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Editors: Kerry Trotter, Kingsley Day
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When Northwestern announced in March that campuses would be shuttered to stem the tide of COVID-19, no student group was hit harder than graduating seniors, who feared this spelled a premature end to their college experience—Commencement activities included. Although all in-person graduation ceremonies were halted, the University community mobilized with alternative plans. The School of Communication moved its convocation ceremony to an entirely online format, with prerecorded remarks by Dean Barbara O’Keefe, guest speaker April McClain-Delaney (see page 23), and graduating senior Kamila Postolowicz, who introduced her. Additionally, all of the more than 300 seniors were asked to submit photos, memories, and accomplishments, which school staff used to create graduate profiles. Perhaps the most exciting elements were an original song written and performed by music theatre students (pictured) and a video featuring student-submitted photos and humorous and inspiring good wishes from a host of illustrious alumni. These included Mara Brock Akil (J92), Kate Baldwin (C97), Greg Berlanti (C94), Craig Bierko (C86), Stephen Colbert (C86, H11), Stephanie D’Abruzzo (C93), Lydia Diamond (C91), Julia Louis-Dreyfus (C83, H07) and Brad Hall (C80), Marcus Folmar (C96), Ana Gasteyer (C89), Kathryn Hahn (C95), Heather Headley (C97), Adam Kantor (C08), Raymond J. Lee (C04), Nick Lehmann (C16), Harry Lennix (C86), Attica Locke (C95), Stephanie March (C96), Denis O’Hare (C84), Nicole Sullivan (C91), and Kimberly Williams-Paisley (C93), as well as School of Communication alumnus parents Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson.

“We’ve reached what I think is a singularity,” said Lennix in his tribute. “Scientists talk about singularity being the point at which something reaches an infinite value, at which point all the rules break down. No more rules. We’re at that time now, and I can think of no better group of people to steward this forward than you Northwestern Wildcat graduates of the School of Communication in 2020.” The Class of 2020 will be invited back to campus next spring to take part in an in-person ceremony.
Northwestern University designated the 2019–20 academic year as a celebration of the decision made 150 years ago to admit women as students. In the School of Communication’s long history, many women faculty and alumni have made singular contributions to their chosen fields. We planned to devote this issue of Dialogue to them in tribute to 150 Years of Women at Northwestern. And, of course, as the first woman to lead this school, I looked forward to the opportunity to showcase our history. This issue’s main feature story does just that.

However, in March, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our plans for this year were turned upside down—as was true for much of our world. I know many of you are wondering how we have responded to this crisis as well as the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, and so this issue also includes my reflections on how disruptive events—both inside and outside the academy—have shaped our school. It is helpful to see current crises in the context of many others we have faced in the past two decades. The essay on page 24 offers that perspective.

As I’m sure you are aware, my service as dean of the school concludes on July 31. In the final component of this issue, I am delighted to introduce you to my successor, Professor E. Patrick Johnson, who begins his service as dean on August 1. It has been a great privilege to lead the school during a time when leadership could make a big difference. The sphere of the communication arts and sciences has been changing at an accelerating pace, and it has never been more important to help our faculty see and implement the changes that need to be made. At the same time, the demographics of our faculty when I arrived in 2000—many of whom had been hired in the 1960s—meant that we have had many vacancies in the past two decades, giving us unprecedented opportunities to reshape our departments.

But rebuilding and creating new programs would have been impossible without the tremendous partnership we enjoy with our engaged alumni, parents, and friends. Growth and change on the scale we have achieved were also the result of their investments of ideas, energy, and gifts. In the past two decades, we have added 11 endowed professorships, which have been key to attracting extraordinary faculty; we have expanded and renovated our facilities to allow us to improve and add programs; and we have been able to expand scholarship support, advising, career services, and cocurricular opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students alike.

Of course, the most visible and successful project our alumni, faculty, and students undertook together was CommFest 2018, which achieved its community-building, educational, and fundraising goals in the most spectacular way. I am so grateful to our alumni leaders (David Lefkowitz, Elizabeth Zoia, and Amanda Silverman), our creative team (Don Weiner, Dave Harding, Rac Clark, and the inimitable Stephen Colbert), and the many alumni who returned to Evanston to perform at the event and participate in the weekend’s activities. It laid the foundation for our future success in ways too numerous to even mention here.

To all of you—students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and friends—I want to express my deepest appreciation for everything you have done for the school, and for me. Just one last time, let me say how much I have loved being your dean.

Barbara J. O’Keefe
Dean, School of Communication
Start a dialogue: dialogue@northwestern.edu
In the 1869–70 academic year, Northwestern University matriculated its first female students, placing it in the vanguard of universities providing equal educational opportunities for women. The School of Oratory—now the School of Communication—was a key point of entry for women from that time forward. As a result, women faculty and alumnae from the school have a long and distinguished history of discovery, creative achievements, and leadership in the communication arts and sciences. Through their contributions, Northwestern has shaped these fields profoundly.
The Arts

From the school’s beginning, its foundations were unequivocally female. In 1881 the brand-new School of Oratory’s first two students graduated—both women. In fact, it wasn’t until 1887 that a male student graduated. Dean Robert Cumnock, the school’s founding leader, served as its only professor until he hired new faculty in 1889 and 1890, both women.

The school initially operated as an elocutionary training ground, laying the foundation for future eminence in rhetoric and public culture. As its performing arts pedagogy program grew, so did its reputation, intensity, and legacy of strong female leadership. In 1914 Susan Burdick Davis, the school’s first female instructor to hold a master’s degree, joined the faculty to teach rhetoric, children’s literature, and “normal methods.”

Children’s theatre pioneer Winifred Ward was hired in 1918, and theatre legend Alvina Krause joined the faculty in 1930. Charlotte Lee was hired in 1945 as the interpretation faculty’s first woman with a doctorate. Those three women played a particularly integral part in shaping theatre and interpretation (now performance studies) into model academic programs. Their transformational work and influence shaped the way Northwestern and many peer institutions teach the dramatic arts to this day.

“They were deeply involved in creating a culture and an environment for rigorous intellectual pursuit and creative and inspired performance,” says Frank Galati (C65, GC67, GC71), professor emeritus of performance studies and a wildly successful scholar, playwright, and director who worked under both Krause and Lee. “These women were powerfully, hugely, tremendously influential in the shaping of these curricula and the points of view of the pedagogy.”

Krause (see page 16) was hired by Dean Ralph Dennis despite her lack of any formal acting training, “but she codified her own methodology,” says professor Cindy Gold, who calls Galati her mentor. “Her belief was that the study of acting was inseparable from the study of liberal arts and the humanities, and she was an early adopter of the idea that acting training should look at the internal life of a character. She was doing what Stanislavsky was doing, what Freud was writing about, so her work was in the zeitgeist.”

Unlike Krause, Charlotte Lee arrived at Northwestern with ample academic credentials, having written a doctoral dissertation on poetry. “It was historic because it opened the door for women who were passionate about the life of the mind and who were now able to look at the possibility of a full professorship,” Galati says. “She was a great teacher, a great performer, effervescent, loving, and maternal.”
Winifred Ward (see page 16), a pioneer in the field of creative dramatics (now known as theatre for young audiences) and founder of the renowned Evanston Children’s Theatre, was a pivotal force in establishing Northwestern’s eminence in storytelling. “She was a marvelous director and leader,” says Rives Collins, professor and chair of the Department of Theatre. “There is a direct link between what she did with Evanston Children’s Theatre and what we do with Imagine U and our storytelling and playwriting programs.”

Collins notes that these early leaders set the tone for what would come to define the modern Departments of Theatre and Performance Studies—a mission to create artists who are intelligent, scholarly, creative, gritty, and inclusive. Today’s departments are as dynamic as they’ve ever been.

“Do we have a sense that in the fullness of time, we may look at this moment and marvel at the women we have now?” he posits. “The answer is emphatically yes.”

He cites Mary Zimmerman, a former Galati student “whose work has transformed the field, that hybrid of performance studies and theatre, to tell stories that are extraordinarily visual and poetic, with an aesthetic uniquely her own.”

Collins continues, “I remember when we were hiring Anna Shapiro, a colleague said to me, ‘Get used to the fact that she’s likely to be the smartest person in the room, no matter what room she’s in.’ Anna has a brilliant sense of text, of literary analysis, and she knows how to unpack a play. This is not a theatre program in which people hang their brains at the door. And Tracy C. Davis is arguably one of the most decorated of our faculty, ever. She is widely published and highly regarded internationally as a preeminent historian and scholar in the field who has transformed doctoral studies in theatre at Northwestern.” Currently focused on the emergence of women as entrepreneurs and performers in the gig economy, Davis’s scholarship dovetails with groundbreaking work being done in business studies and sociology.

A similar emphasis on interdisciplinarity is being championed in the Department of Performance Studies. Renowned for producing the likes of Galati, Zimmerman, and Steppenwolf Theatre’s late artistic director Martha Lavey, the department has been transformed by D. Soyini Madison (who retired this year; see page 7) into an ethnographic exploration of performance not only as practice but as a means of analyzing social, political, and embodied works—especially pertaining to Black, Latinx, Asian American, Indigenous, queer, and feminist experiences.

“I think this department is the crown jewel of performance ethnography,” she says.

Continuing Madison’s departmental path are Marcela Fuentes, an expert on performance in activism and protest; Shayna Silverstein, who examines sound and movement in the contemporary Middle East; Cristal Truscott, founder of Progress Theatre, which works toward antiracism engagement; and Bimbola Akinbola, who researches women’s art-making in the African diaspora.

“I do credit the work of feminist scholars in theatre and performance studies departments across the country, and Northwestern leads in this respect,” says Davis, the Ethel M. Barber Professor of Performing Arts. “And I credit scholars of color and transgender scholars, who train generation after generation of theatre students to go out to advocate and make work of different kinds and bring about the change.”
“I am seeing women who are leaders, who are visionary, who take no guff. This feels like a current generation of women who are ready to take on the world. And then they come here and find faculty who'll say, ‘We’ll help you do it.’”

—Rives Collins

Notable in the quest for change is associate professor Jessica Thebus, director of the MFA program in directing. “The program is entirely female led and female staffed, and a lot of our students, no matter how they identify, are really drawn to the program because of our strong female leadership,” says Thebus. Adding that she also makes a point of trying to model how the next generation of women can find a work-life balance, she notes that the MFA directing program’s faculty—Shana Cooper, Halena Kays, Dassia Posner, and Shapiro—are all mothers.

Collins attributes the success of these deeply thoughtful dramatic pursuits at Northwestern to the faculty’s incredible range. “We have the likes of Masi Asare, a stunning composer and lyricist and inspirational teacher; Dassia Posner, fluent in Russian, who has direct ties to Russian theatre makers who knew Stanislavsky; Elizabeth Son, whose scholarship looks at the history of sexual abuse and redress as it plays out in embodied performance; and Laura Schellhardt and Julie Myatt, who teach playwriting in what is without a doubt the best undergraduate playwriting program in the country.

“And no student at the University could say, ‘Boo hoo, I wish Miss Krause were teaching here today,’” Collins continues. “We’ve got Cindy Gold, Cristal Truscott, and Sandra Marquez, and the amazing Mary Poole, who is retiring this year after more than 30 years of inspiring students.”

It’s the students, after all, who reap the benefits of their deeply creative and intellectual forebears’ legacy. “I am seeing women who are leaders, who are visionary, who take no guff; we are not dealing with a generation of women who will take kindly to condescension, patronizing attitudes, or harassment in any form,” Collins says. “This feels like a current generation of women who are ready to take on the world. And then they come here and find faculty who’ll say, ‘We’ll help you do it.’”
EMBRACING “THE OTHER” IN PERFORMANCE STUDIES

“At every turn in culture, the trajectory of performance studies at Northwestern has always been against the grain,” says newly retired professor D. Soyini Madison, an alumna and revolutionary force of nature in the department.

The exemplarily radical reputation of Northwestern’s performance studies program can be traced back to Shakespearean scholar Wallace Bacon, who founded the Department of Interpretation in 1955 and essentially reimagined the field. Under Bacon, interpretation’s roots in adapting literary texts—typically the Western European canon—started to look toward “the other”—the other voice, the other point of view, the empathy needed for the other. At the time, says Madison, this was an unexpected, unexplored impulse in the field.

“He broke ground,” she adds. “He wanted us to look at other texts that were not ‘classics.’ He said, ‘I want us to travel into other worlds that we do not know, where we are not known.’”

This idea turned on its head what is considered “good” or classic literature and directly influenced Bacon’s successor as department chair, Dwight Conquergood, who took this notion of “the other” even further—beyond text and into people’s lives, a decidedly more ethnographic approach. He collected stories, engaged in rituals, and enacted practices among such cultures as the Hmong and Chicago’s street gangs.

Madison arrived at Northwestern as a Chicago-based theatre artist and single mother in 1984—the year the department name was changed to performance studies—and the following year began to study directly under Conquergood. After completion of her PhD in 1989, her roots among Chicago’s Black female performance activists and her ethnographic research on Black female domestic workers led to a faculty position at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (where her students included future School of Communication dean E. Patrick Johnson) and, in 2007, back to her alma mater.

It was under Madison’s leadership in the department—and in honoring her mentor’s work—that the field took yet another step toward the study of cultures, movements, and ideas well beyond the stage. “We were really able to delve into the theory and practice of performance ethnography,” she says. “And we started getting students who wanted to do the ethnographic work. These were stunning proposals for work that was not in safe places. I had people doing work with Palestinians, the Arab Spring, the riots in Greece and Spain, in Brazil, in India, in South Africa. We hadn’t had that before.”

A respected author in the field, Madison watched students flourish in this new direction as she continued to pursue her work in theory and performance methodology. “If people want to study performance studies,” she says, “they come to Northwestern.”

It’s now the field’s very nature to research and revere “the other,” which in America has long been Black, Indigenous, Latinx, immigrant, LGBTQ, and female populations. “In performance studies we’re always looking for what is left out,” says Madison. “Not only what is left out of the equation, but the cracks in the equation.”

The myriad crises of 2020, whether coronavirus, the overdue reckoning with America’s racial injustices, or political upheavals, have brought into relief people and institutions long overlooked. It can’t be overstated that Madison’s vanguard work has played an integral pedagogical part in radically extending the department’s legacy of making “the other” the focus.
The Sciences

In the early to mid-20th century, when science and medicine were overwhelmingly dominated by men, the field of communication sciences and disorders—particularly what is now known as speech-language pathology—had become a reliable entry point for women.

“There was a teaching component to the practice, so it drew a lot of educators, which was a traditionally female field,” says Bonnie Martin-Harris (GC91), the Alice Gabrielle Twight Professor (named for the first woman to receive her PhD from Northwestern) and the school’s associate dean for academic affairs. “But that has changed a lot, as now there’s more of a medical component. It’s much more rigorous.”

Kate Gottfred (GC73, GC79), a former American Speech-Language-Hearing Association president and an advocate for children’s access to learning development resources (see page 20), recalls that even though women flocked to the profession, the leaders, professors, and heads of special education were still mostly men. To help correct the imbalance, she served on a 1980s committee for equality of the sexes in the profession. “We were fighting the good fight, and we helped women be leaders in their professions,” she says. “Now most of the leaders in our industry are women, most of the researchers are women.”

Northwestern’s Department of Speech Re-education was created in 1928 with only two teachers on its roster, including Belle Kennedy, known for her exacting standards. As the department grew, it boasted such talent as Doris Johnson, the JoAnn G. and Peter F. Dolle Professor Emerita in Learning Disabilities, whose research broke ground in the study of learning disabilities; Laura Lee, who researched child developmental speech in the 1960s and ’70s; and in audiology, professor emerita Laura Ann Wilber, who worked to set and perfect standards for hearing assessment and amplification devices. For more than 20 years, she has served as a US representative to the International Standards Organization.

“We are fortunate in this field to have a history of strong female leadership, especially at Northwestern,” says Pamela Souza, professor and chair of the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. “Some of the researchers, teachers, and students from our department have led groundbreaking work in science and treatment, as well as how we provide care to our patients.”

One influence looming especially large is that of Jerilyn Logemann (see page 19), who began teaching at Northwestern in 1978. A leader in the field of dysphagia (swallowing...
disorders)—often a byproduct of head and neck cancers, neurodegenerative disorders, and premature birth—Logemann was the driving force behind Martin-Harris’s decision to come to Northwestern for her doctorate.

“Jeri Logemann was a pioneer,” she says. “She was the first woman, first anyone, first person, to begin to critically evaluate not only speech disorders but also the very important function sharing the same anatomical pathway, and that’s swallowing. She was tough, and she took a lot of hits along the way. She was invading the turf of surgeons and others, mostly men, but she had to infiltrate so many different disciplines in order to advocate for the science and the patients.

“When I came to do my PhD here, Jeri was the chair,” Martin-Harris continues. “And so not only was she building this clinical science machine, she was also leading the faculty and had huge administrative responsibilities. And she built a bridge to our downtown campus, in terms of doing work with patients in the hospital and doing actual clinical research in the real clinics. She was key in establishing the infrastructure between our campuses, now instrumental in conducting patient-oriented research.”

Martin-Harris herself has transformed the field of dysphagia, having authored and developed the first standardized method of videofluoroscopic assessment of swallowing impairment. She has spent her career focusing on patient-centric approaches and researching the standardization of clinicians’ share scholarship more broadly, developing community-based programming. I am most eager to continue my work with museums and in academic publishing. The School of Communication has always impressed me with its commitment to fostering interdisciplinary scholarship and supporting the artistic practice of its students and faculty. One of the features that distinguishes the school is its faculty, who are exceptional mentors and advocates. When I visited Evanston for applicant weekend, one of the first things I noticed about my department was the strong contingent of women who are amazing scholars, teachers, and activists. I inquired about life as a woman in the program, and the positive responses factored greatly in my decision to attend Northwestern.

**LAURA JEANNE FERDINAND**

*Fifth-year PhD candidate, interdisciplinary theatre and drama*

**HOMETOWN** Roswell, Georgia

*My dissertation is a recuperative history* of women of color and other women in the American South that examines how women shaped Southern history and culture during the region’s most prolific period of cultural production (the early 20th century). Although the influence of these women has been deeply felt across the South, they have been mostly overlooked in scholarship. I am committed to accessible education and public-facing work. In addition to the responsibilities of a university professor, I am excited by the wonderful opportunities to platforms for a wide range of perspectives to bring awareness and inspire positive change in the world. I have faith that my past and future experiences at Northwestern will contribute to my future success as I strive to become a professional in my field while giving back and remaining an active member of the community. I have found a home away from home in the School of Communication.
SHARENA SIGMON
Second-year MFA candidate, writing for screen and stage
HOMETOWN Chicago (Englewood, South Side)

Selecting this program at Northwestern has provided me with further knowledge in my writing, and I’ve gained a new perspective on who I am as an artist. After I graduate, I can tackle my professional aspirations with conviction due to my background in this work. As a woman, specifically as a Black woman, I feel supported by faculty and close peers in my program. No one can ever fully walk in my shoes, but I do know that I have many open ears who are willing to listen and support me in any way that I need to feel supported. That’s super important to me. I plan to move to Los Angeles to further my goals in screenwriting and TV writing. I seek also to teach screenwriting or creative writing; I feel I can venture into new and different territories. A guest visited my program and mentioned how everywhere he goes, a Northwestern alum is there. This excites me for my future. The sky’s the limit.

RAHMA ALMAJID
Class of 2021 human communication sciences major on pre-med track
HOMETOWN Chicago

I want to be a physician and work in developmental pediatrics, a field heavily discussed in most of my courses. In addition to my coursework, since fall 2019 I have been involved in research with Adriana Weisleder in the Child Language Lab, where I help in our studies involving bilingual children and late talkers. This has also been monumental in fueling my interests and teaching me to identify and treat patients with neurodegenerative disorders. Cynthia Thompson is the backbone of our Aphasia Center and has made extraordinary contributions to understanding language recovery after brain damage. I see them all on the ascent in their career stages; they’re amazing.

Northwestern hearing and language scientists are similarly ascendant. Traditionally the field has been more dominated by men; audiology took off after World War II when service members returned home with noise-induced hearing loss, and audiologists often came from neuroscience or ear-nose-throat backgrounds. But Souza recognizes how significantly the discipline has evolved—thanks to leaders like Laura Ann Wilber.

“I consider our audiology and neuroscience faculty among the best of any university,” says Souza, an expert in aging-related cognition and speech perception. “We have Nina Kraus, a tireless researcher of sound’s impact on the brain; Viorica Marian, a leading researcher of bi- and multilingualism; and Beverly Wright, an authority on auditory learning, who was awarded the 1995 Lindsay Award from the Acoustical Society of America, the second woman to receive the prize since its founding in 1942. Each of us has a research lab, and year after year brilliant women graduate whose work will be transformative. The next wave of great scientists is here, and I’m proud to be a part of it.”

“The next wave of great scientists is here, and I’m proud to be a part of it.”
—Pamela Souza
When communication studies professor and chair Leslie DeChurch interviewed at Northwestern in 2016, she knew instantly that the School of Communication operated differently. “I was recruited by Michelle Shumate, wooed by Ellen Wartella, and then hired by Dean Barbara O’Keefe,” DeChurch says. “I came from Georgia Tech, where everyone in the line of command was male.”

Up until 2000, this was largely the case in both communication studies and radio/television/film, where the faculty ranks reflected the demographics of the industries they studied. While women did excel and hold faculty positions, they were the exception, not the norm. Dean Barbara O’Keefe’s arrival in 2000 signaled a new era of parity—both to build fair representation and to chart the innovative direction she envisioned for the school.

“Established programs and curricula, like rhetoric and debate, or film production and criticism, were traditionally the purview of men,” O’Keefe says. “But we needed to build a school reflective of the rapidly changing communication landscape, one that researched and innovated in emergent fields such as interaction design, network and organizational communication, digital media arts and industries, and game design. Cracking the fields of media and communication wide open allowed us to recruit exciting faculty whose scholarship transcended the old paradigms. And what resulted is an interdisciplinary group of researchers and artists that is much more representative of our world.”

Wartella—the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor in Communication, director of Northwestern’s Center for Media and Human Development, and the communication studies department’s first female chair—saw the dean’s arrival as an exciting watershed for the department. “We brought in more people in the area of technology and human-computer interaction,” she says. “We were growing, we had resources, and it was easy to recruit really great people.”

They included Shumate and DeChurch as well as Larissa Buchholz—each an expert in teams, organizations, and

RASHAYLA MARIE BROWN
Second-year doctoral candidate, performance studies
HOMETOWN born in Toledo, Ohio (and has since moved 24 times)
OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS Department of Education Foreign Language and Area Studies grant to study Arabic in Morocco; residency with the Embassy of Foreign Artists in Geneva, Switzerland

I study conceptual performance art’s intersection with film, art markets, modern and contemporary arts education, Black performance, and aesthetics of relation. I do research in tandem with performance and film installations, which I hope to incorporate into my dissertation. My primary goal is to extend my artistic practice while pursuing the PhD. Everyone in the department knows my research requires time to make work as an artist, and they’ve given me opportunities to do both while still enrolled. My adviser, Joshua Chambers-Letson, has been an amazing support in making sure my research directly feeds into practice-based work. Aymar Jean Christian and his OTV platform have also provided space for me and dozens of others to promote underrepresented narratives in media.
But women have a hard time finding mentorship, and for women of color it is even harder. Women of color are woefully underrepresented in film, especially behind the camera. I have to worry about starting a family on top of that, and I don’t have as much time as my male peers to get more work done. I’d rather be a public intellectual than an academic. I would like to submit my dissertation film to festivals, work on museum installations and publications internationally, and continue to teach on the side when it makes sense for my artistic questions.

**WENKE (COCO) HUANG**

*Class of 2022, performance studies and art history major, business institutions minor*

**HOMETOWN Beijing, China**

I would love to explore the connection between performance art and museums or other cultural institutions to potentially open more possibilities for audience and viewer engagement and challenge the temporal stability of visual arts. As an international student, I am also interested in intercultural exchange and collaboration. I would love to test the waters for a bit after graduating before pursuing further scholarship, and I am open to working anywhere in the world. Performance studies’ undergraduate student body is a tiny cohort that bonds together like a family. I have developed strong mentorship bonds with my professors and have also joined some master’s and PhD students in seminar classes. These opportunities have really broadened my Northwestern social circle through knowing so many creative, bold, intelligent, and insurgent spirits from a wide gender and racial spectrum. These people have definitely given me tons of support and raised my awareness of my own sociopolitical position, inspiring me to take a firm stance as a woman of color. I feel like my experience
AMY PROCHASKA
Class of 2021 theatre major, gender and sexuality studies minor
HOMETOWN Pasadena, California
OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS performance and activism module, music theatre certificate

At Northwestern, I’m learning to use theatre as a communicative tool. I believe art has a unique power for welcoming people into tough conversations, and my time here has turned this belief into a lifelong desire to use art for civic engagement and cultural progress. I’m hoping to blend my passion for activism with my love for art. I’m also the executive director of Northwestern’s Sexual Health and Assault Peer Educators, so violence prevention, sex education, and consent work may be a big part of my immediate future, too. A potent intersection of my passions is intimacy choreography and coordination, so I’m hoping to complete training and apprenticeship for that integral field after graduation. I feel most supported by faculty and staff when I am not just championed for being a woman but valued for my skills, perspective, and care. I have learned to take up my space and feel I have earned my opportunities through my hard work and people’s respect for my skills. I feel I am entering the professional sphere as a flexible, supportive collaborator who is ready to think critically, ground my work in pragmatic progress, and innovate past the structures I’m given.

ZETA PHI ETA: NORTHWESTERN WOMEN ESTABLISH AN INSTITUTION

Just shy of the turn of the 20th century, Mollie Connor, Lurine Luke Wright, Leila Little, Maude Muller Newell, and Edith Devore held secret meetings in hopes of overturning a discriminatory rule that prevented School of Oratory students from belonging to fraternities and sororities. Their plans succeeded, and in 1894 Dean Robert Cumnock gave his formal approval for their new sorority—what is now the oldest professional communication arts and sciences organization of its kind. Its mission was “to provide incentives and opportunities for women students to develop professional competency in communicative skills.” The founders named it Zeta Phi Eta.

Despite the air of mystery surrounding the group’s catchphrase acronym “F.O.E.” (“friends of each; each our friend”), Zeta Phi Eta became popular, eventually incorporating and expanding to include other chapters. In 1908 it aligned with Boston’s Emerson School of Oratory; as a result of the negotiations, the original Northwestern name and rituals were retained, but the Emerson group became the alpha chapter.

Past members have included Winifred Ward, Martha Hyer Wallis, and early radio’s Clara, Lu ’n’ Em—Isobel Carothers Berolzheimer, Helen King, and Louise Starkey. In 1975 the organization first welcomed men as members.

Zeta Phi Eta remains active on campus and, among other endeavors, annually helps support an exemplary School of Communication student who plans to remain at Northwestern to pursue a master’s degree. The group’s motto is “Achieve! With Wisdom, Integrity, and Love.”

Members of Zeta Phi Eta in 1896
My research objectives are concerned with the intersection between computer-mediated communication and digital culture, with an eye on reciprocity, temporality, and technology. I want to examine the social norms that shape everyday interactions in mobile platforms and how these norms are in turn shaped by speakers’ emotions and practices. In 2019 I coauthored a paper, published in New Media & Society, about how Argentinians at different stages of adulthood domesticated WhatsApp. I wrote it with my faculty mentor, Pablo Boczkowski, and Eugenia Mitchelstein (GC15). I would like to become a professor at a research university, able to lecture at both undergraduate and graduate levels in the field of communication studies, as well as to conduct research projects in computer-mediated communication and digital culture. I would also like to be a consultant in these topics to work with government, think tanks, the media industry, and international organizations. As a woman and as an international student from Latin America, I feel very much supported by faculty members and peers, in both intellectual and human terms. I am particularly grateful for the attention this community pays to the many invisible ways that intersectionality shapes how different voices are heard. Northwestern has inspired my interest in intellectual interdisciplinarity, has given me theoretical and methodological skills for producing research, has provided me with a sense of committed professionalism, and has expanded my imagination as to how a scholar in the social sciences can translate her knowledge for the use of different communities.
LAUREN WASHINGTON  
Class of 2022 radio/television/film major  
HOMETOWN Kansas City, Missouri  
OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS selected for a Cannes Film Festival internship

After graduating, I’d really love to travel the world for a bit or move to a different country, because as a storyteller I’m inspired by people and their stories. I want to find my tribe and my way into the writers’ room for a TV series; I want to surround myself with creatives of all mediums and plan to continue creating films and web series that I’m passionate about—all while managing my creative agency, FILO, with my brother Brandon. I’d love to work at a production company and eventually have my own.

I feel incredibly supported by my Northwestern peers, whether undergraduate or graduate students. For instance, in my Writing the Dystopian Feature course with lecturer Kat Falls this past fall quarter, I was among a group of undergrad and a couple of grad students who met once a week, and I’ve never felt more encouraged, inspired, and seen than while taking this course. It can be very nerve-racking to share your work, so it’s always great when you can feel comfortable with not only your professor but the whole class. I think every experience is slowly building me up on my artistic journey, which is such a wonderful feeling. For a woman in this field, it can be difficult to feel seen with men overwhelmingly taking up space in the industry, so I’m glad that within my school and department I’ve been able to find my voice and not feel invisible. Having the opportunity to study at Northwestern in this program is going to help me greatly with my artistic journey because it’s given me the access and tools to really go far.
THE TRAILBLAZERS: ALUMNAE WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

The School of Communication’s legacy of female leadership and innovation has shaped the experiences and ambitions of generations of women students. These remarkable alumnae are just a few who have left an indelible mark on Northwestern and the world beyond.

Winifred Ward (C1905), a Northwestern theatre professor working in the early 20th century, revolutionized children’s theatre and pioneered the concept of family theatre. Ward created what she dubbed creative dramatics, a teaching method that relied on self-expression, literature appreciation, and a complete lack of scripts. Ward felt that rather than memorizing lines, children should develop plays out of their own thoughts and emotions.

Born in Iowa in 1884, Ward was the youngest daughter of a lawyer. She spent many summers in Washington, DC, where she attended theatre and grew to love it. Ward studied at Northwestern under Robert Cumnock, the founder of its School of Oratory. In 1918, after earning her PhD in education at the University of Chicago, she joined the Northwestern faculty, where she spent her entire career. She died in 1975.

Alvina Krause (C28, GC33), a legendary theatre and interpretation professor, created Northwestern’s acting curriculum. One of the most influential teachers in the school’s history, she focused on technique and delved deep into the dramatic canon to create a unique form of actor training. She taught at the University for 33 years, influencing hundreds of great artists, including Charlton Heston (C45), Patricia Neal (C47, H94), and Garry Marshall (J56).

The youngest of five children, Krause grew up on the family farm near New Lisbon, Wisconsin. She famously talked about first finding a copy of *Hamlet* and instantly falling in love with dramatic literature. When she was a high school senior, a boy proposed to her; she turned him down, opting instead to seek higher education and a career. After briefly attending the University of Wisconsin, she found her way to Evanston and Northwestern.

Known as a tough taskmaster, Krause encouraged her students to develop their dramatic skills from the inside out and created physical and emotional exercises to help them understand acting’s internal techniques. She retired as professor emerita in 1961 but continued as a lecturer until 1981. Krause died in 1981.

Agnes Nixon (C44), the queen of the soap opera, is best known for creating television’s *All My Children* and *One Life to Live*. Her scripts for daily daytime dramas introduced such social issues as interracial relationships, abortion, drug addiction, the Vietnam War, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS.

In 2010 Nixon received a Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. The citation declared that she had “totally changed the traditionally escapist nature of daytime serials while straining to make the world a better place.”

As a student, Nixon originally aspired to be an actress but had second thoughts after observing her peers. “I was at Northwestern at the same time as Charlton Heston, Patricia Neal, Jeanne Verhagen, and Cloris Leachman. Wouldn’t you say that competition rather reaffirmed my decision to be a writer?” she joked when she came to campus in 2015 to receive an Alumni Merit Award.

Nixon also established a playwriting prize, awarded to Northwestern students as part of the two-day Agnes Nixon Playwriting Festival, which features on-campus readings of new student works. She died in 2016.
Lois Weisberg (C46) left an indelible imprint on Chicago’s cultural scene, creating the Chicago Blues Festival, the Chicago Gospel Festival, other citywide festivals, arts programs for teens, and the famous 1999 Cows on Parade. Featuring multiple artists’ life-sized fiberglass cows throughout the downtown area, the exhibit attracted millions of visitors and an estimated $200 million in revenue for the city.

As Chicago’s first commissioner of cultural affairs, a post she held from 1989 until 2011, Weisberg changed Chicagoans’ view of the arts. In Malcolm Gladwell’s 1999 *New Yorker* essay “Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg,” he called her a “connector,” someone who can connect creative innovators and artists. “She’s a grandmother, she lives in a big house in Chicago, and you’ve never heard of her,” he wrote. “Does she run the world?” The essay was reprinted in Gladwell’s book *The Tipping Point*.

Named the Chicago Tribune’s 1999 Chicagoan of the Year and Governing magazine’s 2001 Public Official of the Year, Weisberg was the recipient of the Alumnae of Northwestern University’s 2003 Alumnae Award and a Northwestern Alumni Association 2004 Service to Society Award. She died in 2016.

Ethel M. Barber (GC47) became the first woman to earn a doctoral degree from the School of Speech, writing “The Analysis for Oral Interpretation of the Dramatic Elements in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*” as her dissertation. After working as an instructional assistant in the Department of Interpretation, she went on to teach speech courses at Milwaukee-Downer College and give lecture-recitals around the world. She founded the North Shore branch of the American Association of University Women and launched the AAUW radio program *Women at Work*, which she ran from 1950 to 1962.

Known for her lifelong generosity, Barber was a longtime Northwestern benefactor. In 1979 she established the Ethel M. Barber Visiting Artist Program, which brought Robert Banner, George Cukor, Martha Graham, Garry Marshall, the Nikolais Dance Theatre, and Ying Ruocheng to campus. She also sponsored the gala program for the dedication of the new Theatre and Interpretation Center in 1980. She was credited with raising much of the money for its largest theater space, the Festival Theater, which in 1984 was renamed the Ethel M. Barber Theater. She also contributed to the purchase of the theater’s lighting control system, named in honor of her late husband. In addition, she made donations to the Speech School Alumni Fund and to the Northwestern Library, the music school, and the art program. Barber died in 1999.

Patricia Neal (C47, H94) prided herself on bringing emotional honesty to her work. Raised in Kentucky as the daughter of a coal miner, she harbored dreams of moving to New York to become an actress. But she promised her parents that she’d go to college first and in 1943 enrolled at Northwestern, where she won a campus-wide beauty pageant and was crowned Syllabus Queen. That same year she was cast in a production of *Twelfth Night*. She studied under Alvina Krause, and her memoir credits the legendary acting professor as her “champion.”

Legendary actress **Cloris Leachman (C48, H14)**, who has won an Oscar, a Golden Globe, and eight Emmys, came to Northwestern in 1944 to study education. But after performing in the Waa-Mu Show, she decided she preferred theatre. Before embarking on an acting career, she took a brief detour into the world of pageants, winning the Miss Chicago title in 1946 and competing in the 1946 Miss America pageant.

Leachman’s big break came in 1948 when she appeared on *Ford Television Theatre*. That same year she earned her first New York stage credit, and over the next decade she appeared in 11 other Broadway productions. Her illustrious career in television comedy included *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, its spin-off *Phyllis*, and *Malcolm in the Middle*. Leachman won a 1972 Academy Award for her portrayal of Ruth Popper in *The Last Picture Show*. In 2005, at age 82, the hard-working performer set a record as the oldest contestant on *Dancing with the Stars*.

Younger sister of movie star and fellow Northwestern alum Charlton Heston, she helped shape a number of programs that directly affected student life, including the undergraduate life program, the Fulbright Scholarship program, honorary degrees, study abroad, the graduate program in literature, and general faculty committees.

For the School of Speech, Heston served as a faculty adviser to the student senate and on a number of performance committees. She was also an associate editor for the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* from 1977 through 1980, editor of *Literature in Performance* from 1979 to 1984, and a member of the *Illinois Speech* editorial board. Heston died in 1984.

**Joann Torretta (C53)** was a radio show writer, television host, fashion director, and entrepreneur. Torretta grew up in Tampa Bay, Florida, and later told family and friends that attending Northwestern encouraged her to think big. After briefly writing for a fitness radio show in New Orleans, she moved back home to Tampa Bay, where she became the host of her own television show, *Fashions for You*.

Ever the entrepreneur, Torretta opened First Impressions, a talent and image development studio, in 1983. Politicians, TV personalities, pageant contestants, and business executives sought her advice and expertise.

A fearless innovator who barreled through barriers to pursue her dreams, Torretta died in 2017. The Joann Torretta Award—given to a Northwestern student who shows exceptional promise in filmmaking, radio, television, or theatre—was made possible through the generosity of her son, Paul Guagliardo (Guyardo) (C83, GJ84, P20).

**Doris Johnson (GC55, GSESP71)** began her teaching career in communication sciences and disorders at Northwestern in the early 1960s, a time when children with reading difficulties...
were simply shuffled into classes for those with mental and physical disabilities. Believing that not all these children belonged in traditional special education classes, Johnson became a pioneer in the study of learning disabilities. With her colleague Helmer R. Myklebust, she coauthored *Learning Disabilities: Educational Principles and Practice*, a landmark book that became one of the foundational texts for understanding otherwise healthy children who have difficulty processing certain information.

For 19 years, Johnson was the director of Northwestern’s learning disabilities program. She has served as the executive director of the International Academy for Research in Learning Disabilities and remains active in the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

Stockholm-born Ann-Margret Olsson (C60) immigrated from Sweden with her family as a little girl. They settled in Wilmette, Illinois, and she enrolled at Northwestern in 1959. But after a year she left college to sing with the Suttletones, performing in Chicago and then Las Vegas, where she was discovered by George Burns.

The legendary singer and actor would go on to star in more than 45 movies, including *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Viva Las Vegas*. She suffered a near-fatal fall from a 22-foot-high scaffold before a 1972 show in Lake Tahoe but made a full recovery, garnering an Academy Award nomination for *The Who’s Tommy*. Her five Golden Globes include a 1984 win for the television remake of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Her career has spanned five decades, including *Grumpy Old Men* in 1993 and its sequel, *Grumpier Old Men*, two years later. She has received two Oscar, two Grammy, and two Emmy nominations, winning a 2010 Emmy for her special guest appearance on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*.

Famed movie producer Sherry Lansing (C66, H95) became the first woman to head a major movie studio when she became president of production at 20th Century Fox in 1980 at age 35. She went on to become chairman and CEO of Paramount Pictures and to oversee the production, marketing, and distribution of three Oscar best-picture winners: *Forrest Gump*, *Braveheart*, and *Titanic*. She also produced a number of other box-office successes, including *The Accused*, *Fatal Attraction*, and *Indecent Proposal*.

In 1996, Lansing became the first woman to be named Pioneer of the Year by the Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation. She was also the first female movie studio head to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

In 2005 Lansing stepped away from her film career to focus on charity work. She founded the Sherry Lansing Foundation, which primarily supports cancer research, a cause she embraced after her mother died of ovarian cancer. Lansing received the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award in 2007 and was inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in 2017.

Jerilyn Logemann (C63, GC64, GC68), a pioneer in the study of swallowing disorders, developed the modified barium swallow test as a less stressful alternative to a typical radiographic swallowing study. It has become a standard diagnostic tool worldwide.

Between 1963 and 1968, Logemann received bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in speech pathology from Northwestern. She taught briefly at local universities before returning to her alma mater to join the research staff and then the faculty at the medical school as well as the School of Communication faculty.

Logemann worked tirelessly to advance knowledge of swallowing and dysphagia treatment, and her clinic on the Chicago campus helped thousands of people. As chair of the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders for many years, she helped shape its top-rated program in speech-language pathology. After Logemann’s death in 2014, former students and colleagues established a fund in her honor to advance the study of dysphagia.
Theatre director and actor Barbara Gaines (C68) founded the Chicago Shakespeare Theater in 1986. Winner of the 2008 regional Tony Award, the company presents as many as 20 productions and 650 performances in a year-round season of plays, musicals, world premieres, family programming, and presentations from around the globe. More than 225,000 audience members attend the performances annually, and a quarter of them are children.

The daughter of a film director, Gaines grew up in the New York City suburbs with an appreciation for the arts. She has directed more than 30 Shakespeare plays, and her productions have won three Laurence Olivier Awards and 35 Joseph Jefferson Awards, including her three wins for best director.


Libby Appel (C69) was the artistic director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival from 1995 to 2007. During her tenure she directed 29 plays, including Pride and Prejudice, Paradise Lost, The Cherry Orchard, Hamlet, and her own adaptation of The Seagull. She has also served as artistic director of the Indiana Repertory Theatre, dean and artistic director of the School of Theatre at the California Institute for the Arts, and head of the acting program at California State University, Long Beach.

Appel has worked with numerous other US companies—including two regional Tony Award winners, Chicago’s Goodman Theatre and Atlanta’s Alliance Theatre. She has authored a book, cowritten plays, and adapted a number of canonical works. In 2010 Appel received the Stephen and Christine Schwarzman Legacy Award for Lifetime Achievement and Excellence in Theatre from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Eileen Cherry-Chandler (C73, GC97), known for her writing and her dedication to community-based arts, is an assistant professor of theatre and film at Bowling Green State University. While a Northwestern undergraduate, she started The Ritual, an annual initiation ceremony for Black Northwestern students. She also founded Black/Folks Theatre (the forerunner of Northwestern’s African American Theatre Workshop) with fellow student Kent Waters and helped organize the Northwestern Community Ensemble with L. Stanley Davis. After graduation Cherry-Chandler continued her work with music professor Thomas Willis, which led to what is now known as Chicago’s annual GospelFest.

As an arts activist, performer, and writer on the Chicago cultural scene for many years, Cherry-Chandler has researched identity politics and social-disparity issues and has held academic positions at Columbia College Chicago, Northwestern, and DePaul University. Her writings include the story collection The Winter Barrel.

“I lived so many years in Chicago, and it is so much a part of who I am,” Cherry-Chandler said in Northwestern’s performance studies departmental newsletter in 2009. “It gave me so much, and I want to write about the gifts Chicago and my journey to Northwestern gave me. My family was broke, and I applied just because my counselor said it would be impossible for me to get in. I didn’t know how I was going to get from Toledo to Evanston, and I arrived at Shepard Hall with $2.50 and a change of clothes. It was an intense time in the country—protests against the Vietnam War, the Black Panther shootings on the West Side. It was a time of growing cultural awareness, study, and activism. For a while, this was my promised land.”

Kate Gottfred (GC73, GC79) is the founder and president of the nonprofit Language Empowers All People (LEAP) Learning Systems, which created Beginning with Babble, a free app designed to help parents improve their babies’ language skills. An advocate for closing the language skill and
literacy gap in low-print, low-verbal households, she is a former president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the industry’s professional, scientific, and credentialing organization.

Born and raised in Chicago, she was exposed to children’s socioeconomic divisions at an early age by her mother, a learning disabilities teacher and pioneer who took young Kate along when volunteering at orphanages, migrant camps, and summer reading programs in areas of need. Her mother told her at age six that she was being given the ability to read so as to help others do the same. Gottfred founded LEAP in 1986 and continues to oversee program development and implementation.

Martha Lavey (C79, G86, GC94, H10) was the artistic director of Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theatre Company for two decades, from 1995 to 2015. During her tenure, Lavey oversaw the production of hundreds of plays and transferred dozens more to Broadway and abroad, including Tracy Letts’s Tony Award–winning August: Osage County. She doubled the size of the ensemble and promoted engagement with younger artists and audiences, elevating Steppenwolf’s reputation as a leader in developing new work and cementing Chicago’s standing as a world-class center for bold, experimental theatre.

Under her leadership Steppenwolf received the National Medal of the Arts (to date, the only one presented to a theatre company), the Illinois Arts Legend Award, and 9 of the company’s 12 Tonys. Lavey herself won the Sarah Siddons Award, a Northwestern Alumni Merit Award, and an Alumnae Award, along with numerous accolades from local and national enterprises. Also acclaimed for her many acting roles at Steppenwolf and beyond, she was the company’s first female artistic director. She died in 2017.

Lorraine Cole (GC80), who earned her PhD in communication sciences and disorders, has spent her career fighting for equity. Currently the chief diversity and inclusion officer for the US Department of the Treasury, Cole is one of two recipients of the 2020 Service to America Medal (“Sammies”) People’s Choice Award, known as the Oscars of government service. The award honors her work to strengthen small and minority-owned banks.

Previously she held a White House appointment as vice chair of the Presidential Advisory Council on Financial Capability. Before entering government service, Cole served as CEO of four national nonprofit organizations—including the YWCA USA—addressing economic parity, the elimination of health disparities, and racial, ethnic, and gender equity.

Prolific theatrical writer and director Mary Zimmerman (C82, GC85, GC94) is the Jaharis Family Foundation Chair in Performance Studies at Northwestern. A 1998 MacArthur Fellow, Zimmerman won a Tony Award for direction in 2002 for her adaptation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses. She has directed productions at some of the country’s most prestigious institutions, including Rusalka at New York’s Metropolitan Opera, Euridice at the Los Angeles Opera, The Odyssey at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Treasure Island at Chicago’s Lookingglass Theatre Company, where she is an ensemble member. She has won more than 20 Joseph Jefferson Awards.

Zimmerman grew up in Nebraska and Europe, the child of academics. When she arrived at Northwestern as a student, it was her first time on the campus.

“When I was a young woman, it never crossed my mind to be a director,” she says. “You see actresses on stage, and you see a pattern of what you think women can do. I always thought the term ‘role model’ was a bit Pollyanna,
but what it really means is there’s just an image, someone sort of like you, in a blunt physical way, to show you the possibility, and that’s so very important. Now young women come to Northwestern knowing they want to be directors.”

Jody Gerson (C83) grew up listening to legends perform. Her father and grandfather owned the Latin Casino, a nightclub in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, where she saw Diana Ross, Frank Sinatra, and Dean Martin. That early education would help her become one of the most influential women in today’s music industry.

In 2008 she became copresident of Sony/ATV Music Publishing; the first artist she signed was the then-unknown Lady Gaga. In 2015 she became the chair and CEO of Universal Music Publishing Group, Universal Music’s global publishing division, and the first woman CEO of a major music publishing company. Under her leadership the billion-dollar-plus company saw its revenue jump by 56 percent. Gerson signed or extended the contracts of many major talents, including Elton John, Carly Simon, Bruce Springsteen, Prince, Taylor Swift, Billie Eilish, Rosalia, Alicia Keys, Coldplay, Justin Bieber, Jack White, Post Malone, Ariana Grande, H.E.R., and Harry Styles.

An advocate for women, Gerson cofounded She Is the Music, a nonprofit that works for women’s equality and inclusion in the music industry. Her many accolades include Billboard’s Executive of the Year and the prestigious Power 100 list. Gerson serves on the board of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Eleven-time Emmy winner Julia Louis-Dreyfus (C83, H07), known for her hilarious, award-winning roles in Seinfeld and Veep, began her comic career her first year at Northwestern when she was cast in Mee-Ow. “Getting into the Mee-Ow Show was gigantic,” she told Northwestern magazine in 2014. “It was very exciting, and I met all of these guys who led me on this path that changed my life.” In addition, she starred in a wide variety of campus productions, including A Day in the Death of Joe Egg with future drama Pulitzer Prize winner Bruce Norris (C82).

Louis-Dreyfus left Northwestern her junior year when she, Paul Barrosse (C80), Gary Kroeger (81), and her future husband, Brad Hall (C80), were hired for the cast of Saturday Night Live—an unprecedented coup for a college foursome and one that has yet to be replicated. Louis-Dreyfus then landed the pivotal role of Elaine Benes on Seinfeld, a hit series that ran from 1990 to 1998. She won a Golden Globe for that role in 1994. The New Adventures of Old Christine premiered in 2006, resulting in her first Emmy Award as outstanding lead actress in a comedy series. As VP-turned-president Selina Meyer for seven seasons in HBO’s Veep, she cemented her position in the comedy pantheon—as recognized when she was awarded the Kennedy Center’s 2018 Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

In 2017 Louis-Dreyfus broke Emmy Award records when she received her sixth consecutive award as outstanding lead actress in a comedy, the most ever by a performer for the same role and her eighth acting Emmy overall. She and fellow alumna Cloris Leachman (C48, H14) are currently tied for the most Emmy wins for a performer. Louis-Dreyfus is a member of the School of Communication’s National Advisory Council.

Jane Steiner Hoffman (C86) is a nationally renowned policy expert on consumer issues. As head of New York City’s Department of Consumer Affairs in the 1990s, she led an antismoking initiative that instituted inspections of retailers accused of selling tobacco products to underage customers. A 2002 candidate for the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor and formerly a senior producer for CNN, she also worked as a commissioner for public authority reform in New York, where her policy work was hailed as a model for the nation.

The support of Hoffman and her husband, Michael Hoffman, was instrumental in helping launch the school’s MFA program in documentary media, including its visiting artist and fellows programs. She is a member of Northwestern’s Board of Trustees and the School of Communication’s National Advisory Council.

April McClain-Delaney (C86) has more than 30 years of experience in communications law, digital learning, and child advocacy across a broad range of private-sector and nonprofit engagements. Her expertise ranges from FCC broadcast regulation to international satellite-service licensing to safeguarding children’s digital privacy. In her role as Washington director of the nonprofit Common Sense Media, she championed digital citizenship and privacy efforts, advocated for government research addressing how media affect kids’ well-being and mental health, and worked toward bridging the “digital divide” so all children have equal access to educational opportunities.

Currently a member of Northwestern’s Board of Trustees and the School of Communication’s National Advisory Council, McClain-Delaney also serves on the boards of Georgetown Law Center, the Sun Valley Community School, and the International Center for Research on Women. Her many honors include the Georgetown University John Carroll Service Award, the Catholic Charities Caritas Service Award. A consensus builder, she was previously a board member of the bipartisan Congressional Club, a spouse cochair for the National Prayer Breakfast, and a past cochair of the First Lady’s Luncheon.

Lydia R. Diamond (C91) is a prolific, award-winning playwright whose works include Smart People, Stick Fly, Harriet Jacobs, The Gift Horse, The Inside, and Voyeurs de Venus. Recently staged at Northwestern, Voyeurs de Venus tells the story of a modern woman researching Saartjie Baartman, who was brought from South Africa to London in 1810 to be exhibited in freak shows as “The Hottentot Venus.” “All of the passages read in this play were real passages from books,” Diamond told a postshow audience in May 2019. “There are thousands of books of explorers and scientists and anthropologists, Europeans who went to places with brown people and wrote about them—as though we were animals.”

Myriad prestigious theaters have commissioned her work, including Arena Stage, Steppenwolf, the Roundabout, and the Humana Festival. A resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists for more than 15 years, she has held multiple fellowships and residencies at Harvard, Arena Stage, and Steppenwolf. Diamond is a writer and consulting producer for Showtime’s The Affair.

Her many honors include the African American Arts Alliance of Chicago Black Excellence Award and the American Alliance for Theatre and Education Award. Diamond teaches playwriting at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Meghan Markle (C03), Duchess of Sussex, is no stranger to headlines—from her dazzling wedding to Prince Harry in 2018 to her announcement that she, her husband, and their son would be stepping back from their roles as senior royals. But her work as an actor, social activist, and philanthropist has made her a trailblazer.

Markle grew up in Los Angeles and double-majored in theatre and international studies at Northwestern. After appearing in small roles in television and film, she achieved national fame as Rachel Zane on the USA Network legal drama Suits. She returned to the small screen in 2020 with the release of the Disney nature documentary Elephant, which she narrates.

Known for her humanitarian work and championing of feminist causes, Markle has been a global ambassador for World Vision Canada since 2016, traveling to girls’ schools in Africa and lobbying for clean water in African communities. Recently she and her husband delivered meals to the needy in Los Angeles during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of Project Angel Food.
Twenty Years of Progress

Barbara O’Keefe reflects on her two decades as dean of the School of Communication

This spring the COVID-19 pandemic forced our University—and our school—to respond with extraordinary measures to maintain its programs and serve its students. Winter quarter activities were curtailed and students told not to return for spring classes. Faculty pivoted quickly to offer instruction remotely. In the School of Communication, over 90 percent of our courses were adapted for remote delivery, minimizing the number of canceled classes. The faculty enacted emergency provisions that permitted seniors to graduate on time, even if they could not meet existing degree requirements. We will be back on campus to some degree in September, but most of our courses will continue to rely on some remote learning as we find our way through the current crisis.

Nonetheless, I view Northwestern’s future with optimism. My time as dean of the School of Communication, which began on July 1, 2000, and concludes 20 years later on July 31, 2020, was marked by a seemingly unending series of challenges, beginning with a recession and attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. When that happened, I was a newcomer to Northwestern, working hard to get to know our community.

A group of alumni, led by Carol Rothman Forster of New York’s Second Stage Theater, had planned a September 21 fundraising event there in connection with a performance of Mary Zimmerman’s Metamorphoses. After the 9/11 attacks, travel in the United States—and especially to New York City—was all but shut down.
Despite the shock and horror of those events, our Northwestern alumni insisted on going ahead with the event; I vividly recall what it was like to fly over Manhattan, in a nearly empty plane, and see the still-smoking ruins. But I also remember just as vividly my first experience of Mary’s play (which could not be a better vehicle for thinking through the uncertainties and challenges of human life) and, even more, my first encounter with the bravery, kindness, and warmth of our alumni community. That evening made me realize that Northwestern would forever be my university and my home.

The 9/11 attacks deepened a financial crisis that had begun with the Y2K scare in 2000. This was followed by the war with Iraq in 2003 and continuing terrorist threats and attacks; the mortgage crisis and market crash of 2007 and subsequent recession; and in the past decade, increasing social and political conflicts around the globe, leading to growing concerns about the future of democracies. As I write this farewell to our community, we have been newly and forcefully reminded of the racism and brutality in our world and are working as fast as we can to design a constructive, actionable response for the University and each of its schools.

Despite the challenges our community has faced during these turbulent decades—and arguably because it was challenged—the School of Communication has become a laboratory for reinventing the communication arts and sciences. No one person deserves the credit for a transformation that remade the 20th-century School of Speech into the 21st-century School of Communication: the ideas, the energy, and the resources for change were contributed by our faculty, students, and alumni, all working together.

It was clear in 2000 that the school needed a more expansive identity, one that acknowledged the now-dominant role of digital media in the public sphere, the increasingly global reach of media and culture, and the increasing convergence of media and their uses. The school’s National Advisory Council recommended a new name to reflect this new identity and did the market research and strategic planning for changing the name from School of Speech to School of Communication. The faculty overwhelmingly voted its approval, and the name change was ratified by the Board of Trustees in 2002.

It was equally clear that our school needed a strategy for addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The strategic plan we presented in 2001 identified three priorities for rebuilding the faculty: diversity, interdisciplinarity, and internationalization. The faculty appointments since then have changed the face of the school and its programs (see next page).

Between 2000 and 2004 the internet (which had been used by a growing global community since the late 1970s) took shape as a set of platforms for social interaction. We foresaw that “Web 2.0” would not simply transform existing communication infrastructures but would continue to grow and evolve. Such a dramatic change in our communication ecology would in turn demand that we shift how we study and practice communication—away from a focus on...
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Since 2000, every strategic plan advanced by the School of Communication has identified diversity, equity, and inclusion as top priorities to meet in every key area: faculty and staff recruitment and retention, development of school leadership, student recruitment, academic program development, and outreach to external communities. But to achieve systemic and sustainable change in any academic unit, it is important to focus on tenure-track faculty, who are responsible for research programs, curriculum, and faculty hiring (they conduct searches, recruit new faculty, and make promotion and tenure decisions). Having a diverse faculty encourages departments to be forward-looking and to consider multiple perspectives. And as the faculty becomes more diverse, it is easier to recruit a diverse student body and support the development of all our students, both graduate and undergraduate.

We are pleased by overall faculty gains in gender balance and diversity; in 2000, fewer than 38 percent of tenure-track faculty were women, whereas as of this September women make up 54 percent. We are also trying to increase recruitment of faculty who are African or African American, Latinx or Hispanic, Asian or Asian American, and multiracial. In 2000 all those categories added up to fewer than 8 percent of the faculty, but this year the total will be 30 percent. We have also increased the number of faculty born outside the United States. Of course, this is a work in progress, but we feel we have made a good start.

The numbers do not fully reveal the dramatic changes that have occurred in our media and performing arts areas, where most of our Latinx/Hispanic and African American faculty teach. The theatre and performance studies faculty and curriculum now provide an understanding of identity as performance and the role of performance as social activism in addition to their longstanding interests in adaptation, devising, and theatricality; this has been made possible by the appointments of Danielle Bainbridge, Joshua Chambers-Letson, Marcela Fuentes, E. Patrick Johnson, Ramón Rivera-Servera, Shayna Silverstein, and Elizabeth Son. The school has assembled a brilliant group of women directors, including Shana Cooper, Halena Kays, Anna Shapiro, Jessica Thebus, Cristal Truscott, and Mary Zimmerman. The new MFA program in acting is headed by Stan Brown, a distinguished expert on the African American voice; Latinx faculty Henry Godinez and Sandra Marquez have brought new dimensions to the study of acting. The music theatre program has been elevated by the appointment of two new African American faculty, Masi Asare (voice and creating the musical) and Roger Ellis (choreography and directing). The dance program has been reenergized by Joel Valentín-Martínez.

Equally exciting new faculty are bringing fresh perspectives to our programs in dramatic writing, notably prolific playwright Thomas Bradshaw; and in media arts, where distinguished documentarian Marco Williams, media platform specialist Aymar Jean Christian, and film historian Miriam Petty are showing students how marginalized voices can be heard.

These and other brilliant artists, scholars, and leaders are raising the stakes for the arts at Northwestern. E. Patrick Johnson has led the University’s Black Arts Initiative, which supports curricular innovation as well as collaborations among many of these faculty. With funding from the Mellon Foundation, his colleague Ramón Rivera-Servera has organized a high-impact network initiative to open opportunities for Puerto Rican artists and make their work more visible and available to students throughout the United States. A. J. Christian’s OTV | Open Television developed a platform that is already being used to provide a creative outlet for artists from marginalized groups in Chicago.

We will soon be opening a new downtown center for graduate study in the performing and media arts, and it will include space for the graduate acting program, the Black Arts Initiative, the OTV project, and collaborations across the graduate arts programs. The goal is for this center to build partnerships with Chicago-area cultural institutions and communities and use that synergy to change the face of arts education and, we hope, the creative industries.
stable practices and industries and toward understanding and managing technology changes and even designing new systems, policies, and platforms.

In response, faculty from the communication studies and radio/television/film departments joined together to build a new cross-disciplinary doctoral program in media, technology, and society and began recruiting new faculty to help study the new world of converged, global, digital media. As the program grew, it spun off a second doctoral program in screen cultures and then a third in technology and social behavior, a cross-school program focused on social computing.

Developing these new programs has allowed us to build a faculty that puts us in the forefront of research on social computing within networks, organizations, politics, journalism, and public health; on information access, policy, and practice; on interactive media, sound design, and games; and on the design and evolution of media platforms. Many of these faculty are active researchers in both media studies and computer science and share interests in human-centered design. They proposed a new partnership with the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science to showcase and support Northwestern's emerging strength in the area of human-computer interaction, and later this summer we will open our new joint Center for Human-Computer Interaction and Design.

Our faculty also saw the opportunity to build the first set of cross-platform programs in content creation. The theatre and radio/television/film departments partnered to build a new master of fine arts program in writing for screen and stage to teach storytelling across the full spectrum of media. Emerging as a leading MFA in writing, it has also allowed great expansion of writing instruction across our curriculum. We now offer curricular modules in playwriting, screenwriting, game design, sound arts and design, and creating the musical.

The work we had done positioned us to see the value in partnering with the Medill School in 2008 to build a program for undergraduates in Doha, Qatar. The major we offer there reflects our new cross-disciplinary, cross-platform approach to media studies. And teaching a global student body has helped us see how the field of communication should be positioned for a global audience.

Our departments saw a need to improve communication and health across the lifespan, encouraging faculty from communication studies and communication sciences and disorders to build a new center to promote the analysis of communication skills and practices within health systems and to design new methods for improving care delivery. A group of our
most exciting and well-funded faculty is advancing this critical project.

While the faculty were leading these shifts in staffing within our research and graduate programs, students and alumni argued for improvements in the undergraduate experience. Highlighting weaknesses in advising and career development, they prompted us to introduce key innovations: a dual advising model, with dedicated professionals to help students navigate the University; an internship program; a modular curriculum to provide students with pathways to their goals as well as associated career development and mentoring; and the Office of External Programs, Internships, and Career Services (EPICS) to support the curriculum and connect students with alumni and creative industries around the world.

As the undergraduate experience and doctoral programs improved, we recognized a need and opportunity to improve and expand professional education as well. In communication sciences and disorders, a wonderful new clinic and an expanded clinical staff have allowed us to both expand our master of science program in speech, language, and learning and support three new professional doctorates: doctor of audiology, doctor of speech-language pathology, and combined PhD/SLPD. In communication studies, we added professional MS degrees in leadership for creative industries and health communication.

In the arts, we expanded staffing for the MFA program in theatre design, built a world-class faculty for the MFA in theatre directing, and most recently added an MFA program in acting. The Department of Radio/Television/Film recently added two new cross-platform programs, the MFA in documentary media and the MA in sound arts and industries. Together with the MFA in writing, they make up an innovative—and integrated—program for educating artists across platforms and disciplines.

The expansion of professional education has benefited everyone in the school by adding faculty who engage with media and creative industries, thereby facilitating research on the creative economy and the activities through which it operates, helping serve students by strengthening the EPICS office, and providing a bridge connecting our students to leading-edge research and creative work.

The events of this spring showed us that a school made for the 21st century will be well prepared to address its most difficult challenges. We have built an outstanding technical infrastructure, and our community is comfortable with new technologies and able to use them skillfully. We have not been daunted by seeing theaters closed during the pandemic; our students even found a way to perform the annual Waa-Mu Show online, and it was a triumph. Our modular curriculum and professional programs provide durable connections to career opportunities. Strengthened support for career development is helping students navigate this difficult economy.

We look forward to being with one other again when we can do so safely. In the meantime, we will continue to develop and implement whatever creative solutions we need, in the face of whatever new challenges may arise.
As news broke of the first US cases of the highly contagious COVID-19 coronavirus, Northwestern moved swiftly to close campuses and conduct spring quarter remotely. Summer activities in Evanston and Chicago were curtailed; the University continues to assess how fall quarter will play out. The challenges have been significant—teaching dance, doing scene work, and accessing production facilities were just a few of the issues for remote learning. But faculty reported successful adaptations to Zoom classes and office hours and are thinking critically about how to continue to support students’ learning outcomes as the school considers sustained social distancing and other shifts in campus operations. The following are just some of the extraordinary ways our community has adapted and excelled in response to the pandemic.

School of Communication Information Technology converted over 200 courses to online delivery (roughly 90 percent of all spring quarter classes), including webinars, one-to-one faculty and graduate student consultations, and new digital assets. In partnership with other schools and units, SoCIT created a virtual computer lab to offer free, browser-based access to Northwestern-licensed creative and computational software. In addition, the staff enabled clinical e-visits and remote delivery of clinical education, with appropriate security practices for a HIPAA-secured environment, and consulted with labs’ principal investigators to convert research data collection and analysis to remote environments.

The Departments of Theatre and Performance Studies and the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts were among the entities feeling the biggest jolt and yet found unique opportunities in the challenge. MFA programs shifted the calendar to postpone collaborative and technical courses and accommodate discussion-based classes in spring; Wirtz Center programming canceled spring and summer shows—31 ticketed events in all—but National Theatre Live, Danceworks, and many other offerings were streamed online; Wirtz staff enlisted faculty, students, and alumni to create a new online Imagine U Storytime series for families; the 89th annual Waa-Mu Show, State of the Art, called off its Cahn Auditorium performances (a first since World War II) but staged a successful invitation-only Zoom reading; the 78th annual Dolphin Show staged a virtual cabaret featuring such special guests as Adam Kantor (Co8); and the annual New York Senior Showcase was presented online, thanks to prerecorded auditions—and with performances featured on BroadwayWorld’s website, industry exposure was magnified.

Faculty have launched new research. Within days of Northwestern’s campus closure, associate professor Aaron Shaw began the COVID-19 Digital Observatory to aggregate, distribute, and document public social data from digital platforms relating to the pandemic. Professor Michelle Shumate, an expert on organizational networks, is being funded by the Army Research Office for her project “Improving Veterans Referrals by Optimizing Network Design in Response to COVID-19.” Shumate and her lab are partnering with the AmericaServes networks, the first coordinated US system of public, private, and nonprofit organizations working together in communities to serve veterans, transitioning service members, and their families. Professors Noshir Contractor and Leslie DeChurch have launched “Teaming in the Time of COVID-19: Understanding How Technology Affordances Can Enable Collaboration during Sudden Workplace Disruption,” a National Science Foundation–funded RAPID project. They are examining the dynamics of remote work in four organizations with
New Guggenheim fellow

Jeffrey Sconce, associate professor of radio/television/film, is a 2020 recipient of the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, one of the highest honors awarded to scholars in the arts, humanities, and sciences. “I am thrilled,” says Sconce. “It’s an honor to be included among the many scholars and artists recognized by the Guggenheim Foundation.”

A cultural historian of media and film, Sconce is the editor of **Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics** (Duke University Press, 2007) and the author of **Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television** (Duke, 2000), **The Technical Delusion: Electronics, Power, Insanity** (Duke, 2019), and numerous articles and essays. A Northwestern faculty member since 2002, Sconce says his Guggenheim project will be an extension of his first two books, which examined the historical association of electronic media with “magical thinking.” The new project focuses especially on the idea of “paracosms,” imaginary fantasy worlds of adolescence and adulthood that have become increasingly interdependent with media technologies and content.

Funding from the Guggenheim Fellowship will support research trips to the archives of British child psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott, the late Los Angeles artist Mike Kelley, and the BBC. The project will examine how various media, from the beginnings of popular print culture in the early 19th century to today’s digital environments, became both objects and facilitators of imaginary worlds.

Sconce is the current radio/television/film faculty’s eighth Guggenheim Fellowship winner, along with incoming assistant professor Erin Courtney, associate professors Eric Patrick and J.P. Sniadecki, and professors Thomas Bradshaw, Laura Kipnis, Lynn Spigel, and Marco Williams.

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation awarded the coveted fellowship to a select group of 175 individuals from a pool of nearly 3,000 applicants from the United States and Canada this year. In recognition of “exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts,” the fellows receive grants for up to one year of work on a special project. The foundation has awarded more than $375 million since 1925 to more than 18,000 fellows, including Nobel laureates, poets laureate, and Pulitzer Prize winners.

—Katie Fretland

which they have long-term contracts for ongoing research. Professors David Tolchinsky and E. Patrick Johnson have each enjoyed film festival wins, despite new online formats. In fact, this has been a boon to their work, as more people are able to access the screenings. Professional programs such as the master of science in communication have been holding regular online panels about crisis communication in the COVID-19 era.

Our clinical faculty working in Chicago at Northwestern Memorial Hospital have been seeing COVID-19 patients and evaluating and treating their swallowing functioning. As assistant director of the Voice, Speech, Language Service, and Swallowing Center, Kristin Larsen leads a medical speech-pathology team that mobilized early in the crisis to offer essential services and help determine if a recovering patient can regain such a vital function.

“This population is unique,” Larsen says. “A lot of the patients have been intubated—placed on a ventilator—and perhaps might end up with tracheotomies. They span ages, but most are older adults. After going through what they go through, a lot of them are weakened and deconditioned; their vocal cords might be traumatized, and we are there to assess their swallowing.”

Even short-term intubation can affect swallowing function, and compromised swallowing can cause patients to aspirate food or drink, potentially leading to infection and even death. The team works to transition patients to an oral diet as quickly and safely as possible, aiding in their recovery and ability to return home. Larsen says that wading into the uncharted waters of COVID-19 was challenging—her group typically treats head and neck cancer patients, those with neurodegenerative conditions, or premature infants. Yet Larsen and colleagues Brittni Carnes, Carolyn Chiu, Shauna Czarnik, Carissa Ernat, Kahlia Graham, Jonelyn Langenstein, Chelsey Miller, Laura Cumby Olson, Jenna Van Duyne, Sharon Veis, and Laura Vygantis were up to the challenge. “The resilience, compassion, and dedication of this team amaze me,” Larsen says. “Our patients appreciate this.”
High marks for communication sciences and disorders programs

Two dynamic communication sciences and disorders programs were recently ranked among the nation’s top five for their categories in U.S. News and World Report’s latest evaluations of graduate-level education. The doctor of audiology program now occupies the number 4 slot on the list of top audiology programs, up from seventh, and the MS program in speech, language, and learning placed second, up from fifth, for speech-language pathology (U.S. News evaluates these programs at several-year intervals).

“It’s a validation of the work we’ve been doing over the last 10 years,” says Sumit Dhar, professor of audiology and the school’s associate dean for research. “Some peer programs are deeply embedded in medical centers, which is their strength, while some programs are stand-alone. We are somewhere in between, and we cherish having feet in both boats—basic science and applied clinical science.”

The highly specialized and selective doctor of audiology program welcomes about 18 students each year for 12 quarters of academics, supervised clinical practicums, and capstone research work. Led by program director Kristine Riley, students can explore such areas as hearing loss and management, speech perception, psychoacoustics, cochlear physiology, and auditory neuroscience. The MS in speech, language, and learning combines concept-based and immersive curricula with clinical training, team-based learning, and ample support and assessment to prepare clinicians for leadership in this rapidly changing and explosively growing field. Program director Stacy Kaplan oversees about 125 students in the two-year program.

Department chair and professor Pamela Souza says that high rankings often catch the attention of potential students but that recruiting success rests on the strength of the programs. “When students are looking for a program and especially when they decide to come here, they are looking for strong clinical training with a lot of different populations, and we absolutely have that,” Souza says. “They are also drawn by our translational research program, even if they aren’t intending to pursue a research career themselves. The top programs bring the best teachers, and they know that our faculty are creating the clinical evidence that’s going to direct practice. That brings us some of the strongest students as well as faculty members—those who recognize that the tight integration between clinical practice and research evidence is what drives us and moves the field forward.”

New course promotes safe drug prescribing

Communication studies professor Bruce Lambert, director of the Center for Communication and Health and the master’s program in health communication, has launched Conservative Prescribing, a course that teaches medical professionals the critical skills, strategies, and best practices for safe and cautious drug prescribing. “It’s well known in medicine and pharmacy that drugs are dangerous,” Lambert says. “Hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized every year from adverse drug events, and millions go to the emergency room because of adverse drug events.”

Created with Gordon Schiff, associate director of the Center for Patient Safety Research and Practice at Boston’s Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and William Galanter, associate professor of medicine at the University of Illinois, the video course was launched this spring through the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s Open School. Free for medical residents and medical, nursing, and pharmacy students, it is available for a fee to all other practicing professionals.

“We’re not antidrug, we’re pro–drug safety,” Lambert says. “These are very sensible principles: start with nondrug therapy, don’t treat the side effects of one drug with another drug, don’t start more than one drug at a time, encourage skepticism, learn about side effects, have a small personal formulary. Each one of them taken alone is pretty uncontroversial, but all together they represent a prescribing philosophy where the idea is that if we’re not careful, drugs will quite likely harm people and not help them.”

The pharmaceutical industry is extraordinarily profitable and goes to great lengths to convince prescribers that its drugs are safe under any circumstance, but Lambert says that’s far from the truth. The opioid crisis is a great example; while opioids are useful when used judiciously, overzealous prescribing and misleading industry marketing helped trigger a public health crisis. But even insulin can be problematic if not approached with care. Lambert’s course is intended to stress health and safety and reduce the chances that a provider unintentionally harms a patient. Completed more than 1,500 times as of July, the course is available at ihi.org/prescribing.
Johnson elected to prestigious academy

School of Communication professor and incoming dean E. Patrick Johnson will be inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the prestigious honorary society recognizing exemplary contributions to the pursuit of knowledge, discourse, and advancing the common good. He was among the 2020 class’s 276 inductees—and one of eight from Northwestern—across a range of disciplines.

“I am in a state of shock,” says Johnson, the Carlos Montezuma Professor of Performance Studies and African American Studies, who learned the news on April 23. “As a scholar, you do your work and hope that you make a dent. But being inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences suggests you’ve made impacts in ways you’re not even aware of.”


The honor came amid an exciting run for Johnson. The documentary Making Sweet Tea, which he produced alongside his husband, Stephen Lewis, has been winning awards on the festival circuit, including the Audience Choice Award for best documentary feature at the Kansas City FilmFest International and the Judges’ Choice Documentary Award at the Longleaf Film Festival.

But for Johnson the American Academy of Arts and Sciences news was wholly unexpected. “All of the living members get to vote on every nominee, even if it’s outside their field of expertise,” he says. “That’s why it’s so significant—and I would have potentially had Barack Obama weighing in whether I’m worthy!”

This year’s other Northwestern inductees are Edith Chen, Yonggang Huang, Teri W. Odom, Mary E. Pattillo, Indira M. Raman, James P. Spillane, and Teresa K. Woodruff. Earlier School of Communication inductees include performance studies alumni and faculty Frank Galati and Mary Zimmerman.

The academy was founded in 1780 by John Adams, John Hancock, and other early scholar-patriots to honor excellence among leaders who work “to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people.” It has inducted more than 13,500 lifetime members since its establishment. Johnson and other new members are scheduled to be honored at a weekend celebration in Boston in October.

2019–20 faculty arrivals

Stan Brown, W. Rockwell Wirtz Professor and director of graduate studies for the MFA program in acting. Brown is a 30-year veteran director, voice and dialect coach, and actor of American and British film, television, theatre, and radio. He came to Northwestern from the University of South Carolina, his alma mater, where he was a professor of theatre and dance and a voice specialist in the graduate professional and undergraduate actor training programs. Classically trained as a graduate acting fellow at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, DC, he began his teaching career at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, where he worked with renowned voice expert Cicely Berry—an experience that initiated Brown’s exploration of culture’s perceptions and impacts on an actor’s voice and speech training.

Cristal Chanelle Truscott, assistant professor of performance studies and theatre. Truscott is the founder of Progress Theatre, a touring ensemble that uses theatre as antiracism engagement to encourage cross-community conversations, connections, and consciousness. Winner of a 2019 Creative Capital Award, she has also received the Doris Duke Impact Artist Award, which recognizes artists who shape powerful creative movements in contemporary dance, jazz, theatre, and related multidisciplinary work. She is currently writing SoulWork: Methodology from the Cultural Conservatory, a book tracing the development, philosophy, and practical application of her generative method for training artists, building ensemble performance, and connecting communities.
New 2020–21 faculty

Even amid a global pandemic, the School of Communication welcomes a record number of new faculty who will be joining Northwestern this summer and fall.

**Erik Nisbet, Owen L. Coon Chair in Policy Analysis and Communication and associate professor of communication studies.** Nisbet came to Northwestern this summer from Ohio State University, where he was an associate professor and the codirector of the Eurasian Security and Governance Program at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies. Nisbet’s scholarship centers on how strongly held partisan, national, religious, or environmental identities bias media and persuasive messages that influence policy attitudes or behavior, as well as on understanding how macro structural factors interact with behaviors to explain communication outcomes. He explores these within the policy domains of international affairs, democratic governance, and science and the environment. Nisbet’s work has been funded by the National Science Foundation, US Department of Defense, US Department of State, and other sources. He will hold the inaugural Owen L. Coon Chair in the school’s forthcoming Center for Communication and Public Policy.

**Bimbola Akinbola, assistant professor of performance studies.** Akinbola’s research examines performance, visual art, and literature being produced by women throughout the African diaspora, with a particular interest in self-making, world-making, and belonging. Akinbola helps fill the scholarly void in this research area left by professor D. Soyini Madison, who retired this year. Previously a postdoctoral fellow with Northwestern’s Black Arts Initiative, Akinbola is also a creative practitioner with an investment in visual art and performance.

**Erin Courtney, assistant professor of radio/television/film.** A nationally recognized playwright whose works include A Map of Virtue and The Tattooed Lady, Courtney was a beloved faculty member at Brooklyn College, where she directed the MFA playwriting program. Her prestigious honors include an Obie Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship, and her plays have been staged at major theaters across the country. She will teach in Northwestern’s MFA program in writing for screen and stage.

**Matthew Kay, assistant professor of communication studies.** Kay is a computer scientist who designs, builds, and evaluates user interfaces and information visualizations. This work often results in communication of uncertainty to nonexperts and building usable statistical tools. He comes to Northwestern from the University of Michigan School of Information in a shared appointment with the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science’s Department of Computer Science.

**Lakshmi Padmanabhan, assistant professor of radio/television/film.** Padmanabhan’s work lies at the intersection of postcolonial studies, experimental film, and global media studies. She researches anti-colonial aesthetics, particularly how they are oriented around resistance, strikes, and civil disobedience, and how those tactics are being represented and reconfigured in South Asian experimental films and digital media. Most recently a postdoctoral fellow in Dartmouth College’s Society of Fellows, Padmanabhan holds a PhD from Brown University. She will be teaching in the screen cultures program.

**Olga Kamenchuk, senior lecturer in communication studies.** Kamenchuk specializes in conflict negotiation and strategic communication, especially as they pertain to misinformation and US-Russia relations. She comes to Northwestern from Ohio State University and will be teaching in both undergraduate and graduate programs.
Faculty focus

Aymar Jean Christian (PhD, University of Pennsylvania) saw his distribution platform OTV | Open Television nominated for a Webby Award last spring in the category of video series—public service and activism. OTV recently launched new mobile and TV apps and a new website where users can register and eventually subscribe. As part of that launch, in collaboration with Slo Mo and Reunion, OTV hosted theQultureFest, a virtual three-day Pride Festival sponsored by Red Bull, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, and Howard Brown Health Center.

Noshir Contractor (PhD, University of Southern California) is running for president of the International Communication Association. The election will be held in September. Last spring, Pablo Boczkowski (PhD, Cornell University) and new NU-Q dean Marwan Kraidy (PhD, Ohio State University) were named fellows of the association.

Henry Godinez (MFA, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee) was directing José Cruz González’s American Mariachi at Dallas Theater Center in March when the production was suspended. The show was a coproduction with Chicago’s Goodman Theatre, where it was scheduled to open in May. With a cast featuring Lucy Godinez (C’18) (above, far right), the production is now tentatively planned for next winter.

John Haas (MM, Northwestern University) taught his spring-quarter Sondheim Junior Tutorial remotely—but with some special Zoom guests. They included Tony and Emmy Award winner Mandy Patinkin (who created the title role in Sondheim’s Sunday in the Park with George) and his wife, veteran actress Kathryn Grody, as well as Tony Award winner Donna Murphy (the original female lead in Sondheim’s Passion). The guests gave the class firsthand accounts of their work with Sondheim—who celebrated his 90th birthday this year—and a look at the ups and downs of life in the arts.

Susan Manning (PhD, Columbia University) coedited the anthology Futures of Dance Studies (University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), a compilation of research by young scholars in the Mellon Foundation–funded initiative Dance Studies in/and the Humanities. Also now in print is a cluster of essays on South African dance artist Nelisiwe Xaba that she edited for the summer 2020 issue of TDR: The Drama Review. The essays emerged from the fall 2017 Black Arts International conference and include her own “Cross-Viewing in Berlin and Chicago” as well as contributions by Reggie Wilson, Mlondolozi Zondi, Mbongeni Mtshali, Eike Wittrock, Aimee Meredith Cox, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Hershini Young. With coeditor Lizzie Leopold, she has launched the new project Dancing on the Third Coast: Chicago Dance Histories. She continues work on Critical Histories of Modern Dance: A Retrospective, her own book of essays for the University of Michigan Press.

Stephan Moore (PhD, Brown University) is the sound designer and composer for The Attendants, a six-hour movement-theatre piece that was seen every Wednesday in June. Created

American Mariachi

The Attendants
Faculty focus

in 2011 for the New York City–based theatre company The Nerve Tank, the work was reimagined for the COVID-19 era.

Madhu Reddy (PhD, University of California, Irvine) and David Mohr, professor of preventive medicine at the Feinberg School of Medicine, were awarded a four-year, $6 million ALACRITY Center grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. The grant will fund three major projects in partnership with Rush University Medical Center and Northwestern Medicine to explore digital mental health interventions for young people, pregnant women, and older adults with depression. “A concern in digital mental health is that we have tools people don’t often use,” Reddy says. “When people do use these tools with coaching and support, they’re effective. But there are a lot of design challenges. Our approach is to combine methods from human-computer interaction and clinical science to design tools that will be both engaging and efficacious. The center is testing that proposition.”

J.P. Sniadecki (PhD, Harvard University) received a 2019 Ford Foundation JustFilms grant and a 2020 LEF Foundation Production Grant for a collectively authored work-in-progress set in Cairo, Illinois. His latest feature film, A Shape of Things to Come, garnered positive reviews in Screen Daily and Modern Times when it premiered at CPH:DOX, the Copenhagen Documentary Film Festival, and has been picked up for distribution by Grasshopper Films.

Ines Sommer (MFA, Art Institute of Chicago) received an Illinois Humanities Council grant (via a nonprofit film organization) to tour her film Seasons of Change on Henry’s Farm throughout the state of Illinois; COVID-19 has forced postponement of the tour. The film won the award for best documentary at the Vail Film Festival in May.

Elizabeth Son (PhD, Yale University) won the Book Award in Humanities and Cultural Studies (Visual, Performance, and Media Studies) from the Association for Asian American Studies for her More CAREER Awards in communication studies

Two communication studies faculty recently received the National Science Foundation’s prestigious Early Career Development (CAREER) Award—and both are interested in the central question of how information is analyzed and disseminated using computational tools. Assistant professor Agnes Horvat (PhD, Heidelberg University) will use the five-year grant funding to explore how scientific research articles are shared online, what factors contribute to larger dissemination, and whether sharing patterns might indicate plagiarism or fabricated data. The findings will provide Horvat (above, fourth from right) and her colleagues with insights into complex systems and networks, the structural underpinnings of online inequalities, and networked crowd computation. Assistant professor Nicholas Diakopoulos (PhD, Georgia Tech), whose grant began in 2019, is examining how algorithms and automation can improve news gathering, reporting quality, and story dissemination. With journalism in crisis, his intent is to empower journalists, aspiring data journalists, and regional news outlets to understand and employ computational tools to lower cost and increase efficiency and quality in news production. The CAREER Award recognizes junior faculty for outstanding research and classroom teaching, supporting those most likely to build a lifetime of leadership in integrating the two areas. Horvat and Diakopoulos join the department’s five previous CAREER winners: Leslie DeChurch, Darren Gergle, Brent Hecht, Madhu Reddy, and Michelle Shumate.
Honors for media, technology, and society program

Faculty, students, and alumni of the media, technology, and society program had an eventful spring, despite disruptions. Associate professor Aaron Shaw (PhD, University of California, Berkeley) received a COVID-19 Open Innovation Grant from Protocol Labs for his COVID-19 Digital Observatory project (see page 30). Student Erique Zhang won the 2020 Graduate Fellow Research Award from Northwestern’s Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing. Student Jabari “Naledge” Evans, a musician and half of the hip-hop duo Kidz in the Hall, is working on a new album and was the subject of a May Chicago Reader article about his work as artist and researcher. Students Soyeon Hwang, Breniel Lemley, and Maya Lennon received National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships. Alumnus Jeremy Foote (GC19) won two dissertation awards in the communication and technology and information systems divisions of the International Communication Association.


Jessica Thebus (PhD, Northwestern University), director of graduate studies for the MFA program in directing, announced that the incoming 2020–21 directing candidates are exclusively Black theatre makers. Manna-Symone Middlebrooks, Tor Campbell, and Jasmine B. Gunter make up the first all-Black directing cohort in Northwestern’s history and perhaps at any US university. Boasting high-profile international and domestic professional experience, the three exceptional candidates released a joint statement: “We see in this painful moment of reckoning a moment of opportunity to finally uproot the racism that is still embedded in the world of theatre—a world that many would assume is open, diverse, and welcoming. The all-Black cohort at Northwestern is an important victory for Black artists during this tumultuous time. This cohort is a part of a movement towards greater representation, more autonomy for Black artists, and more opportunities for Black voices to be heard.”

David Tolchinsky (MFA, University of Southern California) wrote and directed the short film Cassandra, which premiered May 15 on ALTER, YouTube’s horror channel, and quickly garnered nearly 60,000 views. It was nominated for best horror short and best production design in the online Oxford International Film Festival, where Tolchinsky led a June screenwriting master class on Zoom. Additionally, Cassandra was nominated for best actor in a short at Nightmares Film Fest and won awards for best thriller short and best editing at the

Old South, a 2015 documentary produced and directed by Danielle Beverly (MFA, Columbia College Chicago), was seen in July on Al Jazeera’s program Witness. The film follows members of a historic African American community in Georgia as they grapple with the expansion of a white fraternity that lionizes the Confederacy. Al Jazeera moved up the broadcast date after US protests against racial injustice, particularly pertaining to public removal of the Confederate flag and related statues. Old South was originally broadcast nationally on the World Channel/PBS as the fourth-season opener of the America ReFramed documentary series, airing during African American History Month. It toured the festival circuit in 2015 and won the University Film and Video Association’s Documentary Award of Merit.
Women in Horror Film Fest and for best crime-short director at Anatomy: Crime & Horror International Film Festival. The film has been accepted for the Mecal Barcelona International, Pasadena International, Blackbird, and Paracinema Film Festivals.

Marco Williams (MFA, University of California, Los Angeles) received a Sundance Documentary Fund postproduction grant for his film Murders That Matter. The film documents Movita Johnson-Harrell, an African American Muslim mother who, in the aftermath of her youngest son’s murder, vows to save all other Black sons on both sides of the gun.

Ann Woodworth (MA, Northwestern University) directed the final production of her 40-year Northwestern teaching career in anticipation of her retirement next year. Her adaptation of Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard was slated to run at NU-Q last spring; though COVID-19 shut down the production midway through rehearsals, the cast staged it on Zoom as The Cherry Orchard Quarantined. She and the students also created The Cherry Orchard Quarantined: Living in a Pandemic, a website providing images, information, and reflections about the challenging process.

Jing Zheng (PhD, Michigan State University) cowrote the article “CAMSAP3 Facilitates Basal Body Polarity and the Formation of the Central Pair of Microtubules in Motile Cilia,” accepted to the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States. Her coauthors are communication sciences and disorders research professor Mary Ann Cheatham (PhD, Northwestern University) and Feinberg School of Medicine professor Claus-Peter Richter.
Alumni achievements

Class notes are selected from stories of alumni featured in the media as identified by the University’s Office of Alumni Relations and Development and updates sent to Dialogue by mail or by email at dialogue@northwestern.edu.

Rocky Wirtz (C75) was listed by Crain’s Chicago Business as one of the 25 most powerful Chicagoleans.


Kathy Pingel (GC76, GSESP78) will be honored with the American Association of Community Theatre’s Art Cole Lifetime of Leadership Award at the AACTFest 2021 National Festival in Louisville, Kentucky, next June. Pingel served as artistic director of the Kate Goldman Children’s Theatre and for 10 years as director of education and youth programming for the Des Moines Community Playhouse prior to her retirement in 2015. She wrote the curriculum for the AACT adjudication workshop and has adjudicated theatre at the state, regional, national, and international levels. Named an AACT fellow in 2017, Pingel facilitated its Theatre Education Directors’ Conference and is currently the organization’s co-coordinator for education as well as the dramaturge for its NewPlayFest competition. She has taught and directed in Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Iowa, Michigan, and Germany.

Deborah Matthews Phillips (C78) has joined the Independent Community Bankers of America’s government relations team as senior vice president of payments and technology policy.

Jim Boyle (C79) was named chief marketing and communications officer for BBB National Programs, a nonprofit that delivers cost-effective third-party self-regulation, dispute resolution, and other programs.

Michael Thomas (C80) was named chair of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine’s obstetrics and gynecology department. One of two pre-med radio/television/film majors

1960s

Louis Stein (C72), artistic director of the North London–based inclusive theater Chickenshed, won two London Off-West Awards this year—for his musical Snow White (best production for children) and for Chickenshed (most welcoming theater). Last year, Don’t Stop Thinking about Tomorrow, his musical about a young person’s response to climate change, was named best production for young people.

William R. Clayton (C75, L78) founded the new law firm Clayton Trial Lawyers in Fort Lauderdale. He was previously a principal shareholder at Greenberg Traurig.

1970s

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Documentary profiles Marshall

Goodbye gray sky, hello purple. The Happy Days of Garry Marshall, a documentary about the life and work of the film and television legend and Northwestern alumnus (J56), premiered May 12 on ABC. Written, directed, and executive produced by John Scheinfeld (C78) and produced by Dave Harding (C78, GJ79), the documentary features Julia Roberts, Ron Howard, Henry Winkler, Julie Andrews, Jennifer Garner, Jimmy Kimmel, and other Marshall friends and Hollywood celebrities, as well as his wife, Barbara, and children Scott Marshall (C91), Kathleen Marshall LaGambina (C90), and Lori Marshall (J86, GJ88). The writer, director, and producer often dotted his films and series with nods to his alma mater. “Garry famously said, ‘I never wanted to change the world. I wanted to entertain the world,’” said Scheinfeld. “And for more than six decades, his work in television and films made us laugh, touched our hearts, and always left us feeling good.”
as a Northwestern student, he received acceptances to the University of Illinois medical school and UCLA’s MFA program in television production on the same day but chose to pursue a medical career in reproductive endocrinology and infertility. Since 1990 he has been a faculty member at the University of Cincinnati, where he has helped couples conceive more than 5,000 children and contributed to many advances in fertility services and contraception research. Thomas has served since 2015 as a board member of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and has been the division director since 2019. Also a charter member of the Society for Family Planning and the Cradle Cincinnati Advisory Board, he has been the secretary of the Board of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine for the last three years.

Selene Mize (C81) was appointed to the steering group of the New Zealand Law Society, which is undertaking an independent review of the statutory framework for legal services.

Drew Brown (C82) has joined Skydance Television as executive vice president of physical production after previously working at AMC Studios.

Jennifer Regen Bisbee (C84) is celebrating the 25th anniversary of Bisbee and Company, a public relations and marketing communications agency based in Orlando, Florida. She is also the executive producer of What Hugh Knew, a full-length feature documentary in postproduction that explores technology’s impact on real-life connections.

Christopher Celentino (C84), a partner in the corporate department of Dinsmore & Shohl, was named one of the “Top Lawyers of 2020,” based on peer reviews conducted by Martindale-Hubbell.

Spencer Krull (C87) was appointed managing broker of Southern California at Side, a real estate brokerage that exclusively partners with high-performing agents, teams, and independent brokerages to transform them into boutique brands and businesses.

Victoria Gallagher (GC89, GC90), a professor in North Carolina State University’s communication department, was one of three recipients of the Alexander Quares Holladay Medal for Excellence, the university’s highest honor.

Tricia Rothschild (C89), former chief product officer at Morningstar, has joined Magnifi, a TIFIN company, as board adviser.

Tonya M. Evans (C91) is a 2020–21 visiting professor of law at Penn State Dickinson Law. She is associate dean of academic affairs and professor of law at the University of New Hampshire’s Franklin Pierce School of Law.

Leslie Trigg (C92) is CEO of Outset Medical, a commercial-stage company delivering global dialysis technology. In collaboration with the New York State Department of Health, Outset has deployed 50 hemodialysis systems to New York City and Long Island hospitals to provide lifesaving dialysis for patients whose kidneys shut down due to COVID-19.

Carey Crim (C93) was named a finalist for the 2018 Eugene O’Neill Award for her play Never Not Once, which premiered in Canada last fall, opened in February at Rubicon Theatre Company of Ventura, and, before the pandemic, was slated for a British premiere in April.

Sarah Gubbins (C97, GC08) wrote the screenplay for Shirley, a biopic starring Elizabeth Moss as horror and mystery author Shirley Jackson. The film premiered to critical acclaim at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and was named one of the 10 best films (so far) of 2020 by Vanity Fair.

Melanie Hilliard (C98) was named a finalist for the 2018 Eugene O’Neill Award for her play Never Not Once, which premiered in Canada last fall, opened in February at Rubicon Theatre Company of Ventura, and, before the pandemic, was slated for a British premiere in April.

Paula McDonnell (GC01) joined BMO Wealth Management in Winnetka, Illinois, as a private wealth adviser.

Brendan O’Donnell (C01) is a partner at the venture capital firm Frontline Ventures, where he will co-lead FrontlineX, a new $80 million fund aimed at helping US software companies expand into Europe.

Jodi Hildebrand (C02) produced Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway, the sequel to Sony Pictures Entertainment’s worldwide hit; its scheduled US release has been postponed from April until January. Hildebrand runs Olive Bridge Entertainment, a film and television production company owned by writer and director Will Gluck.

Corinne Miller (GC02) wrote the book Reinventing Your Work: 8 Powerful Tips for a Joyful Career.
Emily Smith (C07) was promoted to senior vice president of corporate development and operations at Energy Recovery, a technology design firm that addresses challenges in industrial fluid-flow markets.

Rishi Taparia (C08) was named senior vice president of strategy and business operations at Legion Technologies, a management platform provider for helping companies administer their workforces.

Michael Mahler (C04), Alan Schmuckler (C05), and Amber Mak (C03) adapted the movie The Secret of My Success as a musical that premiered in February at the Paramount Theatre in Aurora, Illinois. As Paramount’s new works development director, Mak approached Mahler and Schmuckler about the project in 2013.

Michael Cicetti (C05) created the award-winning 2019 queer scripted series 5ASB, which has secured distribution with RevryTV and is being shopped to larger studios.

Alex H. Glaser (C06) was named a business relationship manager for JP Morgan Chase. He also works as a business relationship manager for a law firm headquartered in New Orleans.

Di Glazer (C06) was promoted to partner in the theatre department at ICM Partners, a talent and literary agency.

Geraldo Alvarez (C07) was named soccer coach at his alma mater, Marmion Academy in Aurora, Illinois. He also works as a business relationship manager for a technology design firm.

Jessica Redish (C02) wrote and directed the short film The Last Croissant, recently featured on Will Ferrell’s comedy website Fanny or Die. She is a 2020 Helen Hayes Award nominee for outstanding choreography in a play for Chelsea Marcanetl’s Airness at Keegan Theatre and 1st Stage in Washington, DC.

Mackenzie Barth (C13) and Sarah Adler (J13) while they were Northwestern students, was acquired by Her Campus Media, a company for college women and a 360-degree college marketing agency.

Rishi Taparia (C08) adapted, created, and distributed by Mattel about an Indian girl and her magical elephant; the series will premiere in 2021. She is also on the writing team for S.M.A.S.H., an animated series about superhero kids attending camp. Her play Slut was scheduled for a monthlong run in both Boston and Los Angeles but has been postponed indefinitely because of the pandemic.

Mima's Tale for Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Theatre and Mima’s Tale for Chicago’s Griffin Theatre; the latter was nominated for 2020 Jeff Awards for direction and production of a play.

Jerrell L. Henderson (GC15) is a director, a puppeteer, and an assistant professor of performance studies at Chicago State University. Recent directing credits include Thurgood for Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Theatre and Mima’s Tale for Chicago’s Griffin Theatre; the latter was nominated for 2020 Jeff Awards for direction and production of a play.

Hannah Ii-Epstein (GC18) was elected one of five new resident playwrights at Chicago Dramatists, a company focused on nurturing playwrights and developing new plays.

Joe Gaziano (C19) has signed with the Los Angeles Chargers as an undrafted free agent.

Gabrielle Torina (GC19) was hired as engagement and communications manager at Transform Rockford, a grassroots movement for helping that Illinois city become a top community.

Shit was scheduled for a monthlong run in both Boston and Los Angeles but has been postponed indefinitely because of the pandemic.

Will Arbery (GC15) is the Tow Foundation Playwright in Residence at New York City’s Playwrights Horizons and the 2020 winner of the Whiting Award for Drama. His play Heroes of the Fourth Turning was one of two finalists for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in Drama and was named one of 2019’s best plays by the New York Times. The play focuses on four alumni of a conservative Christian college grappling with current events and how to reconcile their education with the broader culture. “My greatest hope for my work is that it challenges, starts conversations, and lets audiences and readers meet in that in-between space of love, terror, and beauty,” Arbery said in a March interview for the Graduate School.

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Nayna Agrawal (GC15) is a writer for Dimple, a new children’s animation series distributed by Mattel about an Indian girl and her magical elephant; the series will premiere in 2021. She is also on the writing team for S.M.A.S.H., an animated series about superhero kids attending camp.

Emily Smith (C07) was promoted to senior vice president of corporate development and operations at Energy Recovery, a technology design firm that addresses challenges in industrial fluid-flow markets.

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disaster, and 9/11. Born Barbara Ann Nusser in Iowa, she grew up in New Jersey and majored in radio/television/film at Northwestern. After graduation she worked as an anchor and producer with local news outlets and wrote and produced the George Foster Peabody Award–winning documentary *Fed Up with Fear*. Throughout her award-winning cable network tenure, she was a fixture on CNN NewsDay, CNN NewsHour, CNN Daybreak, and CNN PrimeNews, and for three years she hosted the weekday afternoon show *Talkback Live*. Battista left CNN in the early 2000s to work in corporate communications but continued to contribute to television programming. In addition to her husband, John Brimelow, she is survived by stepdaughter Halie Brimelow, brother Michael Nusser, sister Amy Nusser Dawkins, and ex-husband James M. Battista.

### Riad Ismat

former Syrian minister of culture and a past School of Communication visiting artist, died on May 13 at age 73 in Glenview, Illinois, from COVID-19 complications. He studied in the United Kingdom and was proud that his education could bridge the divide between Western and Levant cultures. As Syria’s culture minister, the Damascus native organized three minifestivals celebrating the performing arts of ethnic minorities, including Assyrians, Armenians, Charkas, and Kurds. A prolific writer whose plays, novelettes, and short stories were critical of totalitarianism and sectarianism, he reached a point where he felt neither heard nor safe in Syria. After leaving his home for Paris, Ismat came to Northwestern as a researcher with the help of New York’s Institute of International Education. He then taught at Naperville’s North Central College before returning to the School of Communication in 2015 to collaborate and interact with faculty and students in creating art and raising awareness as the first in a series of school-sponsored artists in residence from conflict zones. Ismat’s life was inspirational to those working for political freedom and to artists creating amid wartime turmoil. He is survived by his wife, Azzah, and three children.

### Virginia Z. Rose Delman

(C39, GC46), October 23, age 101, Claremont, California

### Jocelyn Birch Burdick

(C43), December 26, age 97, Fargo, North Dakota

### Florence Leffler

(C47), April 6, age 94, Memphis, Tennessee

### Pauline G. Higle

(C49), February 14, age 93, Gibsonia, Pennsylvania

### Doris Celeste Sheehy

(C49), December 31, age 91, Bolivia, North Carolina

### Carol Thornburg

(GC50), May 14, age 96, Franklin, Tennessee

### Kathleen Blank

(C51), February 11, age 89, Irvine, California

### Suzanne McMurry

(C51), April 27, age 90, Tucson

### Jerry Levin

(C54), February 6, age 88, Birmingham, Alabama

### Jamie M. Gilson

(C55), February 11, age 86, Wilmette, Illinois

### Karen J. Kuehner

(C55), May 28, age 86, Northbrook, Illinois

### Donald E. Rondou

(C55), March 2, age 87, Green Bay, Wisconsin

### Rodger H. Running

(C55), April 16, age 87, Jackson, Mississippi

### Dorothy Soule

(GC55), December 20, age 94, Springfield, Illinois

### Anita Phillips

(C56), January 12, age 85, St. Louis

### Marianna Sellers

(C56), April 1, age 85, Somerville, New Jersey

### John Boyd

(GC57, GC65), December 19, age 92, London, Ontario, Canada

### Carol P. Mower

(GC57), November 22, age 88, Orono, Maine

### David G. Wood

(C57), April 17, age 84, Redwood Falls, Minnesota

### Paul A. Wischmeyer

(C58), March 1, age 83, San Francisco

### Robert J. Bielecki

(C59), November 21, age 82, Arlington Heights, Illinois

### Marcia Quale Chellis Kay

(C61), December 27, age 79, Palm Beach, Florida

### Lynne B. Smith Miano

(C61), May 20, age 81, Bridgewater, Connecticut

### Patricia Scherer

(C62, GC64, GC68), April 26, age 89, Northbrook, Illinois

### Stanley G. Rives

(GC63), November 13, age 89, Mattoon, Illinois

### Sharon M. Kerikas

(GC64), April 18, age 77, Salt Lake City

### Peter D. Willis

(C64), December 29, age 79

### Earl Ross Genzel

(GC65), May 3, age 78, Raleigh, North Carolina

### Beverle Bloch

(C69), April 27, age 72, Chicago

### Mariana Newton

(GC69), December 12, age 81, Greensboro, North Carolina

### Richard A. Ludwin

(GC71), November 10, age 71, Los Angeles

### Diane M. Smith

(GC72), December 28, age 72, Evansville, Indiana

### Joseph A. Rozanski

(C80), March 19, age 63, Chicago

### Carol L. Wick

(C82), May 23, age 60, Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania

### Kathleen Ann Watson

(GC01), December 31, age 75, Phoenix, Arizona

### Brendan J. Ansier

(C02), January 20, age 39, Chicago
A life of many stages

Elaine Cohen Rubin (C69) was born for the stage.

A native of Kansas City, Missouri, she spent her childhood performing. At age three she was dancing, and by age five she was onstage alongside show business legends at Kansas City’s Starlight Musical Theater. By high school she was a regular on local television programs—her petite stature and indomitable work ethic made her the go-to choice for dozens of roles. She was nicknamed “the Shirley Temple of Kansas City.”

“I just remember growing up I was always either in a performing class, a private lesson, a rehearsal, or a performance,” she says. “That’s what my life was like.”

Cohen Rubin had friends who had gone to Northwestern’s summer Cherubs program, so she applied and attended the same year as Emmy Award–winning actor Peter Strauss. Her experience was transformative—she won one of the 10 “highest awards in drama”—and inspired her to apply to Northwestern as a theatre major.

She was surprised to find that, in the 1960s, Northwestern did not offer a curricular track in musical comedy. The University did have the Waa-Mu Show as well as the Dolphin Show, then staged in a swimming pool. “But I was allergic to chlorine, so there was no way I was doing that,” she laughs.

“The biggest value of my experience was from the interpretation department,” she says, “because they taught you how to take a piece of literature, break it down, and really analyze characters. They also taught how to produce live theatre. That honed a lot of my skills.”

Cohen Rubin created opportunities for herself that would capitalize on those skills, whether putting together a music revue her senior year that was showcased at Second City or producing live musical industrial shows for the trade show business, leading to her 42-year career as the founder of Live Marketing—one of the country’s top 100 event marketing agencies and winner of over 500 awards. Its team has performed in 42 countries and in 12 languages.

“Elaine brought all of the arts into my life,” says Arlen Rubin, her husband of 48 years and a CPA who became a member of the Chicago Board of Trade. “It’s been the delight of my life.” The couple is well known for enthusiastic patronage and support of Chicago arts institutions and Broadway shows; Chicago’s Porchlight Music Theatre named them 2020 Porchlight Luminaries.

For over 40 years the Rubins have been loyal annual donors to the School of Communication. Since the launch of Northwestern’s American Music Theatre Project in 2005, that initiative has been a focus of their support. AMTP connects professional playwrights and actors with Northwestern faculty and students to workshop new projects. The final products have ranged from staged readings to fully realized productions. Elaine gives her time and expertise as a member of the AMTP advisory board and in fall 2019 made a major gift commitment to support and sustain its future.

“I love the whole production concept. I love the writing phase, I love the production phase, I love it all because I did it for so many years,” says Cohen Rubin. “This was a great way to get back to the ‘real’ theatre, because I missed it.

“We have to have this process in order for a show to make it to Broadway,” she continues. “But the thing I like most about it is that the students are the key linchpins in the process. They will someday be able to use this experience to make a living in theatre.”

She notes that AMTP’s ongoing partnership with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to create new works and premiere them at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe has been a boon to the program and that the soon-to-be-opened Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing and Media Arts on Northwestern’s downtown Chicago campus will advance the mission even further.

“I see that path as a very smart move,” she says. “And the new MFA program in acting will give us a huge advantage. It will really help Northwestern be considered the place to be.”

Thanks to the generous support of Elaine Cohen Rubin and Arlen Rubin, it already is.
In June, E. Patrick Johnson was named the new dean of Northwestern’s School of Communication. The Carlos Montezuma Professor of Performance Studies and African American Studies in the School of Communication and the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Johnson joined the faculty 20 years ago and has served in significant leadership roles, breaking barriers along the way. He assumes his new position on August 1 as the seventh dean in the school’s history.

A first-generation college student, Johnson was the first African American from his hometown to receive a doctorate, the first African American to be hired and tenured in the Department of Performance Studies, and the first to hold a named professorship in the School of Communication. He has spent much of his career leveraging those opportunities to provide others with a seat at the table and has worked to diversify the faculty through recruitment and mentoring.

“I am truly honored and humbled to be selected as the next dean of the School of Communication. I stand on the shoulders of my grandmother and my mother, neither of whom ever stepped foot on a university campus except to celebrate my graduations and accomplishments, but from whom I learned how to be a committed scholar, artist, and advocate for social justice,” Johnson says. “As I step into this new role, I carry their tenacity and determination with me.

“While I understand the symbolism of being the first African American appointed to this post—and particularly during a global pandemic and persistence of anti-Black racism—my focus as dean will be leading with a moral and ethical imperative to make the School of Communication a place where ‘first’ only refers to our ranking in the world.”

Interim provost Kathleen Hagerty said Johnson emerged from a national search of highly respected, prominent candidates. “I’m thrilled that E. Patrick Johnson will be our next dean of the School of Communication,” she says. “Not only is he an outstanding artist, teacher, and scholar, he is also deeply committed to ensuring that the students, staff, and faculty in the school can continue to excel. He will provide visionary leadership, deep expertise, and unwavering support as he champions each member of the school community. I am eager to begin working with him to address the many opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.”

Since coming to Northwestern from Amherst College in 2000 as an assistant professor of performance studies, Johnson has chaired the performance studies and African American studies departments. He is also the founding director of the University’s Black Arts Initiative, a cross-school collaboration established in 2012 to honor the past and celebrate the potential of Black arts.

A prolific performer and scholar, Johnson has been published widely in the areas of race, class, gender, sexuality, and performance. His research and artistry have greatly influenced African American, performance, and sexuality studies, and he is one of the progenitors of the field of Black queer studies. In recognition of his work, Johnson will be inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences this fall (see page 33).

He succeeds Barbara O’Keefe, the School of Communication’s dean since 2000. She led a transformation of the school’s curriculum and fostered highly interdisciplinary, cross-platform programs at every level from precollege to undergraduate, professional, and doctoral studies.

Johnson received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in speech communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and his PhD in speech communication from Louisiana State University.

—Jon Yates