versatile machine learning accelerator, that can execute a targeted class of AI applications much faster and with much less energy, similar to how a Swiss Army knife has many tools for specific tasks. However, unlike the Swiss Army knife, in which only one tool is used at a time, Louri’s chip will be able to execute multiple applications simultaneously. He has developed novel chip interconnects to speed up data movement between processing elements and memory modules while minimizing energy consumption. Supported with several National Science Foundation awards, the chip interconnects have demonstrated exceptional adaptability for running diverse

applications and, says Louri, are considered a promising solution for next-generation chips by an industry consortium led by major semiconductor companies.

Louri is also exploring incorporating other emerging technologies, such as silicon photonics, which use light instead of electrons to encode information, into AI chips. He’s developed photonic architectures that seamlessly connect numerous processing elements, an approach that allows for scaling the processing power to be on par with the human brain while consuming orders of magnitude lower energy compared to existing electronic chips.

Some of Louri’s motivation is driven by the need he sees for eco-friendly technology. Today, the energy consumption of computing devices and systems accounts for a significant percentage of global carbon emissions.

“Our world increasingly relies on digital systems and computer chips to record, support and shape most aspects of human activity, from commerce to transportation, from health to social networks, from experimental sciences to numerical engineering, and from manufacturing to knowledge production,” he says. “This means there are vast opportunities to improve chips and their efficiency. There is no better time than right now for the field of computer engineering.”

That excitement is echoed by El-Ghazawi, who says the growth and innovation around chip design and fabrication in his department are evidence of GW’s growing strength in this field. In addition to his own research and that of Louri and Adam, he points to the pioneering work of other faculty such as Mona Zaghoul and Guru Venkataramani.

“Together, faculty research in this area has been funded by millions of dollars and produced scores of patents and publications,” El-Ghazawi says.



In the U.S., speeding up computer chips has become a national priority, as evidenced by the estimated \$280 billion investment in the CHIPS Act passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden in 2022.

“There’s been a major drive right now to bring back chip manufacturing capabilities

to the U.S. rather than contract them out to other countries,” says El-Ghazawi. “Scientists believe that advances in these kinds of technologies will actually determine the next global superpower.”

The CHIPS Act was inspired by the fact that only about 14 percent of all semiconductors—the fundamental materials of chips—are currently manufactured in the U.S., a drastic drop from the 37 percent of semiconductors made here in 1990. The act includes direct funding for research like that carried out at GW but also money to support new chip manufacturing facilities

and to invest in education related to semiconductor research, development and manufacturing.


“This is going to create tremendous opportunities for our electrical and computer engineering students,” says El-Ghazawi, referring to the push for new jobs in the semiconductor industry.

GW’s Nanofabrication Center is helping students—from interested high schoolers to students at GW—learn the nuts and bolts of this industry, including how to collaborate with researchers in other fields.

It’s what allowed Zhang—under Adam’s mentorship—to design his chips for future cardiac implants.

He and Adam are collaborating with Igor Efimov, a professor who specializes in cardiovascular engineering and who recently moved from GW’s biomedical engineering department to Northwestern University. Together they are working to design the appropriate algorithms and memristor chips for future testing on heart tissue. While still experimental, their proposed system has already shown 96% accuracy at detecting abnormal heart rhythms.

For Adam, who credits her early teachers in Romania with inspiring her to pursue science, the work with Zhang and Efimov demonstrates how critical both mentorship and partnership are to science.

“I was fortunate to have amazing mentors throughout my education, and my goal is to pay that forward,” she says. “I want students to not only be able to learn the science and engineering concepts but also how to get along with and collaborate with people in diverse fields and from diverse backgrounds.” 

## “THERE ARE VAST OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE CHIPS AND THEIR EFFICIENCY. THERE IS NO BETTER TIME THAN RIGHT NOW FOR THE FIELD OF COMPUTER ENGINEERING.”

### AHMED LOURI

David and Marilyn Karlgaard  
Endowed Chair Professor  
of Electrical and Computer  
Engineering





After creating the wildly popular POPSUGAR, Lisa and Brian Sugar are making aspiring entrepreneurs' dreams come true.



# DREAMING

B

I

G

G

E

R

Alumna and POPSUGAR founder Lisa Sugar pivots to funding—to power the future of commerce.

Story // By Caite Hamilton

COURTESY OF LISA SUGAR

# There's a paragraph in "Power Your Happy," Lisa Sugar's 2016 self-actualization book, where the author confesses, "I don't believe in having a five-year plan."

It seems a bit incredible, given that Sugar, B.A. '98, is the founder of the mega-popular (as in, audience-of-100-million kind of popular) women's pop culture, lifestyle and beauty website POPSUGAR. It's difficult to achieve that level of success simply by following your whims—but that's exactly what Sugar has done her whole career. In 2020, she followed a new one and launched VC firm Sugar Capital with her husband, Brian, and together, they're taking the same energy that grew a happy little blog into a \$300 million media empire and using it to reshape American commerce.



To hear her tell it, Lisa and Brian were just two kids who fell in love their first week at GW—she was drawn to his confidence, he admired her FIFA soccer chops on Sega Genesis—and have been finding new ways to achieve success (in whatever form that might take) ever since. They subscribe to a “just-do-it” philosophy. “We never hesitate to act on promising ideas or expand into new businesses we believe in,” she writes in the book. For his part, Brian left GW after his third year to establish an internet service provider, which led to e-commerce work with major brands like J. Crew, Kmart and Martha Stewart. Sugar's path was slightly more serpentine, seizing any opportunity and landing in the advertising world early on—first in New York City with Young & Rubicam



**Lisa and Brian Sugar met their first week as undergrads at GW.**

and eventually Showtime, and later in San Francisco, where the couple is still based, with Goodby Silverstein & Partners. But her heart was in entertainment, and, on the side, she'd write up recommendations and email them to friends to satisfy her creative itch.

She wanted to be writing. Sugar always felt the most academically capable in her English classes, and early encouragement from teachers in high school (where she turned in a paper with the title “I Don't Know Yet!” handwritten at the top, an early sign of her informal, approachable style) and college (where she wrote a paper comparing an episode of “The Simpsons” to Goethe's “Faust”) helped her turn the talent into a true passion. But her work at Goodby didn't afford a lot of opportunity to use her gift, so in the fall of 2005, at the urging of Om Malik, a friend of the couple and an up-and-coming media titan himself, Sugar started writing a blog.

While these days it's not unusual to open Instagram and see everyone from big-time influencers to your aunt Cathy hawking their favorite products, back in 2005, blogs like POPSUGAR—that is, friendly, first-person journal-type writing that provided recs on everything from what to watch to what to wear—were just starting to take off. Print media had yet to figure out online content integration, and sites like blog network Gawker and gossipy TMZ had taken over the web, giving rise to a certain brand of celeb-obsessed

muckraker.

POPSUGAR had a different voice, one that approached the same kind of stories but from a place of curiosity rather than voyeurism, empathy rather than spite. Sugar's job at the ad agency gave her access to early releases of magazines and TV shows, and her reviews and recommendations provided the basis for the website's content for the next 18 years (and counting).

“I started practicing this daily exercise of writing, whether it was a fun article that I read or a show,” Sugar says. “I wasn't even telling people about it because I felt like people didn't know what blogs were. They weren't going to understand.”

Sugar's tone resonated with the readers she did share the blog with, and eventually with bigwigs at movie studios and media companies. She took an almost compulsive approach to content creation, writing early in the morning, on workday breaks—even getting back in front of her laptop just days after the couple's first daughter, Katie, was born. The hard work paid off: Within its first 11 months, POPSUGAR's audience had grown to an unprecedented 1 million readers, necessitating a move to a bigger server and prompting Brian to join the company full time to help grow it into a full-fledged business. The rapid growth also drew the attention of venture capital firms like Sequoia Capital, which gave the company a \$5 million investment that allowed them to hire more writers, take on bigger stories and expand their content.

“We envisioned reimagining the newsstand,” Sugar says. “Looking at health and wellness, looking at fashion and beauty, looking at parenting—all these categories of different magazines that you would go buy and just put it all in one place.”

From there, they acquired ShopStyle, an e-commerce site, and enabled readers to click and purchase the items POPSUGAR was recommending, directly from the site. They expanded to video, producing everything from live feeds of the Oscars red carpet to exercise content. The site launched a successful subscription box, licensed clothing lines and hosted a weekend-long festival with celebrity speakers, shopping booths and group workouts. By the time Sugar handed over the day-to-day duties at her eponymous media company (following its sale to media conglomerate Group Nine in 2019 and merger with Vox in 2022), the company had grown from a party of two to a staff of more than 500 employees across the globe—and it was time for Sugar's next move.



Brian launched Sugar Capital in September 2020 with an initial fund of \$16 million,

which the company deployed to just over 30 founders. Sugar, who came on board after POPSUGAR landed at Vox, says they have a leg up over other investor competition because they can take what they've learned as founders themselves and apply the experience to up-and-comers in the consumer and commerce tech fields.

"I do think that the fact that we were founders of our own company—that we spent many years building in a variety of different ways—is something that appeals to a lot of founders when they talk to us," Sugar says. "It's definitely not a traditional VC trajectory for a lot of our founders. They're meeting with VCs that have a lot of money and are great visionaries as well, but they don't necessarily have that founder background and history."

Sugar joined the firm for the sophomore fundraise, and together she, Brian and two other Sugar Capital founding partners—Will Hawthorne, a former executive director at JP Morgan, and Krista Moatz, a POPSUGAR co-founder—acquired \$33 million, which, Sugar says, they'll deploy into early-stage companies shaping the way we as consumers buy, sell and do business. (Sugar Capital also reserves about 20 percent of the budget for consumer brands.)

"We love to power the brands and the tools and the technology—all the stuff on the back end that a lot of people don't see—to make brands grow and thrive and become successful," Sugar says. In other words, they go after what's called the "picks and shovels," like Reflex, a staffing solution that allows associates to float between retail jobs where they're needed, or Violet, a universal checkout system that enables users to buy products directly in any platform, from social media to text messages.

The Sugars have a knack for disrupting the industry. Remember, Sugar eschews the idea of a traditional five-year plan, so their success comes less from planning ahead than looking ahead. It's a skill she and Brian honed while growing POPSUGAR—the site was at the forefront when it came to utilizing SEO data analysis, video content and e-commerce, among other things—and it's that same innovation that powers the Sugars' interest in emerging brands.

"Brian, one hundred percent, is fueled by what is next to be disrupted and how we can solve for that," Sugar says. "I remember him telling my parents way back when we first met that no one's going to have phones attached to walls anymore—everyone's going to have one in their back pocket. He's always had that vision toward what's next."

Unlike POPSUGAR, which emphasized spotting and responding to trends in real time, Sugar Capital allows Sugar to get in



**"We love to power the brands and the tools and the technology—all the stuff on the backend that a lot of people don't see—to make brands grow and thrive and become successful."**

● ● ●  
Lisa Sugar




on the what's next even earlier and invest in the emerging players that could change the game over the next three, five and 10 years.

One such company, Exponent Beauty, attracted the investors as a beauty industry disruptor. A line of skincare that protects anti-aging ingredients for peak clinical potency ("Today's skincare contains active ingredients that degrade rapidly once exposed to air, light, water," says the company's founder, Liz Whitman), Exponent received pre-seed money from Sugar Capital in February 2020 that allowed the company to ready its line of products for manufacturing, as well as to launch the brand on [exponentbeauty.com](https://www.exponentbeauty.com). Sugar Capital was there at each step.

"While I work with the whole team on various business decisions, I rely on Lisa, in particular, when it comes to product development, assortment strategy and retail targets," says Whitman. "Lisa is certainly enthusiastic and supportive but, importantly, very thoughtful with a kind way of providing useful suggestions for improvements or new approaches, which I very much appreciate." Whitman echoes what Sugar believes is the investors' superpower: "Our founders appreciate that we can see where they're coming from and relate on a much different level than just people with wallets."

It's not entirely altruistic—as business owners, the Sugars obviously focus on companies and brands they believe will be financially viable. But, from the beginning, Sugar has done things a little differently, with an approachable voice and a unique point of view. This still comes through, everywhere from emails—she often leaves punctuation off the ends of sentences and peppers in emoticons to communicate a friendlier tone—to the Sugar Capital branding, which boasts a logo reminiscent of pop art and subs in Memojis for headshots on the company bio page. It's a more youthful *modus operandi* than some of their competitors, and signals that their eye is trained on the next generation—of commerce, of consumer needs, even of their own three daughters, who have grown up watching their parents build a business and, lately, fund others' growing businesses, too.

"[Our daughters] are seeing that there are always new chapters and seeing us, as their parents, helping other people achieve dreams that we had when we created POPSUGAR," Sugar says. "That's something that's pretty cool for them." And it's pretty cool for Sugar, too. With her trendspotting blogging days behind her, she's open to the possibilities.

"In the VC space," she says, "I'm seeing more of the future." 

# Alumni Profiles

OUR ALUMNI ARE PROTECTING THE PLANET, FOSTERING DIVERSITY AND TURNING A NEW LENS ON DISABILITY.

HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR STORIES.

ALUMNI  
PROFILES  
FEATURE  
STORIES

## MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE

ED REYNOLDS IS SAVING EARTH ONE ASTEROID AT A TIME.

by AMANDA LOUDIN



A typical evening out for **Ed Reynolds, M.S. '13**, does not include rubbing elbows with the likes of Beyoncé, Aubrey Plaza or Britney Griner, but he found himself in their company last April. “TIME” named Reynolds one of its “100 Most Influential People of 2023” for his lead role in developing and launching NASA’s DART mission, and that’s how he landed on the red carpet at Lincoln Center in New York City.

DART, which stands for Double Asteroid Redirection Test, was the first ever mission to demonstrate that humans could deflect an asteroid if needed in order to protect Earth.

After a decade in the works, DART caught the world’s attention in September 2022 when it proved its ability to significantly slow an asteroid’s speed. The DART spacecraft was traveling at 14,000 miles per hour when it deliberately collided with Dimorphos, an asteroid the size of an Egyptian pyramid or small stadium, about 7 million miles away from Earth. The collision changed Dimorphos’ orbital period by 33 minutes.

It was the first time in history humans were able to change the orbit of a celestial body, and its success marked the first demonstration of a planetary defense system by NASA.

“This mission shows that NASA is trying to be ready for whatever the universe throws at us. NASA has proven we are serious as a defender of the planet,” said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. “This is a watershed moment for planetary defense and all of humanity, demonstrating commitment from NASA’s exceptional team and partners from around the world.”

DART was envisioned and led by the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab (APL), and the project capped Reynolds’ nearly 40-year career at APL, the nation’s largest university-affiliated research center.

Reynolds joined APL in 1985 after earning an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech. He landed in APL’s space department and began work on a small polar satellite. Its intent was to understand communication dropouts caused by auroral phenomenon. Other early projects included work on the Reagan-era Strategic Defense Initiative and partner projects with Russian space teams.

Around 1990, Reynolds and APL got their first shot at partnering with NASA on a planetary mission.

As part of that partnership, Reynolds began work on the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR) mission, NASA’s first mission to orbit and land on an asteroid.

“NEAR orbited the asteroid Eros for a year before landing on it and collecting valuable data,” he said.

Since then, APL teams have completed missions to Pluto, Mercury, around the sun and more. Along the way, Reynolds earned a master’s in project management from GW’s School of Business.

“It was a great fit for me,” Reynolds said. “They had a formalized program for the work I was already doing, and it was strong in all the areas I needed.”

“The best class I had was statistics, and the decision optimization class I took was really useful,” he added. “The degree formalized my training, and both NASA and APL recognized that.”

When APL team members began exploring the idea of somehow preventing a major asteroid from causing a catastrophic collision with Earth, the team was well positioned to take it on.

“The idea of planetary defense has been floating around for a long time,” Reynolds said. “In 1908, an asteroid hit Siberia and flattened everything within a 50-mile radius. We’re just lucky it wasn’t in a populated area.”

A much smaller asteroid (about 20 meters in size) exploded over Chelyabinsk, Russia, in 2013. Shortly after that event, NASA formed the Planetary Defense Coordination Office,

which funded the DART mission.

NASA initially tried collaborating with a European team, but when the European funding dried up, NASA decided to keep going with APL.

Reynolds entered the DART project as project manager in 2019 and fostered it to success last fall. As manager, he led hundreds of team members from APL, industry, academia and government worldwide.

“Every time we had a fork in the road and options on the level of rigor, we chose more rigor. For instance, if we considered changing the thermal control settings using software, we then tested it to greatly increase the odds we could hit the asteroid,” he said.

During the “cruise” phase, which spanned the 10 months it took to reach the asteroid, they used Jupiter and some of its moons as proxies for Dimorphos. That system allowed them to test the camera and algorithms to hit the asteroid.

“It was a huge success,” he said, “and it became a big milestone event. The entire planet has a vested interest in this—earthlings now have a tool in the toolbox should a real asteroid threat show up. It was a joy and relief that it all worked out so successfully.”



**Reynolds on the day of the DART launch, Nov. 23, 2021, at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.**



CHINEMELU OKAFOR

# FOSTERING DIVERSITY IN ECONOMICS

*CHINEMELU OKAFOR CREATED THE RESEARCH IN COLOR FOUNDATION TO AID ASPIRING ECONOMISTS OF COLOR.*

by GREG VARNER

**Chinemelu Okafor, M.A. '18**, credits one of her uncles with pointing her toward a career in economics. Originally, she had planned to major in engineering, but the words of her uncle, Ambassador Chiedu Osakwe, carried great weight. A noted diplomat, he was Nigeria's chief trade negotiator and served as director of the Accessions Division of the World Trade Organization.

"My uncle was very well respected, and he was a hero to me," Okafor said. "Everything he said and did was exceptional. He said, 'Chinemelu, you should major in economics,' and I switched. And economics just clicked for me—engineering did not click for me as much."

She now recognizes the strategic value of her uncle's career advice, because economists have tools that can be applied in many different areas, such as political science, anthropology and sociology.

"I think that's what he was getting at in telling me that I should go into economics," Okafor said. "Economists have an exceptional toolkit to understand people,



and those tools can be used in many different places. It was a strategic thing for my uncle to say to me about my career path.”

As an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, she was a double major in international studies and economics, graduating in 2015. The next stop on her academic path was GW, where she earned a master’s degree in applied economics.

During her time at GW, she worked as a research assistant at the World Bank, where she met Tristan Reed, who became her mentor. His professional background in West Africa, working as an associate at McKinsey & Company and living in Lagos, piqued her interest in collaborating with him. He had earned a Ph.D. from Harvard and worked as an economist at the World Bank.

“He would introduce me to people I would never have known otherwise and say, ‘This is Chinemelu. She’s interested in a Ph.D., and she’s going to do excellent things. You need to know her.’ He believed in me. And that experience, of a mentor speaking highly of you, is so necessary. It helps you get into different doors.”

Apart from facilitating her entry into the world of professional economics, Reed also bolstered her confidence.

“People value Tristan’s word,” she said, “and if he tells people I am excellent, then I have no other choice but to assume the position of excellence.”

She and Reed still communicate frequently. He helped guide her on the path to her Ph.D., which she is currently pursuing at Harvard. She is not yet sure whether she’ll pursue a career in academia or in industry, and says she is keeping her options open. This year, she returned to the Washington, D.C., area for a one-year stint with the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

Working with Reed as her mentor filled her with gratitude for the role a mentor plays in the life of economics students and with a

heightened awareness of its importance for mentees. She leads the Research In Color Foundation, an organization dedicated to matching aspiring economists of color with mentors who can help them find a way through the opacities of the economics profession, generally, and Ph.D. pipeline, specifically.

“There was a world of information and inspiration my mentor brought to me that I imagined was inaccessible for others who look like me—who don’t have such a mentor—in a field that does not look like them,” Okafor said.

Her work with the Research In Color Foundation resulted in Okafor being named last year to the “Forbes” annual “30 Under 30” lists recognizing distinguished young leaders in American business, education, media and industry. Okafor was named on the education list. Two other George Washington University alumni also made the “Forbes” lists last year: Yara Bishara, B.A. ’15, was selected in media, and Gabriella Tegen, B.B.A. ’16, was named on the retail and commerce list.

The mentorship program of the Research In Color Foundation helps mentees write cover letters and résumés, and prepare for interviews, among other things. The foundation also provides funding through scholarships and fellowships.

The Research In Color Foundation matches mentees

and mentors in a one-on-one mentorship program where they spend eight months completing an independent research project of their own choosing and then present it at the annual conference in August.

Helping aspiring economists of color is about more than overcoming financial barriers, Okafor said.

“There are hidden rules,” she said, “even pertaining to the way that you should present your résumé in LaTeX, because LaTeX has a

specific font that economists use. There are signals that you do not pick up on unless you have somebody who knows those signals. It’s really important to have somebody you can trust and lean on in these spaces to guide you. And I had that when I went to GW and met my mentor. It has really changed my life.”

Nor can the importance of having more economists of color be overstated, Okafor said.

“There are studies that have shown that when you have more diverse groups, they are able to come to more optimal outcomes for whatever it is that they’re looking to achieve,” Okafor said.

“Your experiences and the perspectives that you bring when you are faced with an economic problem might be completely different because of the communities that you’ve come from,” she said. “For example, I bring a lot of thought from Nigeria. I’m an American, but in my household I’m very Nigerian. Having individuals from diverse backgrounds can help you solve problems more effectively.”

Now that she has not only had a mentor but also been a mentor, Okafor said, she realizes that the mentor/mentee relationship works both ways, with the mentor growing along with the mentee.

“In building any relationship,” Okafor said, “there’s a give and take and there’s communication. An underappreciated aspect of mentorship is that both individuals can grow when mentees feel like they are heard and seen.”

Being in the area to work on the White House Council of Economic Advisers allows her to visit the GW campus. She recently came to Foggy Bottom to meet with Ronald Bird, an adjunct professor of economics, and Joann Weiner, director of the Master’s in Applied Economics Program. She is planning to return to campus for the program’s events throughout the year.

Okafor leads a busy life, traveling to France, Switzerland, New York, Nigeria and elsewhere for research and pleasure. She enjoys going to the gym, spending time with friends and exploring the arts, music perhaps most of all. She’s a fan of Igbo music, which often features the sound of the Oja, a hollow flute.

“The idea is that the Oja speaks to the spirits,” Okafor said. “The Oja is talking to individuals beyond this realm. I listen to a lot of Igbo music that uses the Oja. And I also listen to classical music. I listen to dance hall music from Jamaica. Those are definitely my top three kinds of music.”

After talking with Okafor, it’s not hard to agree that her uncle’s career advice was just right.

**“THERE WAS A WORLD OF INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION MY MENTOR BROUGHT TO ME, THAT I IMAGINED WAS INACCESSIBLE FOR OTHERS WHO LOOK LIKE ME—WHO DON’T HAVE SUCH A MENTOR—IN A FIELD THAT DOES NOT LOOK LIKE THEM.”**

REID DAVENPORT

# REDEFINING DISABILITY THROUGH THE LENS OF ART

*AWARD-WINNING  
FILMMAKER  
REID  
DAVENPORT  
CREATES  
HIS FILMS  
WITH AN EYE  
TOWARD  
“REMOVING  
SYSTEMIC  
BARRIERS  
IN SOCIETY.”*

by **BROOK ENDALE**

**Reid Davenport, B.A.'12**, wants his audience to question why things—all things—are the way they are. His feature film, “I Didn’t See You There,” landed him the Sundance Film Festival’s U.S. Documentary Directing Award in 2022.

Davenport, who is disabled, shot the movie from his electric wheelchair, taking viewers along as he navigates the streets of Oakland, California, unveiling the glaring inaccessibility that can impact a disabled individual’s everyday life. The innovative film was hailed for its ability to showcase Davenport’s vantage point and spark a shift in society’s understanding of disability as a political term.

Davenport’s passion for filmmaking began during his time at GW, where he attended the School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA) with assistance from a Presidential Scholarship. In 2011, he wanted to go on a study abroad trip to Florence along with many of his friends and classmates.

However, the university in Italy declined his application, citing its inability to accommodate his wheelchair on its campus.

“I was devastated. I knew that most of my friends were going abroad,” Davenport said. “After a while, I decided I was done being upset about it and wanted to do something productive instead. It prompted this idea to make a documentary about that experience.” Davenport was enrolled in Associate Professor



of Media and Public Affairs Jason Osder's Introduction to Media Production class at SMPA.

Before the class started, Davenport requested a meeting with Osder to make sure accommodations could be made to allow him to participate in the physical aspects of the class, including shooting video.

"It was great he wanted to talk, and I assured him we'd work it out," Osder said. "So when Reid came into my office for that first time, I hadn't thought to rearrange the chairs in my office. There was no room for his wheelchair, and I got very flustered."

Davenport looked at Osder and said, "It's OK," before proceeding to bulldoze the chairs out of his way. Osder still laughs when reflecting on his first meeting Davenport, saying he knew right away he'd get along with him.

Osder served as a mentor to Davenport as he decided to use the rejection from the study abroad trip as inspiration to make a documentary exploring what it is like living with a disability in Europe.

"It is always exciting when a student comes to me and says they want to work on a project and want my help," Osder said. "When a student is passionate, and it comes from a personal place, and they want my support in making a project, that's even better."

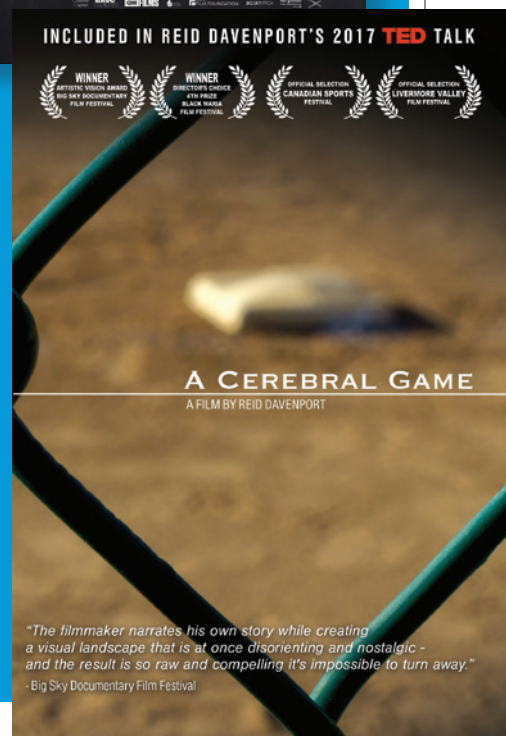
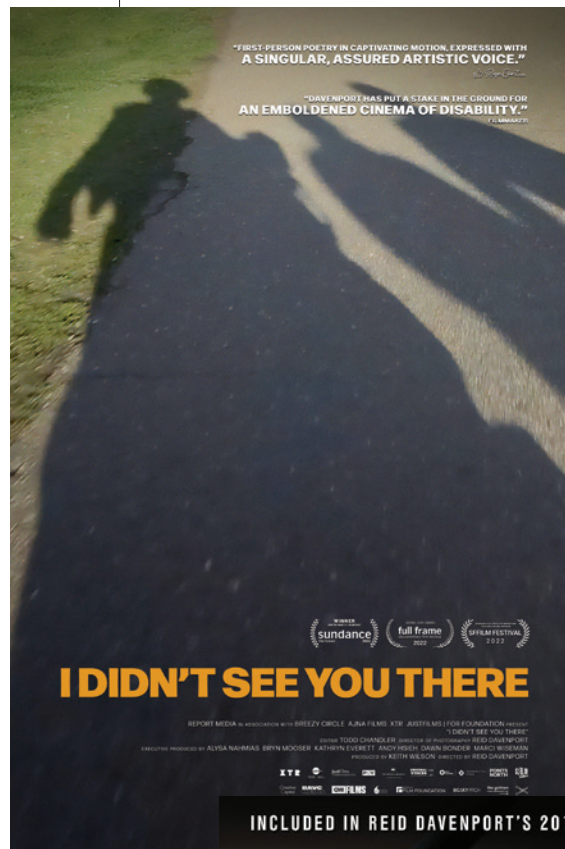
That led to one of Davenport's earliest projects, "Wheelchair Diaries." Davenport was able to raise money and visit four European countries—Ireland, Belgium, Italy and France—in three weeks.

Davenport used that time to document the lives of Europeans living with disabilities and brought to light the pressing issues surrounding accessibility that persist internationally.

"It was really powerful in that I was able to kind of take all of this pain I had about not being able to study abroad and turn it into something productive that people could see, and people could question why things are the way they are," Davenport said.

He credits Osder for mentoring him through the process of making the film.

"That's very rare, very unlikely for an undergraduate student project to raise that kind of money and certainly to wind up as a distributed film," Osder said. "That's the only



**Davenport's award-winning and deeply personal films include "I Didn't See You There" and "A Cerebral Game."**

time it has ever happened to me in 16 years of teaching."

After graduating from GW in 2012, Davenport was accepted into Stanford University's Master of Fine Arts Documentary Production program.

Davenport continued to make other films, including "A Cerebral Game," which won the Artistic Vision Award at the 2016 Big Sky Documentary Film Festival.

"After I made my first film, I was a little hesitant to keep making films about disability," Davenport said. "However, I went back to making films about disability, because I feel that documentaries about disability are usually very corrosive and perpetuate stereotypes. There need to be more films about the positives of being disabled, and that's why I like to make films on the topic."

Davenport's work has received widespread acclaim and has been featured in national publications.

Osder said he couldn't be prouder of Davenport's career, calling "I Didn't See You There" a skillful work of art.

"It's wildly creative, and it presents something to society that's somewhat unique. That is, instead of looking at me to think about my experience, look through my eyes and think about my experience," Osder said. "It's truly a creative and artistic triumph."

Davenport said when he worked on "I Didn't See You There," he didn't foresee the film getting the reception it ended up receiving.

"It was gratifying. I made this film for disabled people," Davenport said. "I wanted disabled people to resonate with it. And to hear how non-disabled people also resonated with it was a big surprise. It's something I'm still trying to wrap my head around."

As he looks forward to what's next in his career, Davenport is excited to keep making films. His upcoming project, "Life After," will explore the political ideologies surrounding death and disability while giving a voice to the disabled community in the debate around medically assisted suicide.

Through his films, Davenport wants his audience to rethink how they view disability.

"The idea that disability isn't an individual medical diagnosis but rather a political class of marginalized people with shared experiences. It's about removing systemic barriers in society," Davenport said.

ALUMNI  
PROFILES



## FLYING HIGH

***RYAN PATTERSON  
IS A STAR AVIATION  
PHOTOGRAPHER.  
HIS UNIQUE TOP-  
DOWN VIEWS OF  
PLANES HAVE  
TAKEN OFF AROUND  
THE WORLD.***

by JOHN DICONSIGLIO

**Ryan Patterson, B.A. '22, M.S. '23,** has a secret: He's afraid of heights.

That's not unusual for many people—even for Patterson, a former organizational sciences major and champion swimmer at the George Washington University who is now an intern with Delta Airlines.

But it's his side gig that's surprising: Patterson is one of the aviation industry's most celebrated photographers. His top-down shots of airplanes snapped seconds after takeoff have sold for thousands of dollars, garnered 238,000 Instagram followers and appeared in media outlets from "USA Today" to "Good Morning America."

And to capture that unique

aerial perspective, the acrophobic Patterson takes his photography to hair-raising heights. He hovers above the planes—hanging out of helicopters at 2,000 feet above the ground.

"Believe it or not, it doesn't feel that high up," Patterson laughed. "Airplanes are beautiful. Being close enough to photograph them in flight is an unbelievable thrill."

Patterson had his fair share of exciting moments at GW—many of them in the swimming pool. In his five-year career, the star backstroke swimmer led the GW men's swim team to conference titles including the 2023 Atlantic 10 Championship. He also competed in the 2021 Olympic trials. Meanwhile, his photography contracts for airlines like Delta, American and United took him to destinations from Sydney to New York.

In the classroom, Patterson focused on management skills—he never took a photojournalism course—and tailored his studies toward preparing for a career on the business side of the airline industry.

"Ryan, like many students from our Organizational Sciences Program, is both capitalizing on his own drive, motivation and raw talent—as well as pulling from foundational work within our program," said Nils Olsen, assistant professor of organizational sciences. "We take pride in the way our organizational sciences students can flex to a variety of professional and intellectual opportunities."

Photography and planes have been Patterson's dual passions since he was a child in the Bay Area. He spent Sunday afternoons with his father at Bayfront Park, watching 747s soar over San Francisco Airport.

"Probably every aviation industry professional has a similar story," he said. "It's a scene that sticks with you for your entire life."

Patterson picked up his first camera—his grandmother's one megapixel point-and-shoot—when he was just 6 years old. Almost immediately, he began shooting airport scenes, filling frames with family vacation pictures of planes at boarding gates. Soon, he honed his lens on his own model airplanes—his Instagram name is still @diecastryan—and studied aerial photos on social media.

In 2016, Patterson found a way to combine his two loves. He and his father chartered a helicopter in Los Angeles to fly over LAX. As planes took off below them, Patterson leaned outside the helicopter door and snapped photos at a rarely seen angle—from above.

"It's a unique shot," he said. "We aren't used to looking at planes like that."

Before the helicopter touched down,

Patterson was already planning his next flight. Saving his babysitting and swim lessons earnings, he soon chartered another helicopter and took more top-down photos. His work caught the eyes of major airlines, which began contracting him for promotional shoots. When Patterson was just 18, United Airlines used his photographs to celebrate the retirement of the 747—the same plane he'd grown up watching over Bayfront Park.

"That was a special opportunity for me," he said. "The 747 was my favorite airplane. I have great memories of them and the time I spent with my dad."

### GROUNDING BY COVID

By his sophomore year at GW, Patterson was one of the biggest names in aviation photography. But in 2020, COVID-19 hit, grounding much of the industry. Patterson continued to work with airlines, often donating his photos in place of lost marketing services.

"For me this has never been about making money," he said. "I looked at it as a goodwill gesture. The people in the aviation industry have a special place in my heart."

Patterson started taking photos from a new angle—images of empty planes lined up in storage across runways. The eerie shots were sometimes hard to look at, he admitted. But he knew he was documenting a chapter in history. He initially refrained from posting them out of respect for his airline colleagues. But today, Patterson said, they are among his most popular—and powerful—photos.

"People have an appreciation for them as a record of a once-in-a-lifetime event," he said. "They think, 'Where was I not going during the pandemic? What trip did I have to cancel? What did I miss?'"

Airplanes aren't Patterson's only subject. His commercial photography has taken him to shoots in locales like Dubai and the Maldives. And he helped Nikon develop a camera with special modes for filming airplanes.

Meanwhile, his own plane


pics continue to take off with commercial and private buyers alike. He often corrects misimpressions that they are taken with drones. And he emphasized that each runway session takes weeks of preparation and involves collecting permits and coordinating with air traffic controllers and pilots.

"I am never in the way of the actual airline operations," he noted. "I'm kind of a fly on the wall—or in the air."

Currently a member of Delta's customer service improvement team in Atlanta, Patterson has hung up both his swim goggles and his camera—for now. He still hopes to one day check London's Heathrow Airport off his photoshoot wish list.

But he's focusing his flight plan on the industry's executive career path.

"I absolutely love my job, and I would not trade it for any other in the world," he said. "Photography will always be my passion.

It got me in the door. But there are a lot of roles in this industry, and there are a lot of opportunities for me to explore." 

**Below: Patterson photographed these stored airplanes in Marana, Arizona, during the peak of the pandemic in 2020.**



# IMPACT OF PHILANTHROPY



LEFT TO RIGHT Eliza Ward, museum development director; Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Donna Arbide; Provost Christopher Alan Bracey; President Ellen M. Granberg; Bruce Baganz, Textile Museum board chair and GW Museum board co-chair.

## INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

# The Textile Museum Receives Record \$25 Million Gift

**ANONYMOUS DONATION TRANSFORMS AND SUSTAINS WORLD-CLASS TEXTILE CONSERVATION, CURATORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES.**

// By Eliza Ward

In September, President Ellen M. Granberg announced an anonymous \$25 million gift to support The Textile Museum, the single largest investment in the museum's history. Over nearly 100 years, The Textile Museum has gained an international reputation for excellence in research, exhibitions and educational programs that explore textile art as global cultural heritage, with collections spanning five continents and five millennia. The museum's conservation program has been a pioneer in innovative practices

in textile care and providing specialized training for conservators.

The Textile Museum reopened in its new home at the George Washington University in 2015, bringing new opportunities to invigorate research and scholarship, transform collections care and prepare the next generation of museum professionals.

"This extremely generous gift will have a transformational impact on The Textile Museum," Granberg said. "The museum is recognized as a center of excellence for the

international prominence of its collections, its academic mission and its global community. These funds will allow us to expand our leading work in textile collections care, scholarship and museum training for generations to come.”

The bulk of the gift, \$24 million, will be placed in an endowment to provide long-term support for textile conservation, curatorial scholarship and educational initiatives. As The Textile Museum prepares for its centennial celebration in 2025, the remaining \$1 million will fund current needs including new equipment for conservation, enhancements to the Textiles 101 learning center, technology to facilitate virtual programming and preserve the museum’s digital resources, and other centennial priorities.

“This extraordinary gift acknowledges the worldwide relevance of our museum’s collections, invests in our museum professionals and recognizes our responsibility to share, collaborate and facilitate access to global heritage,” said John Wetenhall, director of the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum. “It also signals an investment in the future of textiles: training the next generation of scholars and museum professionals and expanding the museum’s audience through digital learning.”

In the 2022-23 academic year, the museum employed approximately 40 GW students on a part-time basis, offering hands-on exposure to museum professions. “My work at The Textile Museum has developed new skills that will help me in my future career,” said Emma Stewart, an M.A. student in GW’s Museum Studies Program who works in the museum’s curatorial department. “I’ve had opportunities to complete collection inventories, physically handle textiles, conduct research and get exposure to methods and materials, and learn how to work with a variety of professionals across the museum.”

Donna Arbide, GW’s vice president for development and alumni relations, noted that the gift reflects the donor’s belief in The Textile Museum’s enduring capacity for impact. “Investing in GW with a gift of this size is an incredible testament to our leadership in textile studies and



**TOP Director John Wetenhall is among the staff at the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum who teach and mentor GW students interested in pursuing museum careers. BOTTOM Chief Conservator and Margaret Wing Dodge Chair of Conservation Maria Fusco oversees the conservation lab at the museum’s Avenir Foundation Conservation and Collections Resource Center.**

preservation. We are honored by this gift, which demonstrates faith in The Textile Museum to protect and promote cultural heritage that is significant across the globe.”

Twelve million dollars in endowed funds for conservation and curatorial engagement will underwrite students and visiting scholars, advance research and scholarship, and support the museum’s Avenir Foundation Conservation and Collections Resource Center on GW’s Virginia Science

and Technology campus. The conservation lab preserves more than 25,000 textiles in the collections and prepares them for display in museum exhibitions. It also serves aspiring conservators through training programs and graduate fellowships.

Another \$12 million establishes a new endowment to support onsite museum education and broaden global reach through digital initiatives, ensuring the museum continues to be an integral part of teaching, research and learning at GW.

Priorities include appointing a new educator dedicated to engaging faculty and students, as well as creating academic courses and paid student positions. Endowed funds will also support museum staff professional development.

Additionally, the endowment will fund the hardware, software and staffing to activate The Textile Museum Collection online, focusing special support on interpretation by our community of students, faculty and independent researchers. These endeavors

will also ensure the preservation and dissemination of digital images of collection artworks and the archives of leading textile scholars.

“This remarkable donor’s generosity ensures The Textile Museum of enduring reach as it addresses the key challenge of cultivating successive generations of those who appreciate textiles as art and cultural heritage,” said Bruce P. Baganz, chairman of The Textile Museum’s board of trustees and co-chair of the George Washington University Museum’s board. “This investment fundamentally advances our aspirations for the museum’s international leadership in art, scholarship, education and fostering cultural understanding.”

Arbide added that she frequently stops by the museum in Foggy Bottom to see the latest exhibitions, noting that the facility is free and open to the public, not just the GW community. “Textiles provide a unique view into cultures that have existed since the dawn of civilization,” she said. “The museum is a truly remarkable gem.”

FROM LEFT Sonya Rankin, Tony Goldwyn, Kerry Washington and President Ellen M. Granberg backstage at Lisner Auditorium at an event celebrating Washington's new memoir.



INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

# Kerry Washington Creates \$1 Million Earl and Valerie Washington Endowed Scholarship Fund to Open Doors to a Liberal Arts Education at GW

**EMMY-WINNING ACTOR, PRODUCER, ACTIVIST, FORMER TRUSTEE AND ALUMNA ESTABLISHES NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF HER PARENTS. // By Ann McMaster**

Distinguished alumna Kerry Washington, B.A. '98, HON '13, has established the Earl and Valerie Washington Endowed Scholarship Fund to honor her parents and support need-based undergraduate study at the George Washington University. President Ellen M. Granberg announced the scholarship at a September event on GW's Foggy Bottom campus celebrating Washington's new memoir, "Thicker than Water."

The memoir includes Washington's journey to GW from the Bronx as an undergraduate, supported by a Presidential Performing Arts Scholarship. "With my scholarship, I was being paid not just to act



but to learn how to act; I was given a toolbox to access and harness the magic,” Washington writes in her book.

At GW, Washington engaged in the work of theater in the costume and scene shop, in auditions and performances and through intensive coursework. It was at GW that Washington “fell more deeply in love with the craft” and decided to pursue acting as a profession.

The Earl and Valerie Washington Endowed Scholarship Fund, named for her father, a real estate broker, and her mother, an educator, supports undergraduate students in need of financial support pursuing liberal arts degrees at GW’s Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. As an endowed fund, this generous support will endure

in perpetuity, offering scholarships to many future generations of GW students.

“Kerry is a remarkable example of the determination and success so many GW alumni achieve in their chosen fields. We are so proud of what she has accomplished in her life and career and the grace and generosity she continues to model,” said Granberg. “We are so grateful that she has chosen to honor her parents in this very special way, and that she continues to be an active part of the GW community.”

In addition to a noted career in television, film and civic life,

**“With my scholarship, I was being paid not just to act but to learn how to act; I was given a toolbox to access and harness the magic.”**

**Kerry Washington**

way many GW alumni walk the talk,” said Donna Arbide, GW’s vice president for development and alumni relations. “She is committed to her career and to making a meaningful difference through her philanthropy and her activism. It is particularly moving that she has chosen to honor her parents by supporting future generations.”

Washington is heavily involved with social and

Washington has been an active supporter of her alma mater as a trustee, a Commencement speaker and a Monumental Alumna.

“Kerry is a remarkable example of the

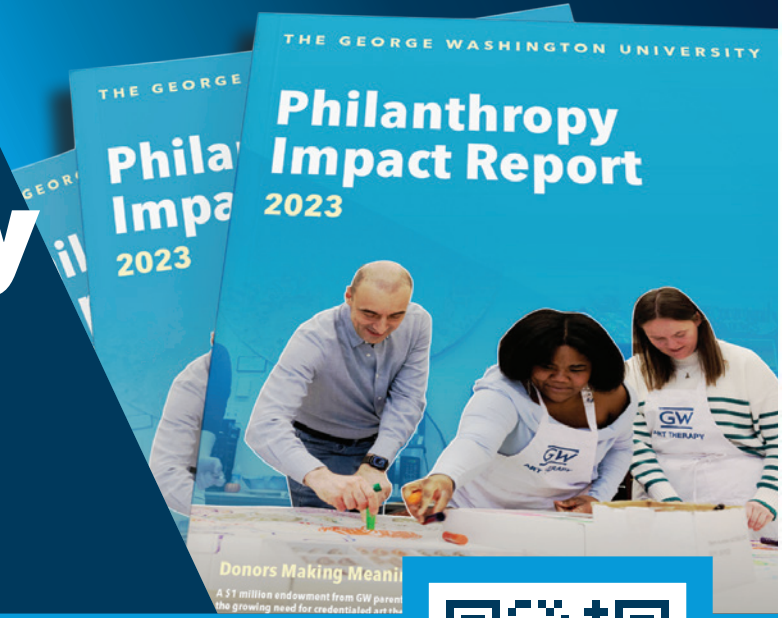
political causes, embodying a commitment to a better world common to many GW alumni. An activist since her teens, she now uses her platform to support grassroots efforts to promote democracy, women entrepreneurs and other causes.

CCAS Dean Paul Wahlbeck expressed gratitude on behalf of Columbian College and the talented students these scholarships will attract. “Solving the complex problems facing humanity requires us to bring together people and ideas from diverse disciplines and cultures in innovative ways,” he said. “Our graduates are known for thoughtful deliberation, creative innovation and agile collaboration. Those are skills our world desperately needs and that Kerry, in her many roles, embodies.”

THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

# Generosity in Action

From scholarships that change lives to groundbreaking research that shapes our greater world, see how donor generosity at GW creates powerful change.



Read the **Philanthropy Impact Report** [impactreport.gwu.edu](https://impactreport.gwu.edu)





**Brady in 2007 at the fifth anniversary celebration of the endowment of the Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, shown in front of a work by Sam Maitin, one of the artists included in the estate collection.**

#### INNOVATIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

## Luther W. Brady Estate Gifts Collection of Mid-Century Painting and Sculpture

**MORE THAN 130 WORKS COMPRISE THE MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR DONATION AND PROVIDE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE FOR GW STUDENTS.**

In June, the estate of celebrated oncologist and philanthropist, triple alumnus and GW trustee emeritus Luther W. Brady, A.A. '44, B.A. '46, M.D. '48, HON '04, bequeathed more than 130 works of art to the gallery bearing his name at the George Washington University. The artwork is valued at over \$3.3 million.

The Brady estate concurrently gave an equally generous portion of his art collection to the Reading Public Museum in Reading, Pa., where Brady served two terms on its board and previously donated artworks.

"This significant collection enhances the George Washington University's standing as a cultural touchstone in Washington, D.C., and provides hands-on classroom learning opportunities for our students," then President Mark S. Wrighton said. "We welcome all to experience, enjoy and learn from these treasures that provide a window into a different era."

"Dr. Brady was a visionary for expanding access to art at GW," Brady Art Gallery Assistant Director Olivia Kohler-Maga said. "Starting in the 1990s, he worked tirelessly for over two decades to provide

the GW community with the opportunity to view the work of internationally acclaimed artists. The gift of these major artworks is a continuation of his legacy, yet another enduring contribution to an institution he believed gave him so much."

The bequest has provided a unique opportunity for hands-on learning at GW. Students in a graduate seminar led by Associate Professor of Art History Bibiana Obler completed original research and writing that are included in the joint exhibition catalog used both by the Brady Art Gallery and the Reading Public Museum.

"The course was a combination of very practical, hands-on [curatorial] work and deep, intensive archival research that was quite unique," Obler said. "It's a lovely thing, because the students were able to leave [the course] with publications to their name."


Beyond students studying the collection itself, the seminar, "Curating a Collection," gave them a background on mid-20th-century art and the Brady collection along with a more general analysis of the relationship between artists, donors and institutions. For students, Obler said, the

class provided an opportunity to examine why people collect art, why they donate it, and how researchers and curators can bring color and context to these collections.

A triple GW alumnus who also received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from GW in 2004, Brady built a remarkable legacy in medicine, academia and the arts. He was a leading radiation oncologist who helped pioneer breakthrough treatments for eye tumors and cervical cancer. For more than 50 years, he imparted his experience and expertise to students at Hahnemann University School of Medicine and Drexel University College of Medicine. Brady was a dedicated patron of the arts, serving on a number of museum boards and supporting prestigious institutions like the National Gallery of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Brady died in 2018 at age 92.

Brady left a lasting impact on his alma mater. His long-term philanthropic support of GW, focused primarily on art and medicine, spanned more than five decades. His namesake gallery, now located in the Corcoran Flagg Building, houses thousands of works of historic and contemporary art of the GW Collection. Brady endowed the gallery in 2001, donating many gifts of artwork over the years and advocating for its relocation from the Media and Public Affairs building to the larger space in 2018. He also generously supported construction of the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum, the School of Medicine and Health Sciences' Ross Hall and more during his lifetime.

His bequest included a gift to endowment funding supporting a named radiation oncology professorship in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences. He took an active role in the stewardship of the university and its institutions, serving on the Board of Trustees for over 20 years and sitting on the board of directors of the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum. In 2015, the trustee emeritus was honored with the President's Medal for his long-standing service and philanthropy.

"Dr. Brady was a truly exceptional alumnus, leader and patron, and he has left GW an equally incredible legacy that supports and commemorates his twin passions, art and medicine," said Donna Arbide, GW's vice president for development and alumni relations. "We are grateful for his countless contributions over many decades. He is sorely missed, but his support and positive impact lives on." 

**BUILDING A GREATER WORLD**

# \$1 Million Gift Creates Fellowship, Study Opportunities on China

**ALUMNUS DAVID GITTER ENDOWS FUND PROMOTING ADVANCED PROFICIENCY IN THE CHINESE LANGUAGE THROUGH IMMERSIVE INSTRUCTION ABROAD. // By Amy Aldrich**

While studying for his master’s degree in Asian studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs, David Gitter, M.A. ’15, pored voraciously through GW’s Chinese-language resources, including the world-class special collection of the China Documentation Center at Gelman Library.

The many hours he spent with these Chinese-language books and journals helped shape his conviction that “advanced proficiency in the Chinese language, both written and spoken, is essential to a true understanding of Chinese culture, history and politics.”

Now an expert on contemporary (post-1949) China who has lived, worked and studied in Beijing, Gitter has firsthand knowledge of the major role that the Chinese language plays in helping professional China watchers make sound assessments and offer informed advice. While Mandarin Chinese is spoken by over 1 billion people, few Westerners are fluent.

Thanks to Gitter’s generosity, each year an Elliott School graduate student, selected by competitive application as a David Gitter Fellow, will be able to experience immersive Chinese-language instruction in China, funded by the David A. Gitter Endowment for Contemporary China Studies. The endowment also enables the school to expand course offerings focused on contemporary China.

“The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is a major world power and of extreme importance to the United States,” Gitter said. “I want this endowment to help American scholars and practitioners acquire a deep and granular understanding of the PRC.”

Donna Arbide,

vice president for development and alumni relations, said, “This gift will give GW students focused on China a big leg up in their studies and careers by adding firepower to critical on-the-ground language study. We are so grateful for successful alumni like David who open doors for others as they advance their impact on their field.”

Gitter made the \$1 million gift through the think tank he founded to advance U.S. understanding of China’s domestic politics, foreign affairs and security policy, the Center for Advanced China Research (CACR). CACR quickly became an important resource for China specialists and media outlets. The David A. Gitter Endowment for Contemporary China Studies will serve as an extension of the center’s work at GW and secure its legacy.

Use of resources provided by the new endowment will be overseen by the Elliott School’s Sigur Center for Asian Studies, a federally recognized East Asia National Resource Center.

“This exceptional gift recognizes the field-defining work that the Sigur Center for Asian Studies is doing, and it will strengthen our offerings for students focused on China,” said Alyssa Ayres, dean of the Elliott School. “Given China’s role on the world stage, there is a critical need for a new cadre of experts who understand contemporary China—and have advanced Chinese-language proficiency.

“We also look forward to bringing experts to campus to teach new courses that will broaden understanding of the geopolitical, geoeconomic and cultural aspects of modern-day China,” said Ayres. **GW**



**Open Doors: The Centuries Initiative for Scholarships & Fellowships charts a course to increase access to the transformative power of a GW degree.**

**With the Third Century Scholarship Endowment Match: Unlocking Access to Undergraduate Education, GW is doubling down on undergraduate scholarship support with a historic dollar-for-dollar fundraising match.**

Learn more at [go.gwu.edu/opendoors](http://go.gwu.edu/opendoors)



# CLASS NOTES

## // '50s

**Stanley E. Degler, M.A. '57**, was featured in the 74th edition of "Who's Who in America" as a publishing executive.

## // '60s

**Henry Stansbury, M.S. '69**, was appointed to the board of directors of MPT Foundation, Inc., the fundraising affiliate of Maryland Public Television.

## // '70s

**Lenore D. Miller, M.F.A. '72**, guest-curated the "Tony Sarg: Genius at Play" exhibition at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass. Michael R. Harrison, M.A. '97, and Darin E. Johnson, M.A. '97, collaborated on the exhibition.

**Gerald Schneider, M.A. '73**, published "Progressive Values: Libertarian Solutions" (Page Publishing, 2023), an exploration of the American political landscape that suggests realistic and ethical solutions to the systemic issues that plague the modern world.



## // '80s

**Eric R. Breslin, J.D. '82**, has been named chair of the New Jersey Chapter of the American College of Trial Lawyers.

**Cynthia Gayton, B.A. '84**, and GW adjunct professor, published the 11th edition of "Legal Aspects of Engineering, Design and Innovation" (Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2023).

**Timothy J. Karnes, M.H.A. '82**, founded berrymanCOVINGTON LLC to help small health care providers navigate federal and state compliance regulations.

**British A. Robinson, B.A. '89**, was named coordinator for Prosper Africa, the U.S. government's flagship national security initiative aimed at strengthening the partnership between the U.S. and countries throughout Africa.

**Sarah Schneiderman, B.F.A. '80**, hosted an art exhibition at the Simsbury Public Library featuring works from her "First, Not Last" collection, which is a compilation of portraits of political firsts in 2020 and 2021. Her work was also featured in the Women's Caucus for Art New Hampshire Chapter's exhibit "Seen and Heard."

**Debbie R. Weiss, B.S. '85**, published "On Second Thought, Maybe I Can!," a memoir about how it's never too late to live your best life.

## // '90s

**Christopher Atkinson, B.A. '98, M.P.A. '00**, was promoted to associate professor and received tenure at the University of West Florida where he teaches public administration.

**Laura Ellsworth, M.F.S. '96**, was promoted to assistant vice president for curriculum, programs and regulation at Prince George's Community College in Largo, Md.

**Damirez Fossett, GME '90 and '96**, has been selected as the Congress of Neurological Surgeons Educator of the Year.



**Laurence Grayer, B.B.A. '92**, joined SIG SAUER as executive vice president, general counsel and chief compliance officer.

**Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff, B.A. '99**, published her second book, "Basketball Empire: France and the Making of a Global NBA and WNBA" (Bloomsbury, 2023), which shows how basketball's global takeover could not have happened without France.

**Amy Garay Solomo, B.A. '95**, was promoted to director of education at the Hofstra University Museum of Art.

## // '00s

**Erica Taylor Haskins, B.A. '06**, co-founded Tinsel Experiential Design, a marketing and design studio focused on immersive customer experiences and experiential engagement. Stagwell Global acquired the company this summer.

**Eric Holland, B.A. '01**, joined Duane Morris LLP's Corporate Practice Group as a partner in its Houston office.

**David Holt, B.A. '01**, was named dean of the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

**Erin Lamb, B.A. '06**, got married in June on the Battleship New Jersey with several other GW alumni in attendance.



**Bryan Brindley, B.A. '16**, and **Jessica Goldenring, B.A. '17**, got married on June 3 in Franklin, Tenn. The pair met during a GW Alternative Break trip to New Orleans, and their connection deepened during Colonial Inauguration. More than 35 alumni attended their wedding, including members of Delta Tau Delta, Alpha Delta Pi, Colonial Cabinet and other former student leaders.



**Bridgitte Rodriguez, M.A. '08**, published "A Walk Through the Redwoods" (Reycraft Books, 2023), a children's picture book about exploring a redwood forest.

**Sana Hoda Sood, M.A. '06**, published "Stories of the World: Diwali" (Little Pages Publishing, 2023), a children's book about the Indian festival of Diwali.

**Mariam W. Tadros, B.A. '08**, joined Womble Bond Dickinson's Business Litigation practice group as a partner in Northern Virginia.

**Jennifer Wisdom, Ph.D. '01**, was the Psi Chi distinguished lecturer at the Association for Psychological Science's annual convention, where she presented "Intergenerational Communication and Leadership: Promoting the Next Generation of Psychologists."

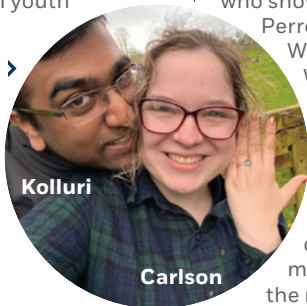
**Bryan Wolford, M.A. '01**, joined the Institute for Defense Analyses as an adjunct research staff member in the System Evaluation Division of IDA's Systems and Analyses Center.

## // '10s

**Vishal Aswani, B.S. '10**, started a new position as the director of the cyber activities budget oversight directorate for the Department of Defense deputy chief information officer for cybersecurity.

**Monica P. Band, M.A. '13**, launched "I Need to Ask You Something," a 10-part podcast series focused on youth mental health.

**Maddie Carlson, > B.A. '19**, and **Akaash Kolluri, B.A. '19**, were married in November. The couple met when they both lived in Mitchell Hall their first year. After graduating, Carlson served in the Peace Corps in Zambia and is currently employed by the Aerospace Industries Association as the membership and standards coordinator. Kolluri works at the National Democratic Institute, where he is the program officer for NDI's programs in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.



**Daniel Lippman, B.A. '12**, a White House reporter for POLITICO, married Sophia Narrett, an artist who shows with Kohn Gallery and Perrotin, on July 22 at the Willard InterContinental in Washington, D.C.

**Shelby Luzzi, M.S. '19**, was promoted to senior manager of sustainability at Destination DC, the official destination marketing organization for the nation's capital.

**Sarah Pagan, B.S. '17**, joined the Institute for Defense Analyses as a summer associate at the Science and Technology Policy Institute.

**Cheryl Thaxton, D.N.P. '18**, joined the University of North Texas Health Science Center's College of Nursing as the Fort Worth associate dean and chair for graduate studies.

**Daniel (Wetter) Villaseñor, B.A. '18**, celebrated one year as California Gov. Gavin Newsom's deputy press secretary.

**Travis Wright, M.S.P.M. '10**, and his wife restored a historic 1760s home in Charles County, Md., and opened it as a wedding venue.

// '20s

**Emily Mosley, B.A. '22**, started as the national operations manager for the Australian Institute of International Affairs.

**Mallory Thompson, B.A. '22**, joined the Institute for Defense Analyses as a research associate in the Cost Analysis and Research Division of IDA's Systems and Analyses Center.



**And what about you?  
Submit your own  
class note update:**

ONLINE  
[alumni.gwu.edu](mailto:alumni.gwu.edu)

EMAIL  
[magazine@gwu.edu](mailto:magazine@gwu.edu)

MAIL  
*Alumni News Section  
GW Magazine  
2000 Pennsylvania Ave.,  
Ste. 300  
Washington, D.C. 20006*

# RECONNECT, REDISCOVER & REAP THE **REWARDS**

As a member of the GW Alumni Association, you have access to alumni benefits that you can take advantage of whether you're near or far.

- >> **Hotel discounts**
- >> **Special savings on insurance and banking**
- >> **Lifelong learning opportunities and courses**



Alumni  
Association

LEARN MORE: [go.gwu.edu/alumnibenefits](https://go.gwu.edu/alumnibenefits)

# IN MEMORIAM



## Tony Bennett, HON '01, (July 21, 2023, 96)

Tony Bennett was a 20-time Grammy Award-winning icon, best known for his jazz and pop tracks, such as “I Left My Heart in San Francisco.” Bennett had strong ties to GW, a connection that spanned more than two decades. Notably, he introduced the nation to the award-winning “GW Presents American Jazz” broadcast, facilitating its creation and serving as the opening announcer each week. Bennett also frequented informal Sunday post-broadcast brunches to mingle with GW students and community members.

In 2001, Bennett received a Doctor of Music honorary degree from GW, and in 2015, the university awarded him and his wife, Susan Benedetto, the President’s Medal for championing the encouragement of arts in education because of its ability to bring people of different backgrounds and experiences together through the human experience. Bennett said receiving the medal was “a great experience in my life.”

Bennett sold 50 million records, received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award and was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master. His began his career in the late 1940s after serving in the United States Army during World War II, where he was stationed in Germany at the end of the war and aided the liberation of a Nazi concentration camp in Landsberg.

**Frederick J. Brown Jr. (Jan. 25, 2023, 95)** was a professor emeritus of education administration and chair of GW’s Doctoral Education Leadership Program from 1977 to 1989. Brown advised numerous doctoral candidates and international students and taught courses at the university’s Tidewater Center in Virginia. Before joining the faculty of GW, he served as associate state superintendent of schools for Maryland and served in various school administration roles throughout the state.

**Eileen J. Edgren, B.A. '61, (March 15, 2023, 87)** was an editor, writer and teacher for many decades. A technical translator of Russian and French, she taught at Mukogawa Women’s University of Spokane and the Economics Institute. She is survived by her two brothers, sister-in-law and cousin.

**Roger O. Moore, B.A. '60, M.A. '64, (Oct. 6, 2022, 89)** was a longtime civil servant, whose 39-year federal government career included 10 years at the Pentagon and a posting as an intelligence officer for the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Command in Taipei. Originally from Cincinnati, Moore moved to D.C. to attend GW in 1956 after serving in the U.S. Air Force. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in international relations from GW and was awarded a Wolcott Foundation Fellowship. He also earned an M.B.A. degree from Central Michigan University. Moore was a lifelong Ohio State Buckeyes and Cincinnati Reds fan as well as a 32nd degree Mason and Shriner. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Gretchen Taggart Moore, three daughters and seven grandchildren as well as a brother and nieces, nephews and cousins.

**Alan S. Nadel, B.S. '71, J.D. '76, (June 13, 2023, 74)** was an attorney specializing in patent and copyright law. During his time at GW, he captained the men’s crew team, becoming the first rower inducted into the Athletics Hall of Fame. After obtaining his J.D. from GW Law in 1976, he served as a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserves. Nadel’s career in intellectual property law included partnership in notable firms and procuring patents for iconic inventions, including the Super Soaker. He remained a devoted GW alumnus and served on the President’s Council for Arts and Sciences. He was also an active figure in the Philadelphia

Intellectual Property Law Association. Nadel’s dedication extended to the Boy Scouts, Congregation Adath Jeshurun, and a passion for skiing and travel. He is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces and nephews.

**Joseph Y. Ruth, B.A. '49, (Sept. 2, 2023, 100)** was the director of admissions and assistant vice president for academic affairs at GW for 30 years.

**David I. Tossman, B.A. '76, (Sept. 30, 2022, 68)** was a podiatrist with more than 43 years of experience in the field of medicine. He was predeceased by his partner, Bruce J. Lipstein; his sister, Sherry Lynn Tossman; and his devoted parents, Minna and Leonard Tossman.

**Thomas C. Wojtkowski Sr., B.S. '52, (Aug. 1, 2023, 96)** was a distinguished figure in Massachusetts politics and the legal community. After serving in the Navy during WWII, Wojtkowski pursued his education, earning degrees from Champlain College and GW, where he played violin in the university orchestra and was editor of the “Hatchet.” He went on to serve as a Massachusetts state representative from 1954 to 1972 and was instrumental in creating the community college system in the state. He also practiced law for five decades, providing invaluable counsel to clients. Beyond his professional achievements, Wojtkowski hosted the Polish-American Show on WBRK radio for nearly 30 years, a testament to his commitment to celebrating his rich cultural heritage as a Polish American.

**Virginia B.D. Young, MVC A.A. '66, (July 30, 2023, 77)** was an active Mount Vernon College alumna for many years, serving as chair of the MVC Annual Giving Campaign, president of the MVC Alumnae Association and a member of the MVC Board of Trustees. She went on to serve as chair of the Council for the Mount Vernon Campus of GW when Mount Vernon became a part of the GW in 1999. In 2001, Young became only the second woman to serve on the board of trustees of the Virginia Military Institute Foundation following the institute’s admission of women in 1997. Throughout her life, she volunteered, served and advocated for women and their access to educational opportunities. ☐

# MAKE LEARNING YOUR LEGACY

*You can help increase access to the  
transformative power of higher education*



By leaving a gift to GW in your will or trust, you can create **revolutionary** opportunities for deserving students.

No gift is too small, and you can change your intentions at any time.

For more information about how you can support future generations of GW students, please contact GW's Office of Planned Giving.

(877) 498-7590 | [pgiving1@gwu.edu](mailto:pgiving1@gwu.edu) | [gwu.planmylegacy.org](http://gwu.planmylegacy.org)

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

The George Washington University  
Washington, D.C. 20052  
Change Service Requested

# GW TOGETHER

Join us in a city near you to meet and welcome  
**GW President Ellen M. Granberg,**  
hear her thoughts on GW's strengths and impact  
on the world, and share your ideas for GW's future.

## COMING UP THIS SPRING:

**Miami // Palm Beach // Los Angeles // San Francisco // Seattle**

