The Path Forward

President Michael Schill has a vision to take Northwestern to new heights.

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Iron Pour

Using a furnace heated to 2,700 degrees Fahrenheit, students poured molten iron into 3D-printed, sand-casted molds as part of the fifth annual Segal Iron Pour in May. Students in the course Leonardo, Geometry and the Art of Manufacturing spent winter quarter exploring Leonardo da Vinci’s artistic processes, then applied their learnings in a public iron pour in a Ryan Field parking lot, using molds inspired by da Vinci’s sketches and exploration of geometry. The course, taught by adjunct lecturer Matthew Cummins and clinical professor David Gatchell, is part of the Segal Design Institute at the McCormick School of Engineering.
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In Memoriam

I never knew Ned Rorem ’44, ’77 H (personally [In Memoriam, spring 2023]). But I do know that Ned Rorem was gay — openly gay — at a time when that was far more dangerous than it is today.

At a time when some people are actively trying to rewrite, erase or even outlaw certain people’s history, we have an obligation to tell the full story.

Becoming gay was not just a part of Ned Rorem’s “private life.” He should be recognized for his public courage.

Jeremy Boxerbaum ’94, ’85 MS
New York City

Marimba Madcaps

There’s an interesting synergy between “Remember the Marimba Madcaps” [Cat Tales, spring 2023] and my new position as executive director and curator for the Center for Mallet Percussion Studies, University of Kentucky. My work as founder and executive director of Heartland Marimba. We prominently feature the Marimba Madcaps (or Marimba Coeds) in our exhibits at the center, and of course Olair Muser was their teacher at Northwestern from 1942 to 1982. We have an entire exhibit room devoted to his work. He was central to directing and organizing other iconic marimba projects, such as the 100-member International Marimba Symphony Orchestra (IMSO).

And, as a bizarre bit of serendipity, Muser designed a set of marimba mallets for the IMSO project in 1935. The mallets were wrapped in gray yarn, with different colors used in a single row of stitching to distinguish the different articulations in the series. In 2021 I released a set of six signature marimba mallets that were designed with virtually the same essential classic marimba mallet.

Willis Siegfield ’62
Boulder, Colo.

It’s reasurring to have a University president who is a staunch advocate of free expression.

— Dalal Aldalaimi

The Threat and Promise of Deepfakes

By V.S. Subramanian

In recent years, deepfake videos — seemingly realistic digital representations created with sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) — have been used to demand ransom, distribute pornographic and influence elections. With the clamor for AI regulation growing louder every day, it is time to reflect on the threats posed by deepfakes as well as potential benefits. In 2019 the app DeepDive allowed users to upload a photo of a fully clothed person. It then automatically generated a synthetic image of that individual completely nude. Unsurprisingly, some used the app to harm and humiliate their ex-lovers. Many U.S. states have banned such apps, but the threat of misusing this sophisticated technology persists.

In a certain different setting — the May 2023 presidential election in Turkey — deepfakes showed candidate Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu and Kurdish Workers’ Party militants side by side at rallies. And closer to home, deepfakes were used in the 2023 Chicago mayoral election, when an image and accompanying audio depicted candidate Paul Vallas making racially insensitive comments about police shootings.

More recently, there are reports of criminals demanding ransom from a mother based on deepfake audio of her daughter saying that she had been kidnapped. Imagine the combination of a Chant-based chatbot with deepfake audio or video that can, in real time, carry on a seemingly real conversation in the child’s voice with her mother. The prospects of malicious deepfakes are indeed frightening.

But not all uses of deepfakes are nefarious. Imagine, for instance, a surgery simulator that generates a deepfake model of a patient’s body that can react in real time to surgeons’ actions. Years from now, such simulators could generate realistic brain injuries, different tissues, training surgeons to treat conditions that they have never seen in real life.

Now imagine a company files a patent for a technique to prevent theft of its intellectual property, it uses deepfake AI to generate fake versions of its invention documentation. In an outside entity steals this intellectual property, the thief will struggle to determine which of the 100 documents is the real one.

Finally, imagine the CIA trying to destabilize a terrorist network by generating a deepfake of a terrorist leader consorting with a known CIA operative or criticizing other leaders within his group. This might sow distrust and bring down the network. Some of our adversaries are already using deepfakes against the U.S.

The new Northwestern Security and AI Lab (NSAIL), a partnership between the McCormick School of Engineering and the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, is already developing deepfake techniques that can be used responsibly. The Terrorism Reduction wave AI Deepfake project being developed at NSAIL, for example, can generate deepfake video intended to destabilize terrorist networks. Other projects also have built on existing AI techniques to generate fake documents and fake databases to deter data breaches and intellectual property theft.

A knee-jerk reaction to ban all deepfakes risks throwing out the baby with the bathwater. The innumerable benefits of synthetically generated media objects would be lost. Instead, we must develop tools that can help us detect and combat against malicious deepfakes, such as detection technology and human fact-checking. And existing legislation can and should be used — and adapted when necessary — to prosecute those using deepfakes for malicious purposes.

V.S. Subramanian is the Walter P. Murphy Professor of Computer Science in the McCormick School of Engineering.

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Address Changes
Mail To: Change Notice Editor Northwestern Magazine, 6030 D Street Avenue, Suite 200 Evanston, IL 60201 Email: address-change@northwestern.edu
The Science of Learning
How does learning happen — and can we get better at it?

David Rapp, Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence and professor of psychology and of learning sciences

Successful learning requires at least two things: incorporating new ideas into your existing knowledge, a process called encoding, and accessing those ideas when they are relevant and useful, a process called retrieval. We spend a lot of time and effort encoding new information by studying, rehearsing and using flash cards. But we don’t spend nearly as much time on retrieval. Practicing our retrieval of newly learned knowledge — by answering questions about the topic, debating ideas and considering possibilities — can improve our retention of information.

Elizabeth Norton, associate professor of communication sciences and disorders and director of the Language, Education and Reading Neuroscience (LEARN) Lab

Our brains are the most plastic, or flexible, for learning, early in life, so one of the most important ways we can ensure that children build a strong foundation for their lifelong learning is to identify children who are struggling as early as possible. Most children learn language with relative ease, yet about 10% have substantial difficulty even though they have good hearing, intelligence, social skills and caregiving. Without early intervention, those children are more likely to struggle in school and have long-lasting mental health challenges, such as anxiety. If your child is slow to learn to talk, seek out a free evaluation from the early intervention office in your state.

Nina Kraus ‘80 PhD, the Hugh Knowles Chair and professor of neurobiology and otalaryngology

Sound is at the root of how we make and keep connections. It shapes who we are neurologically by engaging how we think, feel and remember. Noise (or unwanted sound) can get in the way of this. Hearing is our “alarm sense.” We tend to ignore background noise because it is constant. But are we really tuning it out, or are we simply adapting to a perpetual state of low-level alarm? We have all had the experience of noticing a sound only when it goes away — the air conditioner cycles off or the music is cut. Avoiding noise can promote brain health, facilitate learning and allow us to connect more intentionally with others without distraction.

Talia Lerner, assistant professor of neuroscience and of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and founder of the Lerner Lab

My lab examines how habits are learned. How can we build good habits and break bad ones? How and why do we shift from thinking about our life goals (for example, wanting to maintain good dental health) to performing an action consistently (for example, flossing every night)? The process of learning habits is largely influenced by dopamine in the brain. My lab records patterns of dopamine release while animals learn new habits, and we see that the dopamine release guides which neural circuits are strengthened or weakened. Our findings will help us understand the human brain and identify which neural circuits cause disorders such as depression or addiction.

SCON'S FEEDS
Alumni share the hottest fashion trends from their student days.

“Bell bottoms. Vintage thrift store finds. Also went through an Annie Hall menswear phase.”

Lorena Washington ‘79

“Preppy all the way! Fair Isle sweaters with turtlenecks, polos or button-down shirts paired with khakis, jean skirts or Calvin’s Topiders and L.L. Bean rubber mocs. Greek apparel [above]? And then there were those Frye cowboy boots I bought after getting a D on an exam. I still have ’em!”

Sara Marberry ‘91

“Big hair, big earrings, preppy. Pretty in Pink style. … There was also the Flashdance look: cut-up sweatsuits, leg warmers, long sweaters and tights. Can you feel it?”

Kinberly W. White ‘93

“Popped collar made an unfortunate comeback during my underdgrad years.”

Daniel Solera ’95

My Northwestern Direction
Democracy Depends on Inclusive Education

Education holds a special place in my heart, largely due to my parents’ influence. My father worked as a math teacher and coach. My mother served on the school board in my mostly white hometown, Jackson, Mich. They taught me to value academic excellence and the transformative power of learning. Even so, no one ever encouraged me to teach. But I ended up in the classroom, and my time as an educator opened my eyes in ways I never could have imagined.

So, now as executive director of the Campaign for Our Shared Future, I fight every day to promote inclusive, high-quality K-12 public education for all children by working to keep extreme politics out of our classrooms and school boards. Our nonpartisan efforts include fighting anti-equity legislation, providing support to educators and empowering student activists to make their voices heard.

By Heather Harding, ’92

Heather Harding is executive director of the nonprofit Campaign for Our Shared Future.

My Northwestern Direction
Inclusive Education — both of which are critical to being well-informed, active members of our democracy. With this knowledge, I pursued specialized training in sociology and African American studies, which fueled my passion for democracy and urban education. My senior year, I joined Teach For America and was assigned to a high school in eastern North Carolina, where I taught social studies and an elective African American history course. I introduced my students to the celebration of Kwanzaa. While the student body was mostly Black, they hadn’t learned about their history and were excited to experience a part of their culture.

However, during my sophomore year, I read an article about the creation of Teach For America that shifted my perspective. It underscored the importance of inclusive education — the kind that allows kids to feel welcomed, safe and affirmed in their identities while also learning about people who are different from them. Learning about different identities or values does not threaten your individual liberties or beliefs. On the contrary, it sparks imagination.

By Heather Harding, ’92

Heather Harding is executive director of the nonprofit Campaign for Our Shared Future.
In It for the Long Run
Chicago Marathon medical director keeps runners on the right course.

George Chiampas, assistant professor of emergency medicine and orthopedic surgery at Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine, works for these organizations and more as a team physician and medical director, overseeing player and league safety and developing training on prevention of cardiac death. While he loves all his roles, there’s one event that he looks forward to every fall: the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, which attracts approximately 45,000 runners and an estimated 1.7 million spectators each year. Chiampas, who has volunteered with the Chicago Marathon since 1999 and has served as chief medical and safety officer since 2007, shares what he loves about the 26.2-mile run through the Windy City.

“The Chicago Marathon is probably the greatest celebration of this city. It’s a reflection of our community, our neighborhoods and the goals of these individuals who run for some of the most amazing reasons. When you hear someone say that they’re running for their wife who passed away from breast cancer, or they’re running for their child — there’s nothing better than that purpose.”

“I’ve seen firsthand how powerful these races can be... I was at the London Marathon with my wife in 2009, and we were sitting at the finish line up in the stands. I had worked behind the scenes for marathons, but I had never been a spectator before. All of a sudden we started hearing cheers to the right of us. I looked over and there were about 40 individuals who were blind, sitting in the stands. At the same time, I started hearing bells coming across the finish line. For a couple of seconds, I didn’t connect the dots, but as the cheers and bells got louder, I realized some runners had bells on their shoelaces, so that those who can’t see can hear people running. I couldn’t stop crying. The marathon touches your soul.”

Merriam-Webster recently added misogynoir, a word coined by Northwestern associate professor Moya Bailey, to its English dictionary. Bailey, who teaches courses on feminism, queer theory and social media, first used the word publicly in a 2010 post on the Crunk Feminist Collective blog. A melding of the words misogyny and noir (“black” in French), misogynoir gives name to the specific type of oppression Black women experience as a result of both racism and gender discrimination.

The term gained traction after other Black feminists picked it up from Bailey’s post and began using it. Over the past decade, major news outlets and TV shows have popularized the word. In one of the first major public uses of the term, singer Katy Perry used misogynoir in a 2016 tweet of support for Black comedian Leslie Jones when she was the victim of an online attack orchestrated by alt-right commentator Milo Yiannopoulos. The word garnered national attention during the 2022 confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, as news outlets used the term to characterize the disrespectful manner in which Jackson was treated. “The real root of misogynoir is how people perceive and treat Black women and understand them to be worthy of respect and care,” Bailey says. “I feel very proud that I created something that is useful to people, but … I’m hopeful for the day when people don’t have to use it.”

Learn more about Bailey’s work at alummag.nu/Bailey.
skull-implantable ultrasound device to open the blood-brain barrier and allow intravenously injected chemotherapy drugs to reach large, critical regions of the human brain.

In a recent study, researchers successfully quantified the effect of such a device on the concentrations of chemotherapy in the human brain. In the clinical trial, patients underwent surgery for removal of their tumors and implantation of the ultrasound device, which contains nine ultrasound emitters arranged in a grid-like pattern. Once implanted, doctors activated the device to allow chemotherapy treatment to permeate the brain.

Opening the blood-brain barrier led to an approximately four- to six-fold increase in drug concentrations in the brain, the results showed. Scientists observed this increase in two separate powerful chemotherapy drugs, paclitaxel and carboplatin. The drugs are not typically used to treat glioblastoma patients because they do not cross the blood-brain barrier under normal circumstances.

“Impression of the brain that is nine times larger than the initial device (a single-ultrasound emitter implant) is able to open. This is important observed to maximize effectiveness of the treatment, the chemotherapy must permeate a large region of the brain adjacent to the cavity left behind after the removal of glioblastoma tumors.”

“When we have focused on brain cancer, this opens the door to investigate novel drug-based treatments for millions of patients who suffer from various brain diseases,” says Sonabend, who is a member of the Lou and Jean Malnati Brain Tumor Institute in the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University.

In the past, studies that injected paclitaxel directly into the brain of glioblastoma patients showed promising signs of efficacy, but the direct injection was associated with negative side effects, such as brain irritation and meningitis, says lead investigator Adam Sonabend, an associate professor of neurological surgery in the Feinberg School of Medicine. Temozolomide, the current chemotherapy used for glioblastoma, does cross the blood-brain barrier, but it is a weak drug, says Sonabend.

“The four-minute procedure to open the blood-brain barrier is performed with the patient awake, and patients go home after a few hours. The results showed the treatment is safe and well tolerated. This study is the first to describe how quickly the blood-brain barrier closes after sonication — the use of sound waves to agitate particles or disrupt cellular membranes. The scientists discovered that most of the blood-brain barrier integrity is restored within one hour after this procedure.

“There is a critical time window after sonication when the brain is permeable to drugs circulating in the bloodstream,” says Sonabend. The findings pave the way for ongoing clinical trials in patients with recurrent glioblastoma. The objective of the trial — in which participants receive a combination of paclitaxel and carboplatin delivered to their brain with their ultrasound technique — is to investigate whether this treatment prolongs survival.

“The study is also the first to report that using a grid of nine ultrasound emitters opens the blood-brain barrier in an area of the brain that is nine times larger than the initial device (a single-ultrasound emitter implant) is able to open. This is important observed to maximize effectiveness of the treatment, the chemotherapy must permeate a large region of the brain adjacent to the cavity left behind after the removal of glioblastoma tumors.”

While most visitors to Peru head for Machu Picchu, assistant professor Diego Arias-Bazán says there’s plenty to see in his hometown, Lima, and Cusco as well. Check out the Church of La Merced, built in the 1500s, and the Lima Art Museum (MALI), which showcases the full spectrum of Peruvian art. A walk along El Malecón, a cliffside walkway overlooking the Pacific Ocean, is also a must. Arias-Bazán, an anthropologist who studies the shared cultural and ethnic heritage of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, recommends Coricancha temple (left) in Cusco, where the Spaniards built a church on top of an Incan temple. “It’s like a visual metaphor for colonization,” he says.
The Symphony of the Universe

Darsan Swaroop Bellie says jazz music and gravitational waves have a lot in common. Jazz and astronomy might seem worlds apart, but Darsan Swaroop Bellie has found connections that make his heart sing.

Bellie ’22, who holds a dual degree in jazz studies and physics from Northwestern, is a fellow at the University’s Center for Interdisciplinary Exploration and Research in Astrophysics (CIERA), where he conducts research on gravitational waves, compact objects and cosmology. Merging his seemingly disparate passions, he created the Star Eyes Initiative, which uses original musical compositions to communicate scientific concepts in a digestible way for audiences of all ages. “Sound is vibration,” Bellie says. “Unlike most astronomical observations, which you can detect [using] a telescope, you can’t really see gravitational waves. You have to hear them. You’ll often hear astronomers say that gravitational waves produce ‘the symphony of the universe.’”

An avid drummer and composer, Bellie wrote his first Star Eyes Initiative composition, “Dance of the Black Holes,” this year. He assembled a jazz quintet to perform the piece — which portrays the merging of two black holes in space — at a CIERA-hosted conference on gravitational waves in March. “I never expected that the first Star Eyes performance would be [in front of] an audience of scientists who actually do the science that I’m trying to describe through the music,” Bellie says.

He plans to use future musical compositions to explore scientific fields beyond astronomy. “The goal is to get people thinking about the wonders of the universe,” says Bellie, who is starting a doctoral program in physics at Northwestern this fall.

Knitting Us Together

Anyone can learn to knit, says junior Abbie Farley. She’s president of Knitwestern, a knitting and crocheting club open to Northwestern students and community members. At weekly meetings, members work on two knitting techniques — how to cast on and cast off — and two types of stitches — knit and purl. The club donates finished pieces, including hats, gloves and scarves, to local organizations such as Students Organizing for Labor Rights, Inspiration Corporation and Howard Brown Health’s Broadway Youth Center.

Each knitting or crocheting project takes hours to complete, but the payoff is worth it, says Farley. “Our projects bring comfort and warmth, and that’s what we want to spread.”

Women’s lacrosse caps one-loss season with eighth national title.

The Wildcats were led by Madison Taylor, Sammy White and sophomore Laliberty ’23 CERT, junior Hiller hoists trophy.

The Wildcats were led by Izzy Scane ’22, ’23 CERT, who scored 18 goals in the NCAA Tournament and earned most outstanding player honors. One of the sport’s all-time greats, Scane scored a Northwestern record 99 goals during the season. She was named the Tewaaraton Trophy winner, an honor bestowed on the nation’s top player in men’s and women’s lacrosse. Scane, the fourth Wildcat to win the Tewaaraton, became Northwestern’s all-time leading scorer (288 goals) with her goal in the fourth period of the championship game. Head coach Kelly Amonte-Hiller, who joined the program in 2001, is now tied with his father, John Amonte, with an all-time great short game with an all-time great short game in collegiate women’s lacrosse history.

In addition to Scane, four other Wildcats were named to the all-team: Erin Coykendall ’23, Molly Laliberty ’23 CERT, junior Sammy White and sophomore Madison Taylor.

The Wildcats (21-1) won 21 consecutive games after losing the season opener to Syracuse. Northwestern, the Big Ten regular season champs, also won the Big Ten Tournament for the third time in program history.

Return to the Top

Women’s lacrosse won the NCAA Championship, but in late May the Wildcats returned to the top of the sport, defeating Boston College 18-6 for the program’s eighth title in 18 years. The Wildcats were led by Izzy Scane ’22, ’23 CERT, who scored 18 goals in the NCAA Tournament and earned most outstanding player honors. One of the sport’s all-time greats, Scane scored a Northwestern record 99 goals during the season. She was named the Tewaaraton Trophy winner, an honor bestowed on the nation’s top player in men’s and women’s lacrosse. Scane, the fourth Wildcat to win the Tewaaraton, became Northwestern’s all-time leading scorer (288 goals) with her goal in the fourth period of the championship game. Head coach Kelly Amonte-Hiller, who joined the program in 2001, is now tied with his father, John Amonte, with an all-time great short game in collegiate women’s lacrosse history.

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Underground Heat Islands Pose Silent Hazard

Northwestern engineers are the first to quantify the effects of subsurface climate change on cities.

Climate change isn’t just affecting our air and water. It’s also deforming the ground beneath our feet. In urban areas around the globe, buildings and underground transportation systems continuously emit heat, causing the ground to warm at an alarming rate. Combine this heat with increasing surface temperatures from human-caused climate change, and the shallow subsurface beneath cities is warming by 0.1 to 2.5 degrees Celsius per decade. Northwestern researchers now are the first to discover a link between climate change and the shallow subsurface beneath cities.

“Temperature variations are deforming the ground, and no existing civil structure or infrastructure is designed to withstand these variations. In other words, you don’t need to live in Venice to live in a city that is sinking — even if the causes for such phenomena are completely different.” — Alessandro Rotta Loria

To conduct the study, Rotta Loria and his team installed a wireless network of more than 150 temperature sensors throughout Chicago’s Loop, both above and below ground. They placed sensors in the basements of buildings, subway tunnels, underground parking garages and subsurface streets. For comparison, the team also buried sensors in parts of Grant Park, a green space located along Lake Michigan, where there are no underground structures. Data indicated that underground temperatures beneath the Loop are often 10 degrees Celsius warmer than temperatures beneath Grant Park. Air temperatures in underground sensors can be up to 25 degrees Celsius higher compared to the undisturbed ground temperature. When the heat diffuses, it puts significant stress on materials that expand and contract with changing temperatures.

After collecting data for three years, Rotta Loria built a 3D computer model to simulate how ground temperatures have evolved — and how the ground itself has deformed — over time. According to the simulations, warmer temperatures can cause the ground to swell and expand upward by as much as 12 millimeters. They also can cause the ground to contract and sink downward — beneath the weight of a building, for example — by as much as 8 millimeters. Although this seems imperceptible, the variation is more than many building components and foundation systems can handle.

“We used Chicago as a living laboratory, but underground climate change is common to nearly all dense urban areas worldwide.” Rotta Loria says. “And all urban areas suffering from underground climate change are prone to problems with infrastructure. In particular, European cities with very old buildings will be more susceptible to subsurface climate change.”

Still, Rotta Loria says no one should panic. Buildings might be slowly sinking but will not suddenly collapse. And there is time to harvest waste heat from buildings and reuse it to heat indoor spaces. Engineers and urban planners can install thermal insulation and harvest heat beneath buildings.

“Temperature variations are deforming the ground, and no existing civil structure ... is designed to withstand these variations.” — Alessandro Rotta Loria

For a discovery on the effects of subsurface climate change, see the article in the journal Environmental Science & Technology about the overuse of certain chemicals found in cleaning products. Here are some of their findings:

• Quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs) — found in disinfectant solutions and wipes, hand sanitizers, medical instruments and more — are linked to asthma, dermatitis and inflammation and may also be associated with infertility and birth defects.

• Disinfection with QACs often has no benefit over cleaning with plain soap and water.

• QACs threaten to worsen antimicrobial resistance, “which was already contributing to millions of deaths per year before the pandemic,” says Hartmann.

• Levels of QACs in our bodies and the environment have increased since the pandemic began. The scientists recommend closely monitoring these levels, eliminating QAC use when possible and requiring full disclosure of QACs in all products.
Matthews and Giuliana Zaccardelli launched Digital Fertility Clinic

With backgrounds in law and medicine, Blair Matthews ‘22 JD and Giuliana Zaccardelli ‘22 MD, MBA are co-founders of Zuri Fertility, an app that serves as a personalized supports for patients to find potential factors contributing to infertility. Matthews and his wife, Jasmine, an assistant physician, struggled to get pregnant for more than a year before finally tapping into Jasmine’s professional network to ask for help. “But if you don’t have a medical provider in your family, how are you going to find these answers?” he asks.

That’s where Zuri Fertility steps in. Patients answer a questionnaire to identify potential factors (such as lifestyle, stress, and family history) that contribute to infertility. Zuri Fertility then sends a panel of tests directly to patients from a CLIA-certified lab — a lab that adheres to the federal standards set by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA).

Matthews and Zaccardelli found their start during their NUvention: Accountability Act. In 2022 Zuri Fertility won the Innovative and Game-Changing Idea Challenge: Lunar Forge. The team filed a provisional patent and met with manufacturers this past spring to discuss how to optimize the design and manufacturing process. “If we can increase the lifespan of the boot while keeping it at an affordable price,” Sukohardjo says, “that not only saves consumers money, that saves on materials and allows for sustainability.”

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**Inroads on the Moon**

Northwestern engineering students designed ACRE (Autonomous Casting RovEr), a machine that uses solar energy to melt and cast a mixture of metal lunar regolith, a material that can be used to create landing pads and roads on the moon’s surface. The 20-student team received $168,000 in funding through NASA’s annual Breakthrough, Innovative and Game-Changing Idea Challenge: Lunar Forge.

**Re-Boot for Winter**

A common pet peeve for parents became the subject of four students’ manufacturing and design engineering capstone project.

Last fall, Joanne Park ’23, Callista Sukohardjo ’23, Ben Miller ’23 and Sarah John ’23 surveyed friends and family about everyday annoyances, gathering ideas for an invention. Park’s aunt lamented having to buy new winter boots every year for her young kids.

“The shoe industry is very wasteful,” says Sukohardjo. “Parents end up having to throw out perfectly decent winter boots, as their children quickly outgrow them.”

The name Zuri is a play on Swahili, which means ‘beautiful,’ “ says Matthews, who traveled with his wife to Zanzibar before getting pregnant. “That’s what we want everyone to have: a beautiful experience.”

In 2022 Zuri Fertility won second place in its category and placed third overall in Northwestern’s VentureCat competition, run by the Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. This summer, Zaccardelli and Matthews completed the startup accelerator program Techstars New York City powered by J.P. Morgan.

See alummag.nu/Zuri for more.

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In 2022 Zuri Fertility won second place in its category and placed third overall in Northwestern’s VentureCat competition, run by the Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. This summer, Zaccardelli and Matthews completed the startup accelerator program Techstars New York City powered by J.P. Morgan.

See alummag.nu/Zuri for more.

**Inroads on the Moon**

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A transformative grant from the Howard and Paula Trienens Fund will advance global sustainability and energy solutions at one of Northwestern’s flagship research institutes. The grant from the Trienens’ donor-advised fund was recommended by University Trustee Nan Trienens Kaehler ’79 AS and Thomas R. “Kip” Trienens, siblings who were inspired by their late mother’s dedication to environmental stewardship. The largest philanthropic contribution ever made to the Institute for Sustainability and Energy at Northwestern (ISEN), the grant will provide critical investment in research, education and engagement for climate science, the energy transition and the development of resilient communities.

In recognition of this extraordinary generosity, the University has renamed ISEN the Paula M. Trienens Institute for Sustainability and Energy. In allocating funds to the institute, Nan and Kip chose to honor their mother’s dedication to the natural world. Paula M. Trienens ’47 cared deeply about conservation efforts, supporting organizations such as the Glencoe Garden Club. "Mom was concerned about environmental degradation and climate change," Nan says. "She would be thrilled to have her name connected to her alma mater and its efforts to find future solutions beyond the constraints of current knowledge."

The institute has a well-established track record of innovation across Northwestern, including a history of leading federal energy research hubs, an undergraduate certificate and professional master of science degree in energy and sustainability, and a global portfolio of partnerships with corporate, nonprofit and nongovernmental institutions. "In order to accelerate equitable climate change solutions, we must drive discovery and education across diverse fields of inquiry," says Michael R. Wasielewski, executive director of the Trienens Institute. “The Trienens grant significantly amplifies our capacity to advance meaningful solutions that support the future of all life on Earth.”

Kip encourages others to join his family in bolstering the Trienens Institute’s work. “Students and faculty alike want the University to lead, and with your support, Northwestern can be the premier academic institution addressing sustainability and energy,” he says.

“Together, we can safeguard life on Earth for current and future generations.” The Trienens family’s philanthropy has benefited numerous areas across Northwestern.

Nan and Kip’s father, the late Howard J. Trienens ’45, ’49 JD, ’95 H, was chair of the Northwestern Board of Trustees. He was awarded the Northwestern Alumni Medal in 1996.

Paula Trienens was founder and president of the Northwestern University Women’s Board and also served on the board of The Alumniae of Northwestern University and the Medill Advisory Board. She received the Northwestern Alumni Association Service Award in 1978.

Nan Trienens Kaehler joined the Northwestern Board of Trustees in 1999 and serves on the Northwestern University Women’s Board. She and her husband, Wallace W. Kaehler, have supported the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine and The Garage. Kip Trienens supports areas of Northwestern such as Weinberg College, the McCormick School of Engineering and the Morton Schapiro Northwestern Academy for Chicago Public Schools.

As concern grows about climate change and its impact on the planet, scientists at Northwestern’s Paula M. Trienens Institute for Sustainability and Energy are asking and answering urgent questions. With support from the institute, Daniel E. Horton, an assistant professor of Earth and planetary sciences, provides research insights crucial for shaping environmental policy. In 2022 Horton and co-author Ryan Harp published a study documenting how rainfall events have increased in intensity across the contiguous U.S. Warmer air holds more moisture, so “when it rains now, it rains more,” Horton says. Using daily precipitation observations, the researchers found that precipitation over the past three decades was about 5% more intense on average compared with previous decades.

Horton, the principal investigator of Northwestern’s Climate Change Research Group, also has looked at the benefits and trade-offs of moving toward electric vehicles (EVs) in the U.S. With Trienens Institute funding, he co-authored a 2020 study showing that the air quality, public health and climate benefits would be significant, especially if EVs were charged with emission-free energy sources. “With this work, we hope to inform mitigation and adaptation policies and bring the predictive power of modern Earth system science to one of society’s most profound challenges,” Horton says.

Policymakers, the media and the science community are taking notice of Horton’s research. In 2023 he received the prestigious Faculty Early Career Development Award from the National Science Foundation.
A generous gift from Harry J. Seigle ’71 JD will strengthen Northwestern Pritzker School of Law’s immigration law clinic, which represents children, young adults and parents in immigration court proceedings. The gift will name the Seigle Clinic for Immigration Youth and Families and provide ongoing support for programming and operations as well as staff recruitment, retention and professional development. The immigration law clinic has long been part of the School’s Bluhm Legal Clinic, the Children and Family Justice Center at the Law School’s Bluhm Legal Clinic, and we are better for it. ” — Harry Seigle, second immigration attorney at the immigration clinic by interviewing clients, drafting pleadings and motions, preparing legal briefs, and representing clients at hearings before the U.S. Justice Department’s Chicago Immigration Court and various agencies within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

“Through Seigle’s gift, the clinic intends to increase the number of immigrants it represents, especially in states that fall within the jurisdiction of the Chicago Immigration Court. It also plans to advocate for immigration reform and to improve access to services that help immigrants become more self-sufficient while they wait for their cases to be adjudicated.”

“We are extremely grateful to Harry Seigle for this impactful gift endorsing the Seige Clinic for Immigrant Youth and Families,” says Hart Oosisky, dean of Northwestern’s Pritzker Law and the Myra and James Bradwell Professor of Law. “His generosity will make a critical difference in the Law School’s efforts to assist immigrants and provide our students with important learning and service opportunities.”

The Seigle Clinic for Immigration Youth and Families is directed by clinical professor of law Uzoamaka Emeka Nzelibe ’96, whose areas of expertise include asylum and other forms of humanitarian status; removal defense; and unaccompanied child migrants. The gift also will provide funding to hire a second immigration attorney to increase the clinic’s capacity for handling cases. Seigle made the gift in memory of his mother, Lora H. Seigle, who was born in 1936, a band of former Kellogg classmates sprang into action, led by Peter Schmitz ’96 MBA and his wife, Bromwyn Poole ’96 MBA. “For a long time, I have been trying to help those in need. So I decided to use my platform to steer resources toward ALS research so that others might one day experience brighter outcomes.”

“Esteban Bullrich ‘96 MBA has made a profound impression on the people he has met around the world, both during his time at Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management and throughout his career as an education advocate and respected political leader in Argentina, his home country. When describing Bullrich, friends note his dedication to public service, passionate drive for social justice and generosity of time and spirit to support those in need. So when Bullrich was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease, in 2021, a band of former Kellogg classmates sprang into action, led by Peter Schmitz ’96 MBA and his wife, Bromwyn Poole ’96 MBA. “For a long time, I have been trying to help those in need. So I decided to use my platform to steer resources toward ALS research so that others might one day experience brighter outcomes.”

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“He’s just a really great guy, and everybody says that about their friends, but I always knew he would dedicate his life to improving the lives of others,” says Schmitz, who, along with Poole, has maintained a close friendship with Bullrich over the past 29 years. “ALS is a progressive and fatal neurodegenerative disease with an average survival rate of three years. There are an estimated 350,000 cases of ALS worldwide, and the symptoms and progression of the disease can vary greatly by person. The degeneration of neurons leads to muscle weakness and impaired speech, swallowing and breathing. The disease of Northwestern results in paralysis and death.”

“This disease does not define me,” Bullrich announced in April 2021, when he was serving in the Argentine Senate. “I live a happy and wonderful life, and this challenge confronts me with the need to do more things and to do them better.”

After his diagnosis, Bullrich began to search for ALS medical experts and turned to the Les Turner ALS Center at Northwestern Medicine, which for more than 40 years has been accelerating leading-edge research while providing life-enhancing treatment to people living with ALS. Bullrich learned early on that, given the disease’s rapid progression, he was unlikely to bear witness to a cure — but that didn’t deter him from using his platform to improve access to services and immigration reform and to provide ongoing support for programming and operations as well as staff recruitment, retention and professional development. The immigration law clinic has long been part of the School’s Bluhm Legal Clinic, which assists those seeking humanitarian protection due to violence, persecution or torture in their countries of origin. The clinic also works to keep families together by representing parents facing deportation and separation from their U.S. citizen and noncitizen children. Law students play a vital role at the immigration clinic by interviewing clients, conducting investigations, drafting pleadings and motions, preparing legal briefs, and representing clients at hearings before the U.S. Justice Department’s Chicago Immigration Court and various agencies within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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The first thing to know about Michael Schill, says Carleton College president emeritus Steven Poskanzer, is that he has relentless energy.

“Every place he’s been, he has taken something that was good and made it measurably better, more prominent and more distinctive,” says Poskanzer, who has known Schill since their undergrad days at Princeton University. “My friends tell me that I am a workaholic, but Mike Schill makes me feel like a slug laggard.”

Schill’s prior appointments reflect this constant drive toward excellence. As president of the University of Oregon (UO), he set out to improve the four-year graduation rate by 10 percentage points within five years. UO did it in four. As dean of the UCLA School of Law, he nearly doubled alumni participation in annual giving. And when he was dean at the University of Chicago Law School, 97% of grads obtained full-time employment within 10 months of graduation.

That unfailing energy and laser-sharp focus on institutional improvement proved invaluable as Schill, Northwestern’s 17th president, helped the University address hazing allegations that stunned the community in late summer. Just 10 months into his presidency, Schill found himself facing one of the most significant and unexpected challenges of his career. And now, in addition to maintaining the University’s high academic standards, he has a clear goal: building Northwestern’s athletic department into a national model for integrity and student well-being.

Schill has a reputation for such turnarounds — and for making tough decisions that result in significant positive change. University of Wisconsin–Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin saw that when she served as Schill’s vice dean at UCLA Law.

“Mike takes ownership,” she says. “He doesn’t push hard or painful decisions onto others. As a leader, Mike is authentic, he’s high-integrity, and he’s not afraid to admit that he can learn from others. What happened at Northwestern this past [summer] has been tough all around, but I admire that Mike is a leader who isn’t afraid to say when he thinks..."
he’s made a mistake. Some folks double down and get defensive. Mike listens, he learns, and he’s willing to reassess when necessary. That isn’t easy to do in academia. “Mike is exactly the kind of principled leader who will take these issues incredibly seriously,” Mookin says. At the same time, “he also won’t let the whole university or the student experience be defined by this significant challenge.”

When Schill was introduced as Northwestern’s president on Sept. 12, 2022, it came as little surprise to Mnookin that his first order of business was a nine-month get-to-know-Northwestern listening tour. He has an incredible ability to listen, says Mookin, Schill’s longtime friend. “Mike has a way of making people feel like they are the most loyal people I’ve ever met. And there’s so much about him that is still mysterious. He was able to wildly break all previous fundraising records,” says Mnookin. “He built relationships with people who had not given the university a dime and convinced them to make their first gift—even in seven figures. And he did that by being authentic, clear, transparent and caring.”

Schill became dean of the University of Chicago Law School in 2010. During his five-year tenure, he enhanced research excellence, increased public interest opportunities for students who wanted to work with nonprofits and government agencies, and improved faculty hiring and retention. Up in Evanston, Northwestern president Henry Bienen took note. Schill had studied urban politics in a course co-taught by Bienen at Princeton, and Bienen had kept tabs on him ever since. They reconnected in Chicago. “I was always struck by the fact that Mike cares about institutions, about people and good work and excellence and fairness,” Bienen recalled in his introduction of Schill at inauguration. “Early on it was clear to me that Mike would somehow be president of a major academic institution if he wanted.”

That opportunity arrived in 2015, when Schill became president of the University of Oregon. But the opportunity did not come without challenges. He took the reins of an institution that had recently experienced a sexual violence case involving three student-athletes. UO also faced the prospect of reductions in state funding amid increased costs for public pensions and medical insurance. What’s more, Schill’s two predecessors had been forced out, and the institution had experienced stagnant research investment and a loss of faculty confidence. “The broader reputation of the institution was on the line, certainly in the academic world,” says Association of American Universities president Barbara Snyder.

When he started at UO, Schill became the sixth person to serve as president in seven years. “It was a revolving door,” says Snyder, who first met Schill during his time at the University of Chicago, via her involvement as an alum of the university’s law school. “Because of the crisis of leadership, Mike had to spend time in those early years earning people’s confidence, both inside and outside the institution. And the changes that he put in place made an enormous difference.”

Schill focused on academic excellence. He increased research funding by more than 60%, and the university hired more tenure-track and research faculty. Schill worked closely with Nike founder Phil Knight to secure support for the Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact, a $1 billion initiative to fast-track scientific discoveries and innovations. Schill also launched the Ballmer Institute for Children’s Behavioral Health at a new campus in Portland, Ore. “He was committed to doing the hard things,” says Snyder. “The experiences he had [at UO] prepared him well for the challenges at Northwestern. The ultimate compliment for any leader is [to answer the question], ‘Did the person make the place better?’... And it’s resoundingly ‘yes’ at Oregon.”

Schill’s strong suit, Mookin adds, is his ability to understand an institution’s strengths, find opportunities to build on them and then develop a few important projects that can really move that institution forward. He sees a university “in its best present and future light,” she says. “I have every confidence that he is going to take Northwestern’s many strengths and build them further.”

FORWARD MOMENTUM

“As I was learning about the unique nature of the University in preparation for my inauguration, I came to fully understand that at Northwestern we truly believe in both breadth and depth,” Schill said in his inaugural address. “We embrace the full range of knowledge and creativity. It’s that linkage that makes Northwestern so strong and distinctive.” He also acknowledged Northwestern’s interdisciplinary excellence. “Innovation happens at the intersection of disciplines—and Northwestern is like a city filled with those intersections,” he said, pledging to “create the conditions for even more intersections and more innovation.”

Schill then laid out several major priorities for his presidency. He pledged to make Northwestern a leader in the biosciences, a place that will “create new treatments, cures and health delivery systems.” He committed to research in decarbonization, renewable energy and sustainability, “because little else matters if we cannot ensure a future for our children.”

On his second day as Northwestern president, Mike Schill welcomed new students and their families at March Through the Arch in September 2022.

Mike Schill's portrait in the 1980 Nassau Herald. Princeton University’s senior yearbook.

Schill plans to continue that trajectory — both deepening and expanding the University’s impact in Evanston, Chicago and the world. And with an open mind and decades of university leadership experience under his belt, he’s ready to get started.

IN THE BEGINNING

Mike Schill and his sister, Margo, grew up in blue-collar Schenectady, N.Y. Their father, Simon, worked in a clothing factory, and their mother, Ruth, was a nurse. Neither of their parents went to college. But in one of his earliest memories, Schill recalls his father telling him he’d one day go to Harvard. Well, Harvard wait-listed Schill, but Princeton accepted him — and provided a generous scholarship. Still, going to Princeton was a bit of an adjustment.

“Princeton is a highly selective private school, and I really didn’t know that world,” he says. “It took a little bit for me to feel comfortable. But I think there’s something formative about the relatively modest circumstances of my upbringing."

“Having been a first-generation student at a university that isn’t terribly unlike Northwestern allows me to empathize with our first-generation students here,” Schill adds, “I understand some of the ‘fish out of water’ feeling. But I also know that what makes them perhaps not fit in initially is also something that’s going to give them strength.”

Schill studied public policy, graduated summa cum laude in 1980, took a year off to co-write a book (Revitalizing America’s Cities) with his thesis adviser and then earned his law degree from Yale Law School. “He loved the learning. He ate it up,” says Sarah Gercke, who met Schill in 1979 during their junior year at Princeton. “There’s so much about him that is still the same. He’s hilariously funny. He is one of the most loyal people I’ve ever met. And he’s candid in a remarkably helpful and not hurtful way, which is a bit of a gift.”

After a judicial clerkship, Schill joined the Wall Street law firm Fried Frank. But he disliked the unpredictability of responding to client needs. And he missed getting lost in research. “I like to go very deep into issues,” he says, “and clients aren’t going to pay for someone to learn everything they want to learn before giving an opinion.”

While working for Fried Frank, Schill taught a weekly class at Yale University on real estate transactions and unexpectedly discovered that students loved his teaching. A career in academia seemed like a natural fit. In 1987 he joined the faculty in law and business at the University of Pennsylvania, the start of a 36-year, coast-to-coast academic career that includes nearly 20 years as a dean or university president. Schill became an expert on housing policy, immigration, and race and poverty in U.S. cities. After Penn, he joined the faculty at New York University (NYU), where in 1998 he founded and led the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, a much-needed place for “thinking theoretically and academically but also practically and economically about housing policy in New York,” says Gercke, an adjunct professor of urban planning at NYU.

In 2004 Schill left NYU to become dean of UCLA Law. There, he increased the diversity of the student body and led a successful $100 million fundraising campaign. “He was able to wildly break all previous fundraising records,” says Mnookin. “He built relationships with people who had not given the university a dime and convinced them to make their first gift—even in seven figures. And he did that by being authentic, clear, transparent and caring.”

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FALL 2023

TOWARD GREATER EMINENCE
Northwestern Faculty Senate president Ceci Rogers appreciates that Schill is “making no small plans” as he begins his presidency. “His vision for Northwestern isn’t static,” says Rogers, a journalism professor and director of global journalism learning.

She also appreciates his openness to hearing and responding to faculty concerns regarding the reports of hazing in the football program — including following through on recommendations for a full assessment of the athletic department’s culture and a commitment to greater accountability measures.

“I have supported the message of institutional integrity that President Schill has sent with key personnel changes in Northwestern Athletics,” Rogers adds, “including the firing of former head football coach Pat Fitzgerald ’97, in spite of tremendous opposition.”

Elle Finkel ’97, who moderated the inauguration week panel discussion “Free Expression, Academic Freedom and Higher Education,” liked what he heard in Schill’s inaugural address. “I felt like, ‘Oh, captain, my captain!’” she said.

Finkel, a professor of psychology and department’s culture and a commitment to greater accountability measures.

“With diversity comes difference,” he added. That creates opportunity for dialogue and learning. And the University “is well equipped to create models for engagement across difference,” in that endeavor, Northwestern will prioritize free speech and academic freedom, said Schill, who plans to create an academic center at the Kellogg School of Management to teach students “how to engage with each other across difference” while also developing “data-driven research on what works and what doesn’t.”

Schill plans to better connect Northwestern’s Evanston and Chicago campuses as well — and to collaborate more regularly with the University of Chicago and other local institutions. “We will have the greatest ability to serve [our nation and our world] if we also focus on serving our own community … and partner [with] — rather than just compete with — our academic neighbors in Hyde Park,” he said.

He announced a program that all faculty, staff, students, alumni and fans can be proud of.

Beyond athletics, Schill’s goals also include prioritizing faculty and staff engagement from faculty, staff, alumni and students.

The review will be conducted with hearing and responding to faculty concerns regarding the reports of hazing in the football program — including following through on recommendations for a full assessment of the athletic department’s culture and a commitment to greater accountability measures.

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“As I was learning about the unique nature of the University in preparation for my inauguration, I came to fully understand that at Northwestern we truly believe in both breadth and depth. We embrace the full range of knowledge and creativity. It’s that linkage that makes Northwestern so strong and distinctive.”

To prize robust intellectual exchange, even if that gets controversial sometimes.”

And Schill doesn’t shy away from controversy. Early in 2023, political science professor Alvin Tillery and several colleagues sent the president a letter regarding their concerns about Florida’s ban on African American studies curricula.

Tillery didn’t really expect a response, but within three days, Schill invited him to his office to talk. Tillery wanted the University to “review its relationship with the College Board in light of its complicity with Florida’s censorship of African American studies,” Tillery says. “He didn’t agree with what I was asking to be done,” Tillery adds, “but he gave me a well-reasoned response.”

While they didn’t agree on a response to Florida’s ban, Schill asked Tillery to appear on his free expression panel.

“For me, that’s a real hallmark of leadership,” says Tillery, director of the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy. “It’s easy to find people who are going to blow smoke and tell you that they agree with you. But that’s debilitating for making good decisions. Mike wants to hear every viewpoint.”

With a little more than a year under his belt, Schill says leading Northwestern remains the challenge and honor of a lifetime. And with his trademark enthusiasm, Schill is ready to do the hard work of guiding the University to further excellence.

“I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t think I could make Northwestern better,” he says. “I’m not a caretaker president. … Everyone at the University is incredibly ambitious to grow, to achieve even more excellence, more eminence. My job is to lead that process and bring Northwestern into a new era of even greater impact.”

Steve Hargadon is editor in chief of Northwestern Magazine.

INCREASED SHARE COLLEGE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

GROWING UP, Mike Schill always wanted a dog, but his parents said no. When he became president at the University of Oregon, he decided it’s time. “I had this picture in my mind that the president should walk through the campus and have students come up and pet the dog.” But his staff vetoed the presidential pooch. His chaotic schedule and frequent travel, they reasoned, would not be fair to a pet.

Then the pandemic halted travel, and remote work meant Schill was often at home, alone in the presidential residence. Enter Max! Adopted through Raindog Rescue in Eugene, Ore., Max is a spaniel mix who came from a shelter in Texas. He’s become an instant celebrity at Northwestern, going for walks along the lake and occasionally accompanying Schill to on-campus events.

“It’s the popular one,” Schill admits. “Our students absolutely love him.”

Keep up with Max and Mike’s latest adventures on Instagram @northwesternpresident.

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monkey business

Doctoral candidate Tabor Whitney is collecting feces from endangered monkeys with the goal of creating new health metrics for conservation.

BY CAROLYN WILKE
Undisturbed Forest
Disturbed or Fragmented Forest

The team is studying the health of these endangered primates and will trek until they see them. Some days it takes hours romping through the rain forest’s underbrush to find the animals. But today, after an hour of hiking over level grassland, the team reaches a patch of trees where they spot five or so mantled howlers, shiny and black, hanging out in the branches. Then the researchers hunker down for a bit, eat some breakfast and wait for the monkeys to do their business.

The mantled howlers continue their morning routine. Eating is their primary waking activity. They munch on leaves, flowers or fruit and then settle down to nap. When they rouse a couple hours later, it’s go time for the scientists.

“The second they wake up is when they’re going to poop,” says Tabor Whitney ’22 MA, a fourth-year doctoral candidate who is studying biological anthropology at Northwestern. Whitney has been studying these monkeys since 2021, with Northwestern primatologist Katherine Amato.

The feces may contain clues about the monkeys’ physical condition and could aid Whitney in developing a “the scientists are lucky, the poop index welfare assessment,” a tool that provides metrics that conservationists can use to make decisions about the endangered creatures. The mantled howler monkeys in this region, which includes the Los Tuxtlas Biosphere Reserve in southeastern Mexico, have lost about 75% of their habitat since the 1960s, as people have converted forests to crop fields, pastures and quarries.

In the time that she’s been working in Los Tuxtlas (she has visited for several months each year since 2021), Whitney has witnessed changes to the monkeys’ habitat firsthand. She recalls walking through a patch of rainforest cover near an expanding rock quarry and seeing a new break in the forest: The quarry operation had downed trees, splitting a forest that had been connected the year prior. She knew human activity was affecting conservation. Whitney plans to use the data she collects from the mantled howler monkeys’ feces “to form conservation and management strategies for them.”

Back in the forest, as the monkeys in the trees above begin to stir, the researchers train their eyes on the primates’ posterior. When a monkey looks like it’s got a deposit to drop, Whitney or one of her research assistants gets ready to track the trajectory. If the scientists are lucky, the eruption sample is able to successfully land on a rock or leaf, leaving it uncontaminated by soil, which contains lots of other microbes. To retrieve the sample, the researchers scour the thick vegetation until they find the prize. Then they drop it into a vial of ethanol and log the emitter’s identity. (Researchers can also track primates based on patches of lighter fur and markings on their paws.) The samples are shipped back to a lab on the Evanston campus, where Whitney and her colleagues will investigate their microbiomes. (See “What’s a Microbiome?” on page 32.)

Whitney works with Amato, her adviser and an associate professor in Northwestern’s Department of Anthropology in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. Amato’s interest in primates and fieldwork stemmed from a second-grade lesson on primatologist Jane Goodall. “I never thought I would actually do [what Goodall did],” Amato says. “It seemed like such a far-off reality.” But during her undergraduate studies in biology at Dartmouth College, Amato studied abroad in Costa Rica, doing a 10-week field ecology boot camp where one of her projects compared the behavior of howler, spider, capuchin and squirrel monkeys. After college, she spent a year studying two species of howler monkeys in Mexico, observing their feeding behavior and examining their feces to compare the variety and amounts of seeds they spread.

In 2008, when Amato was beginning her doctoral program, research into the microbiome, including that of the gut, was gaining traction. Working with mice that were reared without any microbes, researchers had recently discovered that a transplant of gut microbes from a person who was overweight caused the mice to develop obesity. Likewise, microbes from people who were lean led to leaner mice. Amato started to think about how microbes could contribute to the biology and health of their hosts in the wild, too.

Scientists also were discovering key roles that gut microbes play in processing food and providing energy to their hosts. Amato wondered whether the gut’s microbial community could help wild primates get enough energy when food was scarce or when nutritional needs were high, such as during pregnancy. Amato investigated this question, studying black howler monkeys in Palenque National Park in southern Mexico and tracking how their microbiome shifted with seasonal changes in diet.

Like the mantled howler monkeys, black howlers will eat leaves when fruit is unavailable. “That’s a pretty big change,” Amato says. While fruit is loaded with sugar and easy to digest, leaves contain a lot of fiber — making them harder to digest — and may also contain toxins. Still, even when the monkeys had to swap fruit for leaves, they were able to maintain the same level of activity. Amato’s data suggested that the monkeys’ microbiome helped them get enough energy from leaves.

Amato wondered whether the monkeys’ microbiomes would help them weather changes in climate.
available foods when their habitats were degraded. To explore this question, Amato collected fecal samples from monkeys in different forest fragments. "And the answer was no. The howler monkeys had microbiomes that were very different in fragmented forests, and different in ways that suggested that microbes were producing less energy," she says. Monkeys living in smaller, fragmented forests also seemed to have more pathogenic microbes, suggesting a link between impoverished habitats and health risks. "These fragmented forest environments look like they may be causing the microbiome to be less resilient and less able to help hosts buffer themselves nutritionally," Whitney says.

Whitney is building on her adviser’s findings with her work on the mantled howler monkeys of Los Tuxtlas. On her most recent visit in fall 2022, Whitney and her team collected samples from about 100 individual monkeys from 10 different forest fragments to study health metrics. So far, the team has documented a dip in the diversity of the monkeys’ gut microbiomes as their habitats’ quality has declined. But it’s not yet clear if and how those changes are linked to poor health.

In addition to surveying the makeup of the monkeys’ gut microbiomes, Whitney is analyzing the fecal matter for other markers of health. One such marker, lipocalin-2, is associated with intestinal inflammation. Whitney’s team can monitor inflammation in the howler monkeys by analyzing samples from feces for this biomarker.

"And the answer was no: The howler monkeys had microbiomes that were very different in fragmented forests, and different in ways that suggested that microbes were producing less energy," says Patti Wolter, a primatologist at Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa, Mexico, and his colleagues reported an increase in the stress hormone cortisol among howler monkeys living in fragmented forests, compared to those in contiguous forests.

Whitney is looking forward to sharing the results of her work with communities in Veracruz, including the lakeside city of Catemaco, where she plans to return to Catemaco in January to connect with nongovernmental organizations, landowners and community members to discuss what she has found — but also to hear their observations about the monkeys’ behaviors and diet.

Whitney is also eager to get back into the forest. While her fieldwork is fun, it isn’t exactly a walk in the park. "Long days of tracking the howler monkeys can be grueling and sometimes fruitless. Snakes, bugs and mud are regular features of her trek," she says. "Getting pooped on by 100% is going to happen by the end of the project," she says. "But it’s so worth it."

Carolyn Wilke ’18 PhD is a Chicago-based freelance science writer and editor. Wilke studied environmental engineering at Northwestern, investigating the potential effects of nanoparticles on bacteria. She was in the first section of the University’s Skills and Careers in Science Writing course and, while earning her doctorate, reported on research as an American Association for the Advancement of Science Mass Media Fellow at The Sacramento Bee. Her work appears in The New York Times, National Geographic and Scientific American.
MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

The 2023 recipients of the Northwestern Alumni Medal, the Northwestern Alumni Association’s highest honor, are leaders in philanthropy, business and health care.

By Daniel P. Smith

Transforming Global Learning
Roberta Buffett Elliott ’54

Roberta “Bertie” Buffett Elliott calls her Northwestern undergraduate experience “life-changing.”

The Omaha, Neb., native credits the University’s broad liberal arts education with exercising her mind in invigorating new ways. A history major who was drawn to Northwestern’s sophistication and Midwestern locale, Elliott recalls courses in psychology, sociology and anthropology that enlightened her, stretching her understanding of people and society.

She remembers famed English professor Bergen Evans proclaiming, “Love doesn’t always turn out to be a good thing” — a startling comment that ignited Elliott’s critical thinking. And she discovered an interconnectedness between seemingly disparate subject areas that stimulated deeper knowledge and perspective.

“Northwestern was the university I chose, and I’m always glad about that because it expanded my world in a way that nothing else would have,” says Elliott, the daughter of former U.S. Rep. Howard Buffett and younger sister of business magnate Warren Buffett.

Elliott’s Northwestern experience laid the foundation for her wide-ranging civic and philanthropic interests in the arts, science, education, health and more — from spearheading the creation of a youth mental health center at the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula in Monterey, Calif., to driving the growth of the Carmel Bach Festival into a world-class, 15-day music celebration in Carmel, Calif.

“My life opened up intellectually so much at Northwestern,” says Elliott. She counts four grandchildren as fellow alumni, and two grandchildren are current students.

Over the last two decades, Elliott has provided similar mind-opening opportunities for others at Northwestern, where her longtime support of international programs has transformed global learning and research.

After serving as co-chair of her 50th reunion class gift committee in 2004, Elliott made a gift to bring internationally recognized professors to teach and study at Northwestern in the fields of international and comparative studies. In 2005 that nascent effort expanded into the creation of the Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies, which supported research, speakers, seminars and travel awards.

“International studies was an important piece for Northwestern to have because the world had changed a lot since I was in college in the 1950s,” Elliott says.

In 2015 Elliott amplified this work through a visionary $101 million gift to Northwestern that created the Roberta Buffett Institute for Global Affairs. Founded on the idea that critical challenges such as climate change, human rights violations and antibiotic resistance cannot be solved from a singular disciplinary or geographic perspective, the Buffett Institute bolsters opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue, transnational research, cultural exchange and global education. Elliott’s support has created 20 scholarships for international students at Northwestern through the Buffett Matching Challenge for International Student Scholarships.

“International studies was an important piece for Northwestern to have because the world had changed a lot since I was in college in the 1950s,” Elliott says.

Much as Northwestern opened her eyes to a broader world and inspired unexpected connections, Elliott hopes her philanthropy uplifts the lives of others.

“I would hope the effect my philanthropy might have on the world is that people learn a different way of thinking about our biggest problems … [and] that we continue to survive and prosper as the human race,” Elliott says.

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At every professional turn, Galvin embraced his alma mater’s culture as motivation. “Northwestern’s emphasis on collegiality and sharing ideas ... was always an inspiration,” he says.

Galvin brought his industrious spirit to Northwestern’s Board of Trustees as a young alumni trustee from 1980 to 1982 and was re-elected to the board in 1988.

Galvin served as a member and co-chair of the steering committee for We Will, The Campaign for Northwestern. The effort raised $6.1 billion to strengthen the University’s trajectory, funding scholarships and fellowships to attract promising students, endowing professorships to attract top faculty, and supporting the creation of new physical spaces to expand the research enterprise and enhance the student experience.

The Galvin family contributed more than $16 million through the “We Will” Campaign, including a $10 million gift to the Kellogg School of Management, on whose Global Advisory Board Galvin has served since 2013. In recognition of his family’s generosity, an area in Kellogg’s state-of-the-art Global Hub was named the Galvin Family Design Wing and Conference Center. The space features design studios and creative space for students to develop, test and launch new businesses.

To further address increasing student interest in entrepreneurship, Galvin also contributed to NUSeed, a $4 million venture capital fund to help launch student-founded ventures. He also guided fundraising efforts for The Garage, Northwestern’s innovation and entrepreneurship lab for students, which has fueled more than 1,000 startups and projects since 2015.

“If you can’t offer students the opportunity to create a business, to innovate, to create intellectual property, they won’t come to your school,” Galvin says. “If we want the University to survive and prosper, it has to engage in continuous renewal, adapting to different technologies and new teaching methodologies, and making sure it provides a modern, innovative educational experience.”

After all that Galvin has helped Northwestern build, he’s most excited for what comes next. “I'm hoping there are lots of surprises to come that take advantage of the creativity and the environment at Northwestern,” he says.

Promoting Health Equity

Charles S. Modlin Jr. ’83, ’87 MD

When Charles Modlin graduated from Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine, his father issued a stern edict. “He told me explicitly, 'It's your responsibility now to use this medical education ... to benefit society,’” Modlin says.

An accomplished clinical urologist and kidney transplant surgeon, Modlin embraced his father’s directive and has emerged as a national leader in efforts to reduce health disparities in men and communities of color.

Modlin, who grew up in New Castle, Ind., first learned about serving the community, “says Modlin, who majored in chemistry as an undergraduate before enrolling in medical school. “It's a calling inspired by his father's charge but also by the responsibilities he feels as a double Northwestern alum. "Northwestern has continued to push me to excel above and beyond, to be innovative and creative in how I can best serve the community," says Modlin, who majored in chemistry as an undergraduate before enrolling in medical school. "The inaugural recipient of Feinberg's Distinguished Humanitarianism in Medicine Award in 2009, Modlin initiated the Class of 1987 Feinberg School of Medicine endowed scholarship campaign to provide tuition support for Northwestern medical students. He also served on Feinberg's alumni board for three terms and has returned to campus numerous times to share his story with undergraduates and medical students.

Dedicated to mentoring and guiding future generations, Modlin also wrote It isn’t Difficult to Do It if You Know How to Do It, which offers career advice for high school and college students.

“Northwestern opened my thinking tremendously and made me realize I can make a huge difference not only in the lives of people in my local community but globally as well,” Modlin says.

Daniel P. Smith is a Chicago-based freelance writer.

The recipients of the 2023 Northwestern Alumni Medal will share how the University shaped their lives and careers at the President's Alumni Panel: My Northwestern Direction on Oct. 6. Visit alumni.northwestern.edu/medal to learn more.
#CATSGiveBack is Northwestern’s celebration of GivingTuesday, a global day of philanthropy following the Thanksgiving holiday.

Last year, nearly 3,400 donors came together to support more than 420 different areas across the University, including schools, student groups, and scholarships. This GivingTuesday, celebrate giving back and make an impact on today’s students.

Learn more at giving.northwestern.edu/CATSGiveBack.

Mark Your Calendar!
#CATSGiveBack is Tuesday, November 28.

Members of the 1977 Mee-Ow Show cast pose in front of the marquee at Evanston’s Varsity Theater. Mee-Ow alumni plan to celebrate the show’s 50th anniversary with a series of reunion events in spring 2024. A retrospective book is also forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. Read more about the origins of Mee-Ow at alummag.nu/Mee-Ow.
Ana Gasteyer in the Peggy Dow Helmerich Auditorium at Northwestern’s Annie May Swift Hall

**Five Questions with Ana Gasteyer ‘89**

The star of stage and screen and former SNL cast member shares her love for The Mee-Ow Show and the dream role she’s chasing next.

1. **Can you share a highlight from your time as a student?**
   
   When I discovered The Mee-Ow Show, I realized I’d found my people. It felt comfortable to me as a performer. I loved improvisation, and I discovered sketch writing. I made my closest girlfriend, who’s a big television writer now, and went on to write with her for years thereafter. I found people who thought and acted like I did in a really great way.

2. **Your daughter is a student in the School of Communication. How has your impression of Northwestern changed since you were a student?**
   
   There are some amazing bookends and parallels. I was a student during theater professor Rives Collins’ first year teaching, and my daughter has taken a ton of theater for young audiences classes with him. Theater professor of instruction David Catlin ’88 was a peer of mine. Northwestern is unique in that the curricular life and the extracurricular life are equally balanced. Speaking as a performer, my experience here of making and doing is unlike most of the experiences of my friends who did not go to Northwestern. And what I discovered as a parent is that it’s even more structured and organized today. I’ve been really impressed.

3. **What do you wish you’d known before entering the entertainment industry?**
   
   When you’re in college, the one thing you cannot ever be prepared for is the freelance nature of the arts. It’s hard to visualize what that really means in terms of how much time you’re on the road, how often you’re going to have to pick up and take the covered wagon with you again, how many bar mitzvahs, weddings, birthdays and funerals you’re going to miss because you’re at the beck and call of a big production that doesn’t really have time for sensible hours.

4. **Do you have any dream roles or projects?**
   
   I’ve done a movie, Wine Country, with my Saturday Night Live girlfriends — Amy Poehler, Maya Rudolph, Rachel Dratch, Tina Fey, Emily Spivey and Paula Pell. I’d love to do more of that and help steer the vision of something that’s on the silly side. I would love to originate a big Broadway role once my son is out of high school. That’s my fantasy — get him off to college and go back to Broadway.

5. **What keeps you motivated?**
   
   When I began my career, I was fueled by terror, fear of failure and true worry that I was somehow not going to cut through and do what I wanted to do for a living. No matter what, there’s a lot of attrition in the performing arts. So my drive was about being legitimized as a performer and a writer. My drive now is finding joy in what I do. I like what I do. I like working hard. I have a good work ethic, but I’m increasingly wanting to simply experience things for the sake of joy and to create joy in the world.

Also, you’re often in the midst of one project and thinking about the one that’s coming, which can seem like a curse, but actually I see it as a blessing.

Read more at alumni.nwu.edu/Gasteyer.

**Songs of Peace**

“When people in conflict come together, open their hearts and listen to music in each other’s languages and cultures, it brings people closer,” says Racheli Galay.

Galay ’07 DMA is a founding member of Quartetoukan, a Jewish-Arab quartet whose music reflects the multicultural, multilingual society in Israel. A classically trained cellist who specializes in Jewish music, Galay has toured Israel, Germany and Spain with Quartetoukan since 2012, performing songs in Arabic, Hebrew, English and Yiddish that promote harmony and peace. Most recently she performed in Morocco as part of the 2022 International Festival of Andalusian Music. “We were Muslims and Jewish people playing together,” says Galay. “It was heartwarming.”

Quartetoukan also conducts music workshops for students throughout Israel, with the goal of bridging the gap between cultures. Jewish and Arab classes are brought together and then split into small mixed groups and instructed to teach one another simple songs from their respective cultures in their native languages. Then, they come up with an original bilingual song to perform together. “Music can solve so much,” says Galay, who is head of the music department at the Great Washington Academic College of Education in Israel, a position she attributes in no small part to her Bienen School of Music education. She also teaches cello pedagogy at the Jerusalem School of Music education. She also teaches cello pedagogy at the Jerusalem School of Music education.

“Songs of Peace” artwork by Nancy Nupuf Margolis ’57 is part of Embracing Our Differences Michigan. Community activist Nancy Nupuf Margolis ’57 is the president and executive director. Each year, youth and adults worldwide submit original art reflecting the theme “enriching our lives through diversity.” Select artworks are then enlarged to billboard size and displayed at parks in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, Mich. “School administrators are incorporating Embracing Our Differences into their curriculum,” Margolis says.
The Ocean Above Me
by Kevin Sites

One of the first “backpack journalists,” Kevin Sites’ ‘89 MS has covered conflict zones around the world. These experiences inform his debut novel, The Ocean Above Me, which follows a former war correspondent Lukas Landon’s fight for survival after the shrimp boat he’s reporting on goes down in a storm. Alone in darkness at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, Landon finds a pocket of air within the shipwreck and learns on the survival skills he learned as a war journalist. At the same time, he must confront his past mistakes. While not autobiographical, the book draws on Sites’ time as a war reporter and the moral dilemmas he faced.

Sites, who recently returned to the U.S. after a decade of teaching at the University of Hong Kong’s Journalism and Media Studies Centre, says literature has the power to do what news reporting often can’t in this age of polarization: “I want to keep reaching people with the issues that are important to us today, but at the same time, I’d like to reach a larger audience that doesn’t come with preconceived notions. Literature is a way to do that.”

An All-American Road Trip
Charlie Oh’s new play explores the limitations of memory and the lure of nostalgia.

In 2018 Charlie Oh ‘16 earned a lead role in the national tour of Bartlett Sher’s The King and I, but just two years after moving to New York City to begin his acting career, “Touring with performers I’d looked up to since childhood was amazing,” Oh says. “But I saw that they had to build careers within the narrow window of Asian American theater.”

He’s right. In the past, American Theatre magazine reports, “productions that explored Asian themes and settings … were created solely by white composers and playwrights.” And the Asian American Performers Action Coalition reports that in the 2018–19 season in New York City, Asian American actors were cast in just 6.3% of all available roles.

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Anthropology doctoral candidate Tabor Whitney ’22 MA makes monkey business her business. Learn how her research uses feces from endangered monkeys to support conservation efforts. See page 28.

Often when you think of venture capital investing, you think of endowments and pension funds investing in hard-to-access opportunities. Alumni Ventures is disrupting the venture capital industry by offering a path for accredited investors to own an actively managed, diversified venture portfolio that invests alongside well-known VC firms. This asset class has outperformed the S&P over many periods. With Purple Arch Ventures, the idea is simple—by investing together with other Northwestern alumni, we all can do better.

Purple Arch Ventures is the Alumni Ventures VC fund for Northwestern alumni and friends of the community. We are now actively raising this year’s fund.

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capital raised
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investors
#1 MOST ACTIVE VC FIRM IN THE US
2022
PITCHBOOK
MOST INNOVATIVE COMPANIES
2022
FAST COMPANY

Learn More
The suspected population decline among Mexican mantled howler monkeys over the course of 30 years, largely due to habitat loss and forest fragmentation. By studying the primates' feces, Northwestern anthropology doctoral candidate Tabor Whitney '22 MA is developing a health assessment tool to help protect the endangered Mexican subspecies. Read more on page 28.