the best is yet to COMM
The Ballad of Mu Lan ran last winter as part of the Wirtz Center’s popular Imagine U family programming. Breaking revenue and attendance records, the show sold more than 1,800 tickets. Imagine U continued its collaboration with the National Theatre in Washington, DC, to produce last spring’s virtual series Life Now and will also partner with Evanston/Skokie School District 65 to bring third graders to Northwestern’s campus to experience live theatre.
Dialogue

ON THE COVER  Communication studies graduate Sophia Simon (C22) sports a prophetic message on her mortarboard at the School of Communication’s June convocation ceremony.

Course connection
New school initiatives explore the communicative ties that bind us

Mighty real
Dean E. Patrick Johnson goes Hollywood with students and alumni in a festive show

Turning tables
Kelvin Boddie explores sound through music and theatre

4 NEWS
Heather Headley talks about her life, music, and career

22 UNSCRIPTED
Kyra Jones on her artistic ascent

23 SOUND OFF
Faculty across disciplines share common threads in work and research

24 FACULTY FOCUS
26 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS
30 GRATITUDE
31 IN MEMORY
32 PARTNERSHIP
As I begin the third year of my deanship, I’m reminded of a verse I love in “I Am Changing” from the Dreamgirls score:

I am changing
Try every way I can
I am changing
I’ll be better than I am
But I need a friend
To help me start
All over again.

We learn this lesson time and again in our lives, but it has really hit home the last two years. With every crisis, challenge, and charge we’re handed, the remedy is always the same: to persevere, we must work together.

I recognize how naive that sounds with ever-compounding global threats halting us at every turn, but it’s a lesson so often forgotten when ego and insecurity are allowed to run amok, and when we’re told things like “I alone can fix it.” The more minds—and the greater diversity of those minds—applied to a problem, the better the outcome; and the more curious those minds, the more impactful an outcome can be. Our human ability to make new discoveries and improve our health and welfare ends the minute we stop seeking each other out and asking, “Why?”

The same applies to our magnificent School of Communication, and in our case, I’m asking, “Why not?” We’ve been blessed with this uniquely disparate but still interrelated arrangement of disciplines, but up until recently they were largely siloed. Why not build more interdisciplinary pathways to partnership? Our students graduate and launch successful careers, but why not help them anticipate and embrace shifts in an ever-changing job market? I’m an administrator and professor, but why not hop on stage with our students from time to time and remind them that we are here to validate and support their dreams?

We are communicating this new commitment to partnerships and bridge-building through a rebranding of SoC. You are getting a taste of it right now, in this gorgeous, image-driven new magazine layout. Soon you can expect a redesigned website to better illustrate our mission and values.

And of course, expect more from our dynamic school as we find solutions to urgent communication problems through working with one another and with other schools and those well outside the academy. We need each of you to help us start all over again.

E. Patrick Johnson
Dean, School of Communication
Annenberg University Professor
Heather Headley dialogues with the dean

Acclaimed singer and actor Heather Headley (C96) had no interest in leaving Northwestern during her junior year—even for the chance to be Audra McDonald’s understudy in the original Toronto production of *Ragtime*.

“I remember the audition like it’s yesterday, and I remember getting the call, and I remember them telling me, ‘We want you to leave for Toronto,’” Headley said. “My first instinct was, ‘Absolutely not, I am not leaving school.’ I had worked so hard to get here.” But leave she did, though she never forgot.

In February, Headley was the second guest in E. Patrick Johnson’s 2021–22 Dialogue with the Dean series, which took place in the Ethel M. Barber Theater at the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts.

In a conversation covering her rich and varied career, Headley detailed her thoughts on Broadway’s efforts at inclusion, moving to Indiana from Trinidad as a child, and the surrealism of her lightning-quick jump to Broadway’s spotlight.

A funny, warm, and animated storyteller, she sprinkled the conversation with snippets of song and the wisdom of her mother, whose melodic Trinidadian lilt she invoked.

Headley left *Ragtime* after a few months to originate the role of Nala in *The Lion King*. Soon after, she received a Tony Award for the title role in *Aida*. From a successful recording career to numerous stage and screen triumphs (including the hit Netflix series *Sweet Magnolias*), she’s always held her journey close.

“I’m grateful to God for putting me here on this ground, this hallowed ground, to learn not only about performance and about being a performer, backstage or onstage, but about being a woman,” she said. “I met my husband here. [Northwestern] is hallowed ground for my family.”

The Dialogue series began last fall with actor and comedian John Leguizamo and concluded in spring with playwright Tarrell Alvin McCraney. See videos of the series at [dean.soc.northwestern.edu/dean-events](http://dean.soc.northwestern.edu/dean-events).

Dissecting Russia’s media problem

“How do we pierce Putin’s propaganda bubble?” asked Erik Nisbet, the Owen L. Coon Endowed Professor of Policy Analysis and Communication and director of the Center for Communication and Public Policy, in March.

Nisbet was moderating the panel “Russia’s War on Ukraine: Russian Public Opinion, Media, and Censorship,” featuring Olga Kamenchuk, communication studies professor of instruction; Vasily Gatov, a Russian media expert and senior fellow at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership and Policy; and Jeffrey Trimble, a former journalist, deputy director of the US Global Media Agency, and acting president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Public opinion polls, types of media used (e.g., state television versus social media), journalists’ behavior, and trust in outlets vary wildly in Russia, and Vladimir Putin’s disinformation tactics and crackdown on access to outside sources are flagrant attempts at keeping his bubble intact, according to the panel.

“When we think how accurately (Russian) people understand what is happening in Ukraine, we should bear in mind that those people are largely cut off from the honest, true information,” Kamenchuk said. “Once they are given the clearer picture, attitudes can change.”

The panel was a partnership among the School of Communication; the Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies Research Program; and the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs.
**Podcast examines actors’ realities**

Shawn Douglass, assistant professor of instruction in theatre, launched the podcast *An Actor’s Arc* last fall to explore the realities of the profession and reflect on working actors’ lives and art. Each of the 10 episodes features a successful actor with a Chicago connection, including Lisa Tejero, Ora Jones, Michael Patrick Thornton, Charin Alvarez, and SoC professor and theatre department chair Henry Godinez.

“My first objective was to provide students with insight into the ongoing artistic journey of professional actors—that their training here is great, but it is only the beginning of a rewarding, continuing investigation of their craft,” Douglass says. “The second was to provide nonactors and general theatergoers with some sense of how actors, especially those who aren’t household names, build a career and keep themselves artistically energized.”

Douglass was awarded an Alumnae of Northwestern University grant last winter for the podcast project that will help fund its next phase. He hopes to feature a diverse group of eight younger actors in the early stages of their career arcs.

*An Actor’s Arc* is available on Apple Podcasts and YouTube.

**Sensor study to inform swallowing treatment**

Bonnie Martin-Harris (GC91), SoC’s associate dean for faculty affairs, was awarded a National Cancer Institute grant last summer that could lead to a new therapy option for survivors of oropharyngeal head and neck cancer who are living with dysphagia (or swallowing disorder).

An interdisciplinary team of physicians, clinicians, and researchers led by Martin-Harris will investigate a swallowing treatment that uses a wearable Bluetooth sensor for remote rehabilitation of breathing and swallowing coordination.

Data collected during the five-year clinical trial will help determine whether this approach improves swallowing function in cancer survivors.

“While survival is good relative to many other cancers of the head and neck, the curative cancer treatments, such as surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, can lead to devastating problems eating and drinking normally,” says Martin-Harris, who is also the Alice Gabrielle Twight Professor in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. “Preliminary studies by our group have shown that swallowing and airway protection improve with the new therapy that trains patients when to initiate swallowing relative to the natural cycle of breathing.”

Affecting nearly 1 in 25 adults in the US annually, dysphagia is a common byproduct of stroke, head and neck cancers, and neurodegenerative conditions. Difficulty swallowing can be uncomfortable at best and fatal at worst, as aspirated food or drink can lead to choking and infections like pneumonia.

**THE CHERUBS ARE BACK!**

After a two-year hiatus, the National High School Institute returned this summer with on-campus programming for the theatre, film, and playwriting institutes (the debate institute remains virtual this year). Select theatre majors were featured in a May TINY DESK (Home) Concert on NPR with Dublin-based band Fontaines D.C. Students sang backup, with assistant professor of instruction Melissa Foster as vocal coach, at Chicago’s Irish American Heritage Center.

Doctor of audiology student **ANDREW BURLESON** last spring dropped off gently used hearing aids to Clementina Canessa Mazzoni (GC20) at the Chicago Hearing Society to be distributed to those in need. The donations are part of ongoing effort at NUCASLL to expand community access to hearing healthcare. The clinic continues to accept donated hearing aids, which are cleaned and tested prior to redistribution.
Danceworks returns, reimagined

With a new director and vision, Danceworks returned in March after a pandemic pause. In a scaled-back version of the event, this year’s “deep.” hinted at what dance program director Melissa Blanco Borelli has up her creative sleeve.

“We want our students to be the best they can be, but I don’t have an ideal of dance perfection,” she says. “I have an ideal of dance, which means to be fully present to your body and its capabilities, to really give everything—your emotions, your physicality, your intellectual and emotional curiosity—and be open to discovery as well.”

The show, as it turns out, was a discovery for all involved: Blanco Borelli and collaborator Thomas F. DeFrantz, professor of theatre and performance studies, are new to Northwestern; Chicago-based guest choreographer Keyierra Collins hadn’t worked with any of the dancers before; and the dancers themselves were either newcomers to the event or seniors who hadn’t been in Danceworks since March 2020.

“The students really get a lot out of it,” Blanco Borelli says. “I think it helps them establish a sense of community and ensemble with one another.”

“Having visual proof, visual evidence, that something atrocious has happened really takes it out of the realm of a story that somebody is telling. It makes it real,” said associate professor Moya Bailey in a CNN story on the 10-year anniversary of Trayvon Martin’s death. Bailey coauthored #HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice, winner of the Diamond Anniversary Book Award from the National Communication Association.

For the dance program, Blanco Borelli hopes to welcome more guest faculty of color, diversify dance options, and establish a stronger through line between devising and choreographing to enhance the rigor of the program. She also wants to push back on the idea that a dance major or minor is a “break” from other majors or coursework.

“You think with both your body and mind,” she says. “Dance practice and dance making create a much-needed negotiation between the two.”
Alumni reboot the Bard

Consider Will Wilhelm (C’14) and Erin Murray (GC’16) Shakespeare originalists. With Gender Play, their bold, unconventional reimagining of seven of the Bard’s iconic characters as played by genderqueer actor Wilhelm, the canon gets a punch-up.

“Gender fluidity is such a huge part of the plots and themes of so many Shakespeare shows,” Wilhelm says. “And yet just like anything else, we don’t really see a lot of trans or nonbinary actors being given those opportunities on big stages.”

Wilhelm met Murray at Northwestern when Wilhelm was an undergrad and Murray was an MFA directing candidate. Their friendship morphed into a creative partnership, and with the support of other Wildcat collaborators, they devised the show to demonstrate the universality of Shakespeare through a very singular vessel: Wilhelm. Each of the characters—Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, Puck, and others—becomes “electrified” in a different way that is uniquely personal to Wilhelm but also eminently relatable to audiences’ experience of being multifaceted humans.

While in teaching residency at Northwestern last winter, Wilhelm and Murray led a workshop with acting students that culminated with each student’s choosing a monologue based not on age or gender but on a shared personal experience.

When watching one of Shakespeare’s plays, “it’s always been an invitation to project and imagine,” Wilhelm says. In returning both to Shakespeare’s intent and to the all-male casts of the Elizabethan era, Gender Play is a reminder of what’s always been—but also what could be.

“When Gender Play is performed, it is not just a safe space for the queer and trans community,” Murray says. “During the duration of the run, you’re making a promise to make your setting safe for all gender-fluid or gender-curious individuals.” The show will premiere in Chicago next year.

The sounds that surround

Nina Kraus (GC’80) says that processing sound is the hardest job we ask our brains to do. A professor in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Kraus explores the hidden magic of our sonic experience in her latest book, Of Sound Mind: How Our Brain Constructs a Meaningful Sonic World. Despite the ubiquity of sound, we tend not to notice our sound environments until we stop and think about them—yet hearing is profoundly pivotal to our human connections, memories, and emotions.

“Sound connects us,” Kraus says. “The sound mind engages how we think, move, feel, and combine our senses. It shapes who we are and how we connect to the world.”

“Both our ability to move and our ability to hear were developed from similar sources,” she explains in the book. “The deep thrum in our chests when we hear a drumbeat, the innate desire to move to a rhythmic tempo—these echo our earliest development. Sound is motion.”

Of Sound Mind won the 2022 Association of American Publishers PROSE Award in the biomedicine category and has been reviewed, cited, or explored by more than 50 news outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, NPR, The Economist, Salon, the Los Angeles Times, Men’s Health, and PBS.

Kraus leads the Brainvolts auditory neuroscience laboratory.

DEAN E. PATRICK JOHNSON received the 2021 Distinguished Scholar Award, the National Communication Association’s highest accolade. He accepted the award in November at the group’s annual conference in Seattle. NCA is the largest communication association in the country.

Professor NOSHIR CONTRACTOR became president of the International Communication Association in May. A leading researcher of network science, computational social science, and web science, he will serve a one-year term.

RONA SIDDQI, music director of Tony Award winner A Strange Loop, was the 2021–22 Kelsey Pharr Speaker Series guest artist, visiting classes, conversing with students and faculty, and teaching a master class in writing for music theatre.
New curricular initiatives aim to provide students with a comprehensive and interconnected understanding of communication—and help them build bridges to industry.

BY KERRY TROTTER
ABOVE Students warm up during the Story of Sounds/ Sounds of Stories first-year seminar.

LEFT Rives Collins (left) leads class with Stephan Moore (right).
The School of Communication boasts an auspicious distinction: no other collegiate program offers a comparable combination of disciplines, and certainly not with the stellar stature each department enjoys. That eminence in basic science, social science, and the humanities “has elevated Northwestern for the last 150 years,” says Dean E. Patrick Johnson. “What makes us an outlier also poses an opportunity: What if we really leaned in to our uniqueness and built more tangible, codified bridges between departments? Between students and faculty, alumni and the campus community, and the campus community and the world beyond? What breakthroughs are possible when we break barriers?”

Since becoming dean, Johnson has launched curricular and programmatic initiatives to boldly redirect SoC toward a stronger, more partnership-driven mission. These include an undergraduate first-year seminar that helps students connect scientific, social, and artistic communicative experiences; a senior seminar that prepares students to launch their professional journeys; and an equitable funding structure for the master of fine arts programs.

**First-year seminar**

“When was the last time you listened to someone? When was the last time someone listened to you?”

Seventeen students were momentarily silenced by these questions from Chicago freelance journalist Bill Healy, underscoring how the noise of digital life drowns out our capacity to truly hear one another. Healy was a featured guest in the Story of Sounds/Sounds of Stories seminar for first-year students, taught last winter by theatre professor Rives Collins and radio/TV/film professor of instruction Stephan Moore.

Hearing, of course, is a foundational element of SoC—from translational research in audiology in the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and its affiliated Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning; to the social and scientific examination of discourse in communication studies; to audio storytelling and sound studies in RTVF; to sound as being representative of culture and identity in performance studies; and to dialogue and song in theatre.

“Learning about sound through the lens of storytelling—I thought, as an actor and musician, that would be a very interesting way to combine all those interests together,” says Evan Trotter-Wright, a theatre major from Arkansas. “And getting a classroom experience dedicated to how those things intersect will be useful going forward in my career.”

Connecting the dots early between SoC’s disparate departments is intentional, as it can help students set or reevaluate goals, knowing that their research and performance work isn’t confined to the traditional boundaries of their majors. SoC is among the few Northwestern schools in which every incoming student has declared a major, explains Lori Barcliff Baptista, associate dean for undergraduate programs and advising, so students arrive on campus eager to learn, having already settled on a path.

“The flip side of these clear goals is perhaps a reluctance to step outside that chosen major and explore other facets of the communication landscape,” she adds. “This experience was designed not as a distraction from students’ objectives but a distillation or synthesis of them. Storytelling, for instance, is not just words on a page—it’s the timbre of a voice or the sonic environment or the long pauses that say more about a human experience than a transcript ever could.”

The seminar, a version of which will be offered each quarter, is required for all first-year students. Spring’s Bodies, Spaces, and Sounds explored how sound and bodies make meaning across cultures. Future iterations will touch on such communication principles as diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in patient-provider interactions; music performance as social justice; and panoramic perspectives in media.

“These connections have been established, but we needed to create pipelines for interdisciplinary partnerships that will not only raise the profile of our departments but of SoC as a whole,” says Dean Johnson. “Building this understanding into the first-year curriculum was a logical way to set the tone for their undergraduate experience: don’t just look across the stage, studio, or lab for your future collaborators—look well outside your vantage point or chosen methodology. Discoveries are made in those in-between spaces.”

**Senior seminar**

SoC seniors have little trouble finding employment after graduation. In fact, 95 percent of graduates in the four years ending in 2020 are currently employed...
or in graduate school. But with the job market in constant pandemic-related flux and the process of navigating competitive industries becoming increasingly complicated, building curricular connections to the professional world has become more urgent than ever.

“The SoC student experience is typically marked by a dizzying array of academic accomplishments, club memberships, cocurricular activities, and internships,” says Michael Johnson, director of the Office of External Programs, Internships, and Career Services (EPICS). “We’ve worked closely with faculty and the Office of Undergraduate Programs and Advising to design a senior seminar so students can translate what they learn into a targeted career plan.”

The spring 2022 pilot offered seniors three possible sections: arts administration, film and television, and performing arts. Using career competencies outlined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, students examined their fluency in such areas as innovation and professional creativity, communication and articulation, and critical thinking and creative solutions. They explored how to feel more comfortable networking, conveying their skills to others, and understanding how paths to their chosen fields may have many routes.

“This is an exciting development for EPICS, since until very recently our work with undergraduates was fairly minimal,” Johnson says. “Most of our services were at the professional program level, but working with undergrads means they can exit Northwestern with a better sense of how to achieve their goals, whether going straight to industry or pursuing advanced degrees. This knowledge will save them time, money, and possible stress. And we will reap the rewards of continuing to see our alumni lead and succeed.”

EPICS is exploring how to involve more alumni in the seminar.

**New opportunities for graduate students**

With Northwestern’s Graduate School, SoC announced last fall that its full suite of master of fine arts degree programs—acting, stage design, directing, documentary media, and writing for screen and stage—will be tuition-free for students beginning in fall 2022. The University will provide full tuition, a stipend, and a health insurance subsidy.

**FIRST-YEAR RESEARCH GRANTS GUIDE SUCCESS**

Vivianna White became interested in human communication sciences when she was a babysitter for a child with a hearing impairment. After accompanying the child on speech-language pathology and audiology appointments, White determined that Northwestern and its small but rigorous communication sciences and disorders program would allow her to keep working on behalf of the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

“I’m looking to go into audiology,” she says, “but I’m very interested in working with children, and I would like more experience in professional research.”

As a first-year student, White earned an Early Research Experience Award, which matches students with an SoC faculty member to get a taste of careers in the social and basic sciences through mentorship, extensive research opportunities (more than 100 required hours), and a monetary award. Last year saw a surge of applicants, and students—whose interests included bilingualism, neurodegenerative disorders, and market misinformation and decision-making—were intentionally given cross-disciplinary faculty matches. White was one of seven first-year scholars paired with labs in CSD and communication studies; she is working alongside CSD assistant professor Elizabeth Norton in her Language, Education, and Reading Neuroscience lab.

Typically undergraduates “don’t know how to get started in research, so it takes them two or three years to find their way into a lab,” Norton says. “By the time they start, they are nearly ready to graduate. As a lab director, I love having students who can join in their first year and stay for their whole Northwestern career. They can get involved deeply and really make important contributions to our science, which sets them up for success in graduate school and beyond.”

“This is an exciting development for EPICS, since until very recently our work with undergraduates was fairly minimal,” Johnson says. “Most of our services were at the professional program level, but working with undergrads means they can exit Northwestern with a better sense of how to achieve their goals, whether going straight to industry or pursuing advanced degrees. This knowledge will save them time, money, and possible stress. And we will reap the rewards of continuing to see our alumni lead and succeed.”

EPICS is exploring how to involve more alumni in the seminar.
The move seeks to make advanced degrees more attainable, especially for students of color or those without generational wealth, and bolster arts institutions that depend on diverse perspectives and experiences.

“There is so much value for artists in pursuing a terminal degree,” says Dean Johnson. “The opportunity to immerse yourself in your craft, work alongside equally dedicated collaborators, and thrive in a rigorous curriculum is what sets apart the working artist.

“But sending these artists off to launch their careers under the yoke of debt is detrimental to the future of arts institutions that rely on committed talent to grow and evolve. We want them to walk out of here ready to be an integral part of that growth.”

Working with the Offices of the Provost and Budget and Planning, SoC and the Graduate School launched a fully funded MFA in acting program in fall 2019. In fall 2021, the longstanding theatre department programs in directing and stage design became fully funded; documentary media and writing for screen and stage, two programs housed in RTVF, complete the suite in fall 2022.

“Eliminating tuition will be a huge boon to our MFA programs,” says Thomas Bradshaw, professor and chair of RTVF.

“It will allow aspiring writers and filmmakers to pursue their dreams without any financial burden.”

Angela Ray, associate dean for graduate education, sees this change as transformational for recruitment and rankings. “The new funding model will substantially raise our national profile in arts education and will further increase our competitiveness relative to the strongest of our national peers,” she says. “We’re delighted to share this news.”

Peer programs, such as those at New York University and the University of Southern California, do not guarantee full tuition benefits.

The takeaway, says Dean Johnson, is that strategic collaboration—whether between departments building new courses or bridging college and industry for better outcomes, or among University units striving to fund MFAs—is essential in building knowledge. “We’re embracing what makes us stand out, and that is to the benefit of our entire community—and the entirety of our communicative experience.”
KEEPING IT MIGHT
TY REAL

Life is a (Comm)Cabaret at a Los Angeles alumni event starring none other than the dean.

BY KINGSLEY DAY
Over the years, occasional alumni events across the country have featured musical entertainment imported from the School of Communication. But at January’s CommCabaret in Los Angeles, the star attraction was none other than the dean of the school.

E. Patrick Johnson even appeared during three of the evening’s songs wearing a wig, feather boa, sequined gown, and heels. And he didn’t have to lip-sync for his life—he sang live! With the school represented at its highest level by a gay Black man performing in drag, CommCabaret sent an unmistakable message of inclusion. It was also part of Johnson’s broader strategy of connecting with far-flung alumni.

Events like this are part of the dean’s mission to be more visible and engaged with communities both on and off campus. Demonstrating his own versatile roles as scholar, performer, and academic leader, Johnson’s appearance beautifully embodied his quest to build connections across the school’s disciplines. Reaching out, building bridges, and crossing boundaries (in more ways than one), he vividly personifies a new direction for the school.

A writer and editor of award-winning books on race and sexuality, Johnson has also won accolades for performances across the country of his solo shows Pouring Tea and Sweet Tea, both based on his Stonewall Book Award–winning Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South—An Oral History. He accepted the School of Communication deanship with the proviso that he could continue to perform—and with CommCabaret he adroitly combined his administrative and dramatic roles.

“One of the things I love about being an artist and a scholar is collaboration,” Johnson said. CommCabaret involved multiple collaborations: between the school and the Marshall family, who hosted the event at Burbank’s Garry Marshall Theatre; between the School of Communication and Northwestern’s Bienen School of Music, with three student musicians in the band; and between the school and the California Wellness Foundation—led by alumna Judy Belk (C75)—which sponsored two groups of Los Angeles National High School Institute (Cherubs) students to attend the tech rehearsal.

The event also provided valuable performing experience for three School of Communication students. As the dean’s backup singers, Claire Kwon (C22), Lucy London, and Jay Towns (C22) enjoyed their own moments in the spotlight.

“Getting to perform with the dean of the School of Communication was a huge privilege,” London said. “This opportunity gave me a chance to perform alongside supertalented students and gave me a joyous reminder of the power of performance. It is incredibly special to see the dean in his element, doing things other than administrative work. It really brought the community together in a new way.”

“Good performance is a dialogue,” Johnson told the audience. “Through vulnerability and authenticity, a performer and audience engage in an exchange that builds trust, empathy, and community. That flutter we feel in our hearts during those magical, real moments of a live show is that dialogue in action.”

The audience of alumni and friends no doubt felt many such flutterings during the course of the evening, especially given the past two years’ paucity of live performance. But Johnson was able to find inspiration even in the pandemic, noting that “we need a change sometimes to make us wake up and stare reality in the face.”

“There’s no virus, no pandemic, that will keep a Wildcat from creating their own runways to snatch success,” said Johnson as he introduced the show, which then showcased a music video in which the dean (sometimes in duplicate or triplicate) lip-synced and boogied to RuPaul’s “Cover Girl” in full academic regalia.

The ensuing live program ranged across gospel, blues, soul, and pop,
Our theater was aglow with purple pride as we showcased not only current Northwestern students but also Dean Johnson’s many talents.”

KATHLEEN MARSHALL (C90), daughter of Northwestern alumnus Garry Marshall, whose namesake venue hosted the event

interspersing Johnson’s selections with jazz and Broadway standards performed by the student band and vocalists. The students also sang a medley of TV themes in tribute to Northwestern alumnus Garry Marshall, acknowledging the venue bearing his name and the key role of the Marshall family and friends in making the event possible—especially Barbara Marshall, Kathleen Marshall (C90), Scott Marshall (C91), Heather Hall, and Joseph Leo Bwarie.

“Our theater was aglow with purple pride as we showcased not only current Northwestern students but also Dean Johnson’s many talents,” Kathleen Marshall said. “We might be far from Evanston, but our hearts are aligned with the new goals of openness and inclusivity.”

Led from the piano by music director and performance studies faculty member Kent Brooks, the four-piece band included students Shanth Gopalswamy, Jesse Lear, and Daniel Zitomer.

“Getting the chance to perform with such a talented group of musicians was a gift,” Zitomer said. “I believe opportunities like these are crucial for stepping out into the world of professional music performance, and I’m very lucky to have been a part of it.” Lear was equally enthusiastic. The chance “to learn about the roots of a variety of genres such as gospel and blues through live performance is an unforgettable experience,” he said. “Playing with the other musicians has further reminded me of how powerful music can be.”

Later in the show, Johnson reentered in full drag, complete with a slit up his sequined gown. Claiming to be Sheneeda Bath, a dear friend of Johnson, the versatile performer ended up singing Duke Ellington’s “I Got It Bad (And That Ain’t Good)” sprawled atop the piano.

Johnson brought the show to Chicago this past spring and has plans to tour in other cities in the future.

Kingsley Day retired in 2020 from the Office of Global Marketing and Communications.
TURNING TABLES

Pursuing an MA in sound arts and industries has expanded horizons for Kelvin Boddie. The program, in turn, has been broadened by his participation.

BY KINGSLEY DAY
Kelvin Boddie grew up playing musical instruments. Though eventually tiring of them, he developed a passion for music and sound. So while earning his undergraduate degree in political science at the University of Chicago, he taught himself to DJ.

“It was something that I always wanted to try,” says Boddie, who can now DJ “just about anything, but hip-hop is my preferred genre.”

Boddie enjoys his current interactions with students as an academic adviser at the University of Illinois Chicago, and he still enjoys DJing. Eventually he found a perfect avenue for combining the two interests when a friend, who was in Northwestern’s master of sound arts and industries program, told Boddie about it.

“Instead of doubling up on the teaching and student service side of my career, I decided to build up this side and then figure out how to mash them together,” he says. He quickly discovered that the program encourages students to “find an area that you’re interested in, that’s comfortable for you, and live in that for a while.” For Boddie, it was an ideal opportunity to sharpen his focus on hip-hop. With program leadership eager to forge more partnerships with Chicago-area hip-hop creators, Boddie’s work has helped expand the program in a welcome direction.

“The most enjoyable example so far has been the final project for my Sound Studies class,” he says. “We talked a lot about voice, ownership of voice, and using a voice out of context. So I did a DJ mix that was a deep dive into hip-hop history, using samples and showing how and where they were sampled. It’s one continuous mix, and I plan to extend it as my capstone project.”

Boddie says the feedback he’s received has been “a great validation for what I value, for how I look at hip-hop and music in general. It’s great to see there’s a space for it here, that there’s room for analysis and evaluation of hip-hop in the grand scheme of sound studies, and that I can contribute to it.”

Those explorations haven’t been Boddie’s only pioneering efforts. Last fall, he became the first student in the program to serve as sound designer for a Wirtz Center mainstage production. Presented in partnership with the American Music Theatre Project, The Battlefields of Clara Barton was Northwestern’s first live theatre performance since the COVID-19 pandemic and was also the first time Boddie had done theatrical work.

“I controlled the mixing of all the sound,” he says. “It was a great learning experience.” Although he came to appreciate the advantage of programming presets, for this maiden voyage, he mixed the whole show live—just like a DJ.

Boddie completed the program in June and hopes to combine his sound training and education background in an academic setting or at a nonprofit promoting youth creativity. “I definitely look forward to continuing to grow,” he says, “and to finding the right way to merge my career paths.”
SIRIUSLY

US and Russian crew members undergo testing ahead of the eight-month terrestrial SIRIUS 21 isolation mission that approximated the physical and mental challenges of a journey to Mars. Professors Leslie DeChurch and Noshir Contractor, with students in their ATLAS and SONIC labs and research coordinator Joy Liebman, have partnered with NASA and the SIRIUS team to study how isolation affects teamwork—critically important on a long voyage. The crew “landed” in July and will debrief with the Northwestern team to get a final set of data.
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore.
Unscripted

with Kyra Jones

Kyra Jones (C14) was a staff writer on the ABC series Queens. Juli Del Prete (C14) and Jones wrote and starred in the independent web series The Right Swipe, which was distributed on OTV, the platform created by associate professor of communication studies Aymar Jean Christian. Jones moved to Los Angeles from Chicago last winter and is a new member of the SoC Board of Advisors.

I didn’t figure out that I wanted to be a screenwriter until around my senior year of college, but by then it was too late to change my major to RTVF. I knew I loved storytelling through film and TV, which is why I gravitated to acting. But after a few years in the theatre program, I realized there was an extreme lack of nuanced, three-dimensional roles for Black women and people of marginalized identities. I wanted to be a part of creating those roles rather than just fighting to be cast in the few that came along. I was always a strong academic writer and people told me I was funny, so I took a screenwriting class and immediately fell in love.

The biggest difference between a network writers’ room and that of an independent series is the money. There is so much scraping and scrounging and begging for funding when you’re producing independently, and you have to kill a lot of the darlings in your script to be able to produce within your budget. The second biggest difference is the number of cooks in the kitchen. There were about nine writers in the network room, all pitching ideas, and our showrunner got the final say on what ended up in the script. With my web series, it was just me and my cowriter making what we wanted to make.

I love professor AJ Christian. We didn’t connect until after I graduated, when I was an actor in a different OTV series called Seeds. But that Northwestern connection and OTV’s mentorship and resources helped me become the artist I am today. Not only did working after graduation as a survivor advocate and sex educator at Northwestern’s Center for Awareness, Response, and Education provide me with a steady job that gave me flexibility to pursue acting and writing (which is so rare to find), my knowledge of sexuality, gender, race, pleasure, trauma, and more also grew exponentially. This work has so much impact on who I am as an artist and the types of stories I’m passionate about telling.

I miss everything about Chicago but the snow. It’s the best city in the world. I love the arts scene there—film, theatre, music. I think I may miss the food the most, though, especially jibaritos.

“There was an extreme lack of nuanced, three-dimensional roles for Black women and people of marginalized identities. I wanted to be a part of creating those roles.”
Common ground

CommConnections, the school’s new cross-disciplinary symposium series, explores facets of communication through artistic, scientific, and social scientific perspectives. Three faculty members kicked off the first panel in April.

On diversity
“In documentary, there is a reenergized conversation related to whose story it is and who gets to tell it … And there’s suddenly a renaissance if you are a documentary maker of color.

“Is this truly leading to substantive change? Because this is not the first time this kind of cycle of response to injustice in our nation has occurred, an articulated investment in rectifying things through the arts or documentary. But certainly a lot of voices are awakened. It remains to be seen what the audience—not the viewing audience, but the funders, the broadcasters, those who really control certain levers of power—will really be doing. But it’s an interesting moment.”

On equity
“My field tends toward uncovering universals—core scientific principles. If you sample a set of 10 people, the goal is to draw a universal conclusion, something that could be generalized to more people. A big problem in the field is that we don’t sample representatively—so that leads to a very skewed perspective of what children do, how they learn, how they develop, because we’re not really looking at kids all over the world or even all over the United States or Chicago.

“But what does the average really mean? Is there really this kind of universal? It always comes down to the specifics. Can we take a scientific approach that’s based more on contextualizing all the patterns that we see? Can we acknowledge more of the diversity of human behavior, thought, and experience?”

On inclusion
“There has always been an interest in ‘SoulWork,’ the generative method I developed from African American performance traditions—in training artists and actors in a way that is inclusive of the brilliant artistic legacies of a range of cultures.

“In higher education, there is an increased awareness and expectation that we will be exposed to and trained and immersed in a range of perspectives, a range of identities—and even more, that we will be able to bring the fullness of our identities to our work, in all of their complexity, diversity, and interculturality. That’s really a hallmark of SoulWork. It’s a performance-making methodology and a theoretical framework that not only encourages but requires people to bring forth the fullness of their identity and to develop artistic practice alongside social consciousness and understanding of the society we inhabit.”

Sound Off

Marco Williams, radio/television/film; documentary filmmaker

Adriana Weisleder, communication sciences and disorders; child language researcher

Cristal Chanelle Truscott, performance studies; artist and scholar
Moya Bailey (PhD, Emory University) gave the keynote address at February’s Symposium on Rhetorics of Gendered Anti-Blackness and Sexuality, sponsored by Arizona State University’s School of Social Transformation.

Claudio Benzecry (PhD, New York University) wrote *The Perfect Fit: Creative Work in the Global Shoe Industry*, published in January, which explores the global process behind making women’s shoes.

Melissa Blanco Borelli (PhD, University of California, Riverside) received an Alumnae of Northwestern grant for her April Love Lovin’ Blackness: 2022 Black Performance Theory Working Group Meeting. The group of scholars work on the theory, history, and practice of African diasporic expressive cultures.

*Redemption* by Thomas Bradshaw (MFA, Brooklyn College) received a citation of excellence from the Laurens/Hatcher Foundation. The award includes a $15,000 grant to Bradshaw and the same amount to the theater producing the play.

Aymar Jean Christian (PhD, University of Pennsylvania) was awarded a two-year $150,000 grant from Humanities Without Walls, a University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. His project “Black Trans in the Americas” is a community-led research partnership to document and celebrate the myriad ways that trans Black people create community, build programming, and lead movements with local and global groups in the Americas.

Tracy C. Davis (PhD, University of Warwick) began her second year in the National Science Foundation–funded NU-Geopaths program with the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences. Davis and Suzan van der Lee are principal investigators on a project offering mentored summer internships to high school students, with a goal of increasing diversity in geosciences by exposing students to the breadth of the field. Davis focuses on training the graduate student and post-doctoral mentors and enhancing mentees’ skills in scientific communication.

David Catlin (BS, Northwestern) directed last winter’s world premiere of Michael Hollinger’s *Mr. Dickens’ Hat* for Northlight Theatre. Artists included actors Cordelia Dewdney (C16) and Ruchir Khazanchi (C21) and designers William Boles (GC15) and Sully Ratke (GC16). Catlin is a founding ensemble member of Chicago’s Lookingglass Theatre Company, which reprised *Lookingglass Alice* last summer. He adapted and directed the signature production with scenic designers Daniel Ostling (GC96) and Sarah Watkins (GC13).

Melissa Foster (MME, Northwestern) received Northwestern’s 2022 Charles Deering McCormick Distinguished Professor of Instruction award. She is currently writing *Hip-Hop: Rap and R&B—A Performer’s Guide*, to be published by Rowman and Littlefield.

The Dance Studies Association honored Nadine George-Graves (PhD, Northwestern) with its Outstanding Scholarly Research in Dance award and Susan Manning (PhD, Columbia University) with its Dixie Durr Award for Outstanding Service in Dance Research.

Dean E. Patrick Johnson (PhD, Louisiana State University) received the Frederick Douglass Medal from the University of Rochester’s Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African American Studies.

Hamid Naficy (PhD, University of California, Los Angeles) is now the namesake of the Hamid Naficy Book Award, granted every two years by the Association for Iranian Studies on behalf of the Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies at San Francisco State University.
Elizabeth Norton (PhD, Tufts University) is codirecting Northwestern's involvement in a landmark study on how the COVID-19 pandemic and opioid epidemic will together affect children's brain development. The HEALthy Brain and Child Development study will follow a regionally and socioeconomically diverse group of 7,500 pregnant people in their second trimester and also follow their children for up to a decade. With a large data set of biologic, brain, behavior, and social information about the children and their families, the study will enable comparisons of brain development and behavioral outcomes among children from a variety of environments. Northwestern is one of 24 participating research sites across the country in what is the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind. Feinberg School of Medicine’s Lauren Wakschlag is codirecting with Norton.

Lakshmi Padmanabhan (PhD, Brown University) was awarded one of four fellowships for collaborative research and art practice through Union Docs Center for Documentary Art and will receive $20,000 for participating in the yearlong program. Padmanabhan’s teaching and research focus on world cinema and experimental film, postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and queer theory.

Dassia Posner (PhD, Tufts University) coedited Three Loves for Three Oranges: Gozzi, Meyerhold, Prokofiev with musicologist Kevin Bartig and Maria De Simone (GC18, GC21). The essay collection, paired with new translations of Prokofiev’s Love for Three Oranges, charts the transformations and transpositions this fantastical tale underwent to provoke theatrical revolutions.

Ariel Rogers (PhD, University of Chicago) was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for her new book project. The forthcoming Rethinking the Frame: On the Organization and Delimitation of Moving Images is a reconsideration of the cinematic frame in light of advances in viewing media, especially virtual reality.

Michelle Shumate (PhD, University of Southern California), with Katherine R. Cooper, wrote Networks for Social Impact, published last fall. The book takes a systems approach to explain how and when networks make a social impact.

David Tolchinsky (MFA, University of Southern California) and undergraduate Adelaide Young received the Fletcher Award last fall, which recognizes outstanding undergraduate students who have conducted research with support from an Undergraduate Research Grant. Tolchinsky was Young’s faculty adviser. Her project was a feature screenplay exploring the realities of living with obsessive compulsive disorder using the creative language of film thrillers.

Ellen Wartella (PhD, University of Minnesota) coauthored the policy brief “A Whole New World: Education Meets the Metaverse” for the Brookings Institution. The brief explores how immersive and imaginary digital worlds can be harnessed as an effective educational tool and how to guide teachers and caregivers to prepare for these new opportunities.

Mimi White (PhD, University of Iowa) compiled a dossier for the summer 2021 issue of the academic journal Screen, including the introduction to four essays as well as the essay “Genetic Affect, As Seen on TV.” She also wrote Animating Entertainment, or Very Special Media Reflexivity” for the book Very Special Episodes: Televising Industrial and Social Change.

Marco Williams (MFA, University of California, Los Angeles) in April was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to fund further production of his forthcoming documentary Eyes on the Prize Reclaimed. The film tells the story of the making and legacy of Eyes on the Prize, the landmark public television series about the civil rights movement. The documentary will be released in late 2023.
Alumni Achievements

1970s

Njoki McElroy (GC70, GC73), a former performance studies faculty member, teamed up with Nicole Stewart Schlesinger (Co1) to create the 2019 production of From Freedman’s Town to Botham Jean: Stories for Racial Healing, in which seven Dallas residents performed their personal stories about race. Schlesinger produced the show and McElroy directed. Last year, McElroy directed a virtual performance of stories for racial healing. She is the author of the memoir 1012 Natchez.

Nicole Stewart Schlesinger

Steve Meixell (C76) is the director, writer, and producer of the PBS documentary Unearthing Ogawa, which was also seen at major film festivals in the US, Canada, and Australia. The film was named best documentary feature at the 2021 Chicago Indie Film Awards and received honors on the international film festival circuit.

Jane Hoffman

Marsha Z. Laufer (GC72) was named by President Joe Biden in January to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

1980s

Caroline O’Boyle (C82) was promoted to Illinois associate vice president for the Trust for Public Land.

Jane Hoffman (C86), Northwestern trustee and former commissioner of consumer affairs for New York City and a senior fellow at Harvard, wrote Your Data, Their Billions: Unraveling and Simplifying Big Tech, published in May. In the book, Hoffman notes that the “Big Five” technology companies have captured 1,500 personal facts about the average person—which may prove that privacy as we know it is dead.

Steve Meixell

April McClain-Delaney (C86), Northwestern trustee and former Washington director of Common Sense Media, has been named deputy assistant secretary of commerce for communications and information at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Coleen Coleman

1990s

Beth Barnes (MSJ81, GC90) was a recipient of the 61st annual Great Teacher Award from the University of Kentucky Alumni Association. She is a professor and the director of undergraduate studies in its department of integrated strategic communication.

Kiva Allgood (C95, KSM07) was appointed president and CEO of Sarcos Technology and Robotics.

Matthew Spangler (C96) adapted Khaled Hosseini’s novel The Kite Runner for the stage; it premiered on Broadway in July at the Helen Hayes Theatre. The play has previously been produced

former actress Adrienne Alitowski (C88) recently released her book Clipped: A Mom Invents a Way to Hold Her Life Together Just as the World Falls Apart, which has reached best-seller status.

Coleen Coleman (C88, GSESP21), senior associate dean in the School of Education and Social Policy, was awarded the 2021 Jean E. Shedd University Citizenship Award.

John Lehr (C88) and Andy Wombwell (C89) cohost the podcast Flula Makes Five, a 10-episode audio sitcom in the style of classic 1980s network shows. Lehr stars alongside actor Flula Borg in the series, which is written and directed by Wombwell. Mark A. Ward (C87) created the promotional materials.

Former actress Adrienne Alitowski (C88) recently released her book Clipped: A Mom Invents a Way to Hold Her Life Together Just as the World Falls Apart, which has reached best-seller status.

Coleen Coleman (C88, GSESP21), senior associate dean in the School of Education and Social Policy, was awarded the 2021 Jean E. Shedd University Citizenship Award.

John Lehr (C88) and Andy Wombwell (C89) cohost the podcast Flula Makes Five, a 10-episode audio sitcom in the style of classic 1980s network shows. Lehr stars alongside actor Flula Borg in the series, which is written and directed by Wombwell. Mark A. Ward (C87) created the promotional materials.

April McClain-Delaney (C86), Northwestern trustee and former Washington director of Common Sense Media, has been named deputy assistant secretary of commerce for communications and information at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Kiva Allgood (C95, KSM07) was appointed president and CEO of Sarcos Technology and Robotics.

Matthew Spangler (C96) adapted Khaled Hosseini’s novel The Kite Runner for the stage; it premiered on Broadway in July at the Helen Hayes Theatre. The play has previously been produced
in London’s West End, at the Dubai Opera House, and in other countries.

In last fall’s *How the Arts Can Save Education: Transforming Teaching, Learning, and Instruction*, Erica Halverson (C97, GSESP05) draws on 25 years as a researcher and teaching artist to offer a blueprint for students and teachers to take risks, collaborate, and work creatively to build arts-centered learning environments.

**2000s**

**Billy Eichner** (Coo) made headlines when it was announced that he would be the first openly gay man to cowrite and star in his own major studio film. *Bros* will comprise an all-LGBTQ principal cast (including all principal heterosexual roles played by openly LGBTQ actors). The comedy is scheduled to be released this fall by Universal Pictures.

**Amber Hickory** (C98) was named chief marketing officer of RMB Capital, an independent investment advisory group.

**Nicole Patton Terry** (C99, GC02, GC05) was a finalist in the William T. Grant Foundation’s 2022 Institutional Challenge Grant for her project “University Research Partnerships to Reduce Educational Disparity in College Towns: Building a Model in Tallahassee, Florida.”

**Marissa A. Peirsol** (Coo) was elected to partnership at the law firm BakerHostetler.

**Kristen Schaal** (Coo), voice of impish Louise Belcher on the long-running Fox animated series *Bob’s Burgers*, brought the character to the big screen when *The Bob’s Burgers Movie* opened in theaters in May.

**Phil Yu** (Coo) received the Peabody Trailblazer Award in March. Yu created the blog *Angry Asian Man*, which explores racism, representation, and the visibility of Asian Americans in popular culture. He also coauthored *Rise: A Pop History of Asian America from the Nineties to Now*, which was published in January, and is featured in the Netflix documentary *White Hot: The Rise & Fall of Abercrombie & Fitch*.

**Ebs Burnough** (C02) is managing director of Hatch House Media, a film, television, and theatre production company in the UK, and president and founder of Ebs Burnough Solutions International. He was appointed to the board of directors of Hudson Pacific Properties.

**Rosa Escaréño** (GC03), general superintendent and CEO of the Chicago Park District, joined the board of directors of Teatro Vista, Chicago’s only Equity-affiliated Latinx theatre company.

### New, more diverse Board of Advisors to have more involvement

When **E. Patrick Johnson** began his deanship in August 2020, he recognized that the existing alumni National Advisory Council needed restructuring. His vision centered on a group that would be smaller and more diverse—along racial and ethnic, geographic, occupational, and age lines—with term limits and greater involvement in SoC campus operations. The Board of Advisors, convened last fall, comprises about 30 members (half the size of the original council) and includes new members **Ebs Burnough** (C02), **Jackie Laine** (C08, KSM17), **GiGi Lucas** (C07), **Kyra Jones** (C14), and **Jason Kessler** (C04). The group has three committees to advise the dean on planning, the student experience, and future board development. Alumni and friends of SoC who are interested in getting involved may email socdev@northwestern.edu.
Alliant Insurance Services appointed Meghan O’Malley (Co03) as first vice president. She will lead its western region.

Barbara Webb (GC03) was promoted to partner at MGO.

Raymond J. Lee (Co04) and Morgan Weed (Co07) performed in the Washington, DC, production of the musical Once Upon a One More Time, inspired by the music of Britney Spears.

Jarrod Zimmerman (Co05) made his off-Broadway debut in Trevor at Stage 42 as dad/Father Joe, a role he originated in the world premiere four years prior at Writers Theatre in Glencoe, Illinois.

Aaron Mays (Co07) joined communications firm Kivvit as managing director.

J. S. Puller (Co07) published her sophomore novel, The Lost Things Club, last summer. The heartwarming middle grade story explores the effects of grief, the power of friendship, and the lesson that sometimes not all lost things are meant to be found.

Luke Tanen (Co07, KSM15) was promoted to president and CEO of Chicago Innovation.

Liza Katzer (Co08) is coexecutive producer of the Emmy Award–winning Apple TV comedy Ted Lasso.

Mike Kafka (Co09) was hired last winter as the New York Giants’ offensive coordinator. He was previously the quarterbacks coach for the Kansas City Chiefs.

Heather Lylis (Co09) was promoted to copresident of the PR firm now known as Sunshine Sachs Morgan & Lylis.

Julia Rhoades (Co09) joined Croke Fairchild Morgan & Beres as a partner in Detroit.

2010s

Racquel Gates (GC11) was appointed an associate professor of film at Columbia University School of the Arts.

Who is Jonathan Fisher (C12)? This Northwestern theatre alumnus ended the 38-game winning streak of a defending Jeopardy! champion in October, going on to win 11 consecutive games himself and earning nearly $250,000.


Luis Pineiro (C13) joined the television literary division of A3 Artists Agency.

Lindz Amer (C14), a digital creator and activist specializing in queer storytelling and performance in children’s media, was one of seven recipients of the Maine Arts Commission’s fellowship awards.

The comedy POTUS, by Selina Fillinger (C16), opened on Broadway in April. Directed by Susan Stroman and starring Vanessa Williams, Rachel Dratch, and Lea Delaria, the play earned three Tony Award nominations. Fillinger is among the youngest playwrights to have a show on Broadway and a past Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival winner. She currently writes for the third season of Apple TV’s The Morning Show and is developing a feature for Chernin/Netflix.

Luis Antonio Perez (GC17) and his Colorado Public Radio music appreciation podcast
*Music Blocks* won best podcast for children at the 2022 Podcast Academy Ambie Awards and was also nominated in the best knowledge category. Perez is also a producer on *Back from Broken*, which was a 2021 nominee for best interview podcast.

Silvia Lovato (GC19), senior director of research and evaluation at PBS KIDS Learning Technologies, was appointed to the board of directors of Girls on the Run of NOVA (northern Virginia).

2020s

Nia D’Emilio (GC20) is the marketing coordinator for the Trident Network, a digital entertainment network that produces live shows on Twitch, videos on YouTube, and podcasts for audio platforms. The organization continues to add content from creators across the country.

Columnist and author Michael Leppert (GC20) released his latest book, *Flipping the Circle: A Political Thriller*, in 2021. A look at the seedy world of government lobbyists and political corruption, it draws on insights from Leppert’s career at the Indiana statehouse.

Andy Slater (GC20), a Chicago-based media artist, sound designer, teaching artist, and disability advocate, was awarded a 2022 USA Fellowship. He is the founder of the Society of Visually Impaired Sound Artists and director of the Sound as Sight accessible field-recording project. As a blind member of the extended and virtual reality community, he uses his voice as a creator and advocate to help the industry be more accessible for disabled people. The $50,000 fellowship recognizes artists for their contributions to the field and allows them to decide how to best support their lives.

Jabari Evans (GC21) joined the faculty at the University of South Carolina as assistant professor of race and media in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

Felicia Oduh (C21) received a 2021 Artist Grant award from the Reva and David Logan Foundation. Oduh is an actor and playwright whose work focuses on Black womanhood, identity formation, and under-represented narratives.

Dwight White (C16, MSJ17), an artist and creative consultant, painted the mural in the main room of Northwestern’s newly renovated Black House.
Mass media and mental health

To best make a creative impact, one must tell the truth.

The School of Communication’s Pritzker Pucker Studio Lab for the Promotion of Mental Health via the Cinematic Arts launched last fall to harness media arts to tell the truth about mental health issues and the countless ways they manifest.

With a generous $1 million grant from the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation and Jessy Pucker (WCAS19), the studio lab, under director and RTVF professor David Tolchinsky, set an ambitious agenda of courses, events, speakers, screenings, and grant-funded media-making around honest portrayals of a misunderstood topic.

“It is well documented that mass media has long perpetuated a profoundly negative stigma related to mental health,” Tolchinsky says. “Through one-dimensional viewpoints, inaccurate portrayals, and depictions centered on fear and shame, the media has reinforced discriminatory behavior toward people experiencing mental health issues and propagated impediments to treatment and recovery.

“We believe there is an enormous opportunity to use media—in particular, narrative filmmaking across drama, comedy, and horror—to shine a light on a wide range of mental health issues.”

For instance, schizophrenia and dissociative disorder have long been used in cinema as the “origin stories” of violence or superpowers. With their reliance on existing prejudices and preconceived notions about race, identity, religion, and more, these one-note storylines have been exploited to drive audience reactions.

To help student creators fight these biases, the studio lab offers an innovative three-quarter curriculum focused on original narratives for mental health and mental illness. The 10 students in the inaugural cohort were awarded grants of $2,000 (for screenplays) and $5,000 (for films) to tackle the topic. The lab also sponsors cross-disciplinary lectures by professors and partners outside SoC, including from the Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern Wellness, the anthropology department, and the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute.

“We strive to provide our students with the best facilities, faculty, and experiential opportunities, as well as help them address their mental health and well-being,” says E. Patrick Johnson, dean of the School of Communication. “We are grateful to Jessy and the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation for helping us give students a pipeline to gain agency over mental health narratives and, through creative collaboration, reshape how we learn and talk about a very misunderstood topic.”
### In Memory

**Willie Mae Hardage-Estes** (C39) December 1, 2021  
**Eleanor M. Patton** (C40) February 28  
**Adelaide Holz** (C42) September 23, 2021  
**Edwin J. Abramson** (C48) December 5, 2021  
**Eugene A. Kreyche** (GC51) January 23  
**Virginia E. Evenstad** (C52) February 22  
**Arthur S. Hough Jr.** (C52) January 1  
**Kenneth E. Alberts** (C53) August 31, 2021  
**Frances Rotman Fivelson** (C53) January 25  
**June K. Roshe** (C53) November 1, 2021  
**Georganne A. Chalmers** (C54) January 8  
**Sam L. Bogart** (GC55) January 31  
**Joanne Brown** (C55) August 5, 2021  
**Elizabeth Heidemann** (C55) August 10, 2021  
**Nancy L. Alexander Jaicks** (C55) January 1  
**Jack Lanning Jr.** (C55) December 2, 2021  
**Joan I. Lynch** (GC55) November 5, 2021  
**Murry A. Marks** (C55) January 21  
**Joan P. Mayer** (C55) February 12  
**Harry A. Singleton** (C55) October 1, 2021  

**Robert J. King Jr.** (C56) January 13  
**Dale W. Stevens** (C57) January 24  
**Maria Pitcairn** (C58) February 10  
**Carole K. Smith** (C58) December 2, 2021  
**Joseph W. Wenzel** (GC58) January 23  
**Janet Davis** (C59) October 2, 2021  
**John Tom Pappas** (C59) February 16  
**A. Kent Gravett** (C60) July 10, 2021  
**Barbara Swanson** (C61) January 20  
**William T. Garrison Jr.** (C63) January 31  
**Lyn Brown** (GC64) January 23  
**James C. Batta** (GC65) July 20, 2021  
**G. Karen Hennig** (C65, GC65) September 23, 2021  
**Roy A. Koenigsknecht** (GC65, GC68) October 18, 2021  
**Jan H. Levine** (C65) September 11, 2021  
**Hugh K. Tirrell** (C66) January 23  
**Lindsey F. Cadot** (C68) December 17, 2021  
**P. William Hutchinson** (GC68) October 9, 2021  
**Charles A. Stjern** (C68) November 27, 2021  
**Robert N. Cohen** (C69) December 1, 2021  
**Ann Guild** (GC70) December 5, 2021  
**Mary M. Carroll** (GC71) November 1, 2021  
**James J. Quinn** (GC71) July 14, 2021  
**Anne Rist** (GC71) July 10, 2021  
**Joseph N. Johnson II** (C72) February 8  
**Dee Dee H. Klein** (SESF57, GC73) October 1, 2021  
**Michael Seth Danziger** (C76) April 11, 2021  
**Patrice Jeanne Bell Vossekuil** (C78) September 23, 2021  
**Elizabeth A. Moerschel** (C80) December 9, 2021  
**Allison A. Saltzer** (C92) October 22, 2021  
**Tiffany D. Dickerson** (C95) December 2, 2021  
**Claire Whitaker** (C49), known for her TV writing work on *The Waltons*, *Falcon Crest*, *Eight is Enough*, and *Death Valley Days*, died on September 23, 2021, at age 93. After graduating from Northwestern, she moved to California and was hired as a typist for radio and early television programs, including *The Jack Benny Show* and Groucho Marx’s *You Bet Your Life*.  
  
  Whitaker wrote a short film for the newly formed BYU Motion Picture Studios in 1962. Called *Man’s Search for Happiness*, the film was presented at the 1964 New York World’s Fair. In 1963, Whitaker signed with the H. N. Swanson Agency in Hollywood and began her TV screenplay writing career, which included credits on *Wagon Train*, *The Wonderful World of Disney*, *Promised Land*, and *Baywatch*.  

**William F. Chimka** (C60), or Bill Taylor, as he was known to his radio listeners, died on August 28, 2021, at age 82. He worked for decades in Wisconsin as an announcer, top-40 disc jockey, and oldies show host for numerous stations. Nationally he was heard on the air in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Las Vegas, Houston, Phoenix, and Denver.  
  
  While working at WEMP in 1956, Taylor tried to stay awake for 100 hours straight at an auto show, according to a *Milwaukee Journal* column. The Journal noted that Taylor “trained” for extended periods without sleep while a student at Northwestern University: “I stayed up for 56 hours once writing term papers,” he said.  

**Stephen Loomis** (GC71), who once designed shirts for Cicely Tyson, Elton John, and Lionel Richie, died on October 21, 2021, at age 74. Loomis worked from 1972 to 1980 as the head designer and vice president of Workroom 27 in Hollywood. Founded by fashion designer Bill Whitten as a custom shirt business, Workroom 27 was discovered by Neil Diamond and grew into a must-stop shop for any entertainer hoping to make a splash onstage. It would become famous for creating Michael Jackson’s rhinestone glove and crystal-encrusted socks.  

**Sally Nemeth** (C81), an award-winning playwright, novelist, and screenwriter, died July 30, 2021, at age 62. She began her television career in 1992 on NBC’s *Law & Order* and later wrote for the show’s UK spinoff. Her play *Holy Days* won a number of London Fringe Theatre awards, and *Mill Fire* premiered at Chicago’s Goodman Theatre, with its UK premiere at London’s Bush Theatre.  
  
  Nemeth produced the documentary *Long Story Short* about Larry and Trudie Long, a popular Asian American nightclub act of the ’40s and ’50s. Her novel for young adults, *The Heights, the Depths, and Everything In Between*, was published in 2006.
The HCI + D center tackles tech with interdisciplinary thinking.

Northwestern is home to a host of research centers, but only a handful are based on partnerships between schools. The Center for Human Computer Interaction + Design not only connects the School of Communication with the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science, it also includes faculty from the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences; the School of Education and Social Policy; the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications; and the Feinberg School of Medicine.

The center’s codirectors represent interschool collaboration both collectively and individually. Darren Gergle is professor of communication studies, and McCormick professors Elizabeth Gerber (mechanical engineering) and Bryan Pardo (computer science) also hold joint appointments in the School of Communication—Gerber in communication studies and Pardo in radio/television/film.

HCI+D opened in 2020 as the pandemic drastically reduced human-to-human interaction—but given the topic at hand, the ubiquity of video conferencing, and the collaborative spirits of the codirectors, the center was able to draw far more participants than anticipated into its work.

“We’ve been doing a quarterly Thought Leader Lecture Series with external experts from industry and academia,” Gergle says. Aimed at spawning new research initiatives, the 2020–21 events attracted more than 1,500 online participants. HCI+D has also launched an undergraduate certificate program.

“HCI+D is necessarily cross-disciplinary, involving fields including psychology, computer science, sociology, and design,” Pardo says. “Our new undergraduate certificate provides a way for those interested to take a coherent program of study and gain a valuable credential.”

A significant recent donation that funds a new professorship will greatly enhance the center’s integrative work. “It’s going to contribute a lot to our goals of building new technologies and new paradigms for interactions that are more collaborative, more sustainable, and more equitable,” Gerber says.

The center seeks to understand the effects of technology on a broad range of stakeholders. “It’s a mistake to think you can design these things in a vacuum and then deploy them without wildly different consequences,” Gergle explains. “That immediately argues for bringing a lot of different disciplines and perspectives and domains to bear on any given problem.”

“The most interesting problems happen at the intersections,” Gerber adds. “We have six schools represented and eight different departments. We’re going to be focused on shared interests in opportunity areas rather than disciplinary heritage. We need to break the boundaries between schools and radically engage the community.”
Assistant professor Elizabeth Norton, right, assists students in fitting an EEG cap during a workshop in her Cognitive Neuroscience of Human Communication course.