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*"I'll be honest: I limped my way across the finish line at my Northwestern graduation." p. 7*

# Northwestern

SPRING 2022

A detailed oil painting of a middle-aged man with grey hair and a beard, smiling slightly. He is wearing a blue graduation gown over a light blue shirt and a purple patterned tie. The background features a dark, ornate archway with the word "Northwestern" inscribed on it, and a building with spires in the distance under a warm, golden light.

## MORTY



**One for the Trophy Case**

The Northwestern field hockey team won its first NCAA championship in program history, shutting out Liberty University 2-0 in late November. Head coach Tracey Fuchs and her squad became the ninth Northwestern team overall to bring home a national championship. Maddie Zimmer, the 2021 NCAA Tournament MVP, sealed the win with a third-quarter buzzer-beater. "Couldn't have done it without my teammates," says the sophomore midfielder. "I trust every single teammate with my life, honestly. As much as individual awards are really exciting, I'm so happy for this team." (Find out what inspires Coach Fuchs. See "Field of Dreams," page 8.)





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Julius Lucks and his team created a device that can assess water safety and quality with just a single drop.

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*By Alan K. Cabbage*



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← “I went into plastic surgery to make a big impact on people’s quality of life. We give patients reassurance that ... they’re going to be in good hands.”

— Sumanas Jordan '17 GME, assistant professor of plastic surgery, left, with patient Vyctoria Peek

JORDAN AND PEEK: ZOE RAIN



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Talk Back

WINTER ISSUE

I am always grateful to the Northwestern alumni office members who publish the wonderful magazine Northwestern and send it to us even though we are in foreign countries. I am very pleased to read all the news and the updated information as well as the president's address about the remarkable progress and innovation throughout the campus. Poong Yoon '68 MS, '71 PhD Gyeonggi-do, South Korea

MUSIC MEMORIES

I'm with Catherine Scholl '86 ["Our Beautiful Campus," Sound Off, Voices, page 8, winter 2022]. I loved the old Music Administration Building! I'd trek down from the Phi Gam house, sometimes late at night, just to spend an hour or two playing piano to my heart's content down in the basement. Then, up in the big rehearsal hall, under the baton of the great John Paynter '50, '51 MMus, it was a thrill adding my trombone to the sound of the NU band or orchestra. As Scholl said, it's etched in my memory and heart forever. Richard Allen '61 Los Angeles

FOSSIL CANYON

While I applaud your positive coverage on Kevin Lynch and the Fossil Canyon game in the winter issue ["Can You Dig It?" Innovation, page 18], there is an oversight that may have hit the trifecta of cultural, gender and institutional insensitivities. Yuko Sugiyama Lynch '92 MBA, an active Kellogg School

of Management alumna and co-creator of the game, is merely listed as wife. Although the omissions may simply be the product of sloppy reporting or editing, it is sad to see an august institution (hopefully) unwittingly perpetuate outdated tropes. Lloyd Cheu '92 MBA New York City

REMEMBERING A WNUR DJ

In your winter edition you have a picture on page 15 ["Turn Up the Radio," Cat Tales] with the caption, "A WNUR DJ in 1969." That's Amos C. Brown III '72, who was a vital part of WNUR and the Northwestern student government from 1968 to 1972.

I worked at WNUR for three years with Amos and many other great students at that time of political unrest on campus. Amos had at least one radio show every semester of his Northwestern career and served on the WNUR leadership team continually during that time.

After graduation, Amos established a strong radio presence in Indianapolis, especially in the broadcasting and discussion of civil rights policies, city government and other topics especially of interest to the Black community.

Amos died suddenly in November 2015 while visiting his parents in Chicago. He was a great friend and a fine radio journalist. Patrice Pavka Fischer '72 Palm Harbor, Fla.

SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDBACK



A New Game Plan  
As a Native person, I can personally witness the celebration of Jason Wright's leadership along with his NFL franchise's name change and the impact that it is having in the Indigenous population. Kchimigwetch ("big thank you" in my language). — Roger Williams in

Love watching all my teammates continue to compete and lead off of the field. #GoCats — Torri Stuckey '04 in

The Other Side of the Strong Black Woman  
Thank you for continuing to bring awareness. It will help others understand the issue, including the many Black women who agree and yet can't find the space or figure out how to not wear the cape. — Tiphany Pugh '99 in

I Do ... Thanks to NU  
Editor's Note: For Valentine's Day we shared a few Northwestern love stories. See alummag.nu/love.

My husband and I met freshman year living in the same dorm! He proposed on the Lakefill, we got married at Alice Millar Chapel. Our wedding bands have "Go 'Cats!" engraved. — @mommamackmerk6

While it was a great education, meeting my wife Camille was probably the best return from my tuition! Go Valentine Cats! — Jim Lamoureux '87 in

Stories from the Black House  
Editor's Note: Archivist Charla Wilson discussed the artwork curated for the newly renovated Black House. See alummag.nu/blackhousestories.

Black House is an amazing accomplishment. Congratulations to the great work done by MaryAnn Marsh '85 and the NUBAA Board of Directors. — Kaye Chavis in

Voices

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The U.S. Needs to Invest in Research Now

By Benjamin F. Jones

The advance of science and technology has brought remarkable gains over the last two centuries. In 1870, U.S. per capita income averaged just 6% of what it is today. Most people were farmers and, limited by rudimentary tools and know-how, could produce very little output per hour. In the 1880s, life expectancy was just 48. Diseases like typhoid and cholera were common, and antibiotics did not exist. But a steady series of advances has

slowly — and dramatically — changed this picture.

Today's U.S. workers, with their advanced tools and know-how, are extremely productive. For example, a single combine harvester on a farm in Illinois recently set a world record by harvesting 3.5 million pounds of corn in one day. On the health side, life expectancy is decades longer, and recent breakthroughs in mRNA-based vaccines, applied to COVID-19, are just the latest in a series of scientific and technological advances that have improved our lives.

People broadly understand that science and innovation are important. At the same time, there is substantial public skepticism about the value of investments in the scientific and innovative enterprise. The esoteric nature of science can make such efforts hard for the public to comprehend. And research itself, as a step into the unknown, inevitably produces many failures, which can breed more skepticism.

Today the U.S. devotes a very small

share — less than 3% — of its total gross domestic product every year to research and development (R&D). Federally funded R&D as a share of the U.S. economy is half its level from the 1980s and approaching its lowest level in the last 70 years. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the U.S. has also been experiencing slower economic growth.

But how do we measure the importance of research and the return on R&D investment? I've been working with colleagues to answer these questions. In one study, former Northwestern postdoctoral fellow Mohammad Ahmadpoor and I investigated the link between private sector inventions and prior scientific research. After studying tens of millions of scientific papers, we found that the majority of such articles produced roots of knowledge for future inventions. Moreover, the inventions with the highest value are the ones most closely related to prior scientific advances.

And the linkages from science to the market are often indirect. Take Uber, for example, which relies on GPS satellites to track our locations. The GPS system works by comparing extremely accurate time signals from the satellites' atomic clocks. But because satellites move at high speed and experience less gravity, these clocks experience time differently than we do on Earth — which means they must be adjusted according to Einstein's theory of relativity. A mobile app that appears to be a revolutionary business idea, in reality, depends deeply on essential foundations of science.

R&D is an incredibly high-return machine that pays for itself many times over. But because the benefits are often indirect, the researchers and funders do not often get much compensation — as Einstein's estate receives no Uber stock.

It is therefore up to the public at large to support science and R&D, just as the public benefits from it. The U.S. could double its investments in R&D and reap enormous returns, producing higher standards of living, better wages and longer, healthier lives. Asking Congress to devote more resources to science should be among our highest priorities.

Benjamin F. Jones is the Gordon and Llura Gund Family Professor of Entrepreneurship and professor of strategy at the Kellogg School of Management.



SHANE COLLINS

↑ Benjamin F. Jones



SOUND OFF

# Hard Choices

How do you make a tough decision?

**Bradley Akubuiro '11, partner at Bully Pulpit Interactive**



“Teddy Roosevelt once said, ‘In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing and the worst thing you can do is nothing.’ So, first I commit to deciding and I accept upfront that some people will not like my decision. Instead of searching for a perfect solution, I look at my alternatives and consider the worst-case scenario for each. If the worst case is not something I can live with, I rule that option out. Then I choose the best of the remaining options. Finally — and this part is key — I embrace the decision, and I don’t look back.”

**Lifang Hou, director of the Center for Global Oncology, chief of cancer epidemiology and prevention, and professor of preventive medicine and pediatrics at Feinberg School of Medicine**



“In my field, deciding where to focus my efforts is difficult. So many factors contribute to cancer development, and there is still so much to discover. However, this also presents a strength: I know that if my team and I are using our best scientific methodology, researching *any* of these factors will be fruitful. The key is to continue collaborating and sharing our findings widely. This can lead to surprising connections — and even better cancer prevention and treatment.”

**Tilden Katz '95 JD, adjunct professor at the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and vice president of strategic communications and issues management at Smithbucklin**



“When I faced a tough career decision about whether to keep practicing law at a big firm, I had to face who I really was (unhappy, mediocre and still young) rather than how I *wanted* to see myself (someone starting a long, distinguished legal career). My decision to quit law led to a satisfying career in crisis communications, a field where I can put my advocacy skills to better use. And it’s much more genuine to who I am.”

**H. David Smith, distinguished senior lecturer in psychology at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences**



“I try to minimize the influence of factors that could lead to bias. One approach is to simply consider the reasons why I might be wrong. If I were a juror, I might purposely focus on the evidence that goes against my evolving point of view. If I were leading a team, I might consult with trusted advisers who are willing to disagree with me. This ‘consider the opposite’ strategy helps direct my attention to factors that I may have disregarded at first.”

**Charlotte Oxnam, McCormick School of Engineering junior**



“I go with my gut. When I founded my startup, Cue the Curves, an online shopping platform for plus-size women, I learned that when people tell you what they want, it’s not always what they *actually* want. You have to read between the lines. There are still going to be unknowns, but I have to trust that I can roll with the punches.”

SOCIAL FEEDS

It’s official: Early decision admission letters are here! Wildcat alums shared their joy with the incoming class of 2026.



“My husband and I are Wildcat alumni, class of 1990. We have another Wildcat in the house. My daughter accepted early decision, class of 2026! So proud! Go U, NU!”

Lainna Shaw Callentine '90 [in](#)

“I remember getting that big packet in the mail 20 years ago. Still one of the happiest days of my life. NU is a special place ♡!”

Dun Wang '03 [in](#)

“Congratulations! My freshman year was 40 years ago, and it still brightly resonates. You have such wonderful experiences ahead of you. Savor every minute.”

Steven Hartstein '85 [in](#)

TAYLOR DOYLE '24



MY NORTHWESTERN DIRECTION

# An Uncommon Recipe for Success

I’ll be honest: I limped my way across the finish line at my Northwestern graduation. I remember baleful storm clouds creeping across the Evanston skyline on that June afternoon as Wynton Marsalis '09 H rushed through his Commencement speech. And while it felt good to finally finish this undergraduate experiment in a harried, hurried manner, I had not achieved proficiency in any field of knowledge. I had cut bait on my history degree and done the absolute minimum to eke out a diploma. During my (super) senior year, I spent my weekends at Evanston restaurants to learn how to cook. Yes, despite a monstrous pile of student debt and time invested, I wanted to become a chef.

This is a particularly stinging failure of the Asian American narrative. Our parents had not immigrated here to work a strenuous blue-collar job only for their children to return to the very same trade. We were supposed to turn the narrative around, become a respected professional — a doctor, a lawyer, whatever. Just, for the love of God, don’t let me catch you in front of a stove. But what can I say? It was an irrational calling of an unconventional nature. I leapt in with both feet. Of course, this had to be hidden from my mom, a single mother. You can imagine the heartbreak it would have caused. So I got support from my most important resource at Northwestern — my friends. There were many times when I threatened to repeat a habit

**Eric Huang '09**

Eric Huang runs Pecking House, a chili-fried chicken restaurant in New York City.

of giving up on myself. I didn’t excel in high school, so I cut class. I barely graduated as a result. I excelled at the cello, but I gave up when it got hard. I was expelled from The Juilliard School. I had no idea what I was doing at a university like Northwestern, and the freedom to make my own choices was damning. The school threatened expulsion. *But not this time*, I told myself. I liked it here too much. I was finally surrounded by people with whom I had mutual respect and genuine camaraderie — good people who wouldn’t let me quit. These friends dragged me to the library, proofread my papers and banged noisily on my door when I didn’t want to go to class. And when I experimented with buttered noodles and grilled pork tenderloins for my friends, they encouraged me to keep at it, despite me barely knowing how to make a vinaigrette. I didn’t end up using my history degree much. But I did finish the damn thing. And honing the determination to reach a summit no matter the multitude of disadvantages and obstacles in my way would serve me well. I moved back to New York City and began training at Michelin-starred restaurants. Years later I became a sous chef at Eleven Madison Park, voted the world’s best restaurant in 2017. This was a dream come true. And so my friends saved me. It wasn’t pretty, but we got there, and at Commencement the dissonance of the cheerful trumpet music juxtaposed against an ominous Midwestern rainstorm seemed appropriate in retrospect. No achievement is without its hardship or fear. And no achievement is truly the result of a single person’s efforts. There would be many struggles ahead that I only overcame due to stalwart friendship. It takes a village — one filled with compassion and trust. And Northwestern gave me a village for the first time in my life.

“Our parents had not immigrated here to work a strenuous blue-collar job only for their children to return to the very same trade. ... But what can I say?”



WHAT INSPIRES ME

Field of Dreams

On the eve of Title IX’s 50th anniversary, a championship-winning field hockey coach celebrates the successes of her women student-athletes, both on and off the pitch.

Tracey Fuchs, field hockey head coach

“My players inspire me the most. These young women come in as 17- and 18-year-olds and leave as leaders with a degree from Northwestern. I’m inspired by their growth and leadership, and it’s amazing how they can balance such a tough schedule of academics and athletics and still be so successful.

“As coaches, we spend the most time with these students of anybody on or off campus. We really get to know them at a different level, and for me to share in their championship and be able to lead them to victory was probably one of the

proudest moments of my coaching career. “And we want to pursue another one. Defending a championship is the hardest thing to do in any sport, but we have a great team coming back. We’re really looking forward to pursuing another title for Northwestern. This University brings out the best both in athletics and academics. I couldn’t be in a better place.”

*Tracey Fuchs won her third field hockey national championship — and her first as a head coach — when Northwestern toppled Liberty University in the NCAA National Championship in late November. A 2014 USA Field Hockey Hall of Fame inductee and arguably the greatest player*



↑ Tracey Fuchs hoists the NCAA National Championship trophy in November 2021.

*in U.S. field hockey history, Fuchs has helped the Wildcats achieve a winning record in 12 of her 13 seasons as head coach at Northwestern while also leading the team to two Big Ten titles.*

HANNAH-JONES: MONICA SCHIPPER/GETTY IMAGES; PATTERSON: ROB WILDEBOER/WBEZ; DUCKWORTH: U.S. SENATE PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO; PARKER JR.: JIM VONDRUSKA/GETTY IMAGES; FUCHS: RYAN KUTTLER/NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

HEARD ON CAMPUS

Safety and Justice

To commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Nikole Hannah-Jones reminded her audience that we have not yet achieved social and racial justice. Three other guest speakers discussed what it’ll take to keep communities of color safe — and help us all thrive.

“Most Americans have no idea how radical [King] was. He called racism, militarism and capitalism the three evils of the U.S., and he was not actually looking for a colorblind society. He wanted a society that was going to ... address anti-Blackness.” **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and creator of *The 1619 Project*, at the Martin Luther King Jr. Day keynote conversation

“[The Office of Firearm Violence Prevention] will make sure that we are a listening body. We will listen to community members and outreach professionals. [Street outreach organizations are] anchoring institutions for neighborhood safety and well-being.” **Chris Patterson**, assistant secretary for violence prevention at the Illinois Department of Human Services, at the Northwestern Neighborhood & Network Initiative’s symposium on street outreach

“Every person in this country has the right to breathe safe air, drink clean water and live on uncontaminated land. ... Environmental justice is social justice. ... For decades, communities of color and low-income communities ... have been given a [disproportionate amount] of the pollution.” **U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth** at the inaugural Buffett Fireside Chat

“For 66 years, we have suffered pain for [Emmett Till’s] loss. [But] we are not defeated. ... We can carry on and let America know the truth. ... Through his death we see how far we’ve come and how much work we still have to do.” **Rev. Wheeler Parker Jr.**, Till’s cousin, at a Northwestern-hosted press conference after the FBI closed its investigation into the 1955 murder of Till without filing charges



ALEX NABAUM

News

Students shape Block Museum collection p. 13

Kombucha with a kick p. 16

Reversing spinal cord injuries p. 14

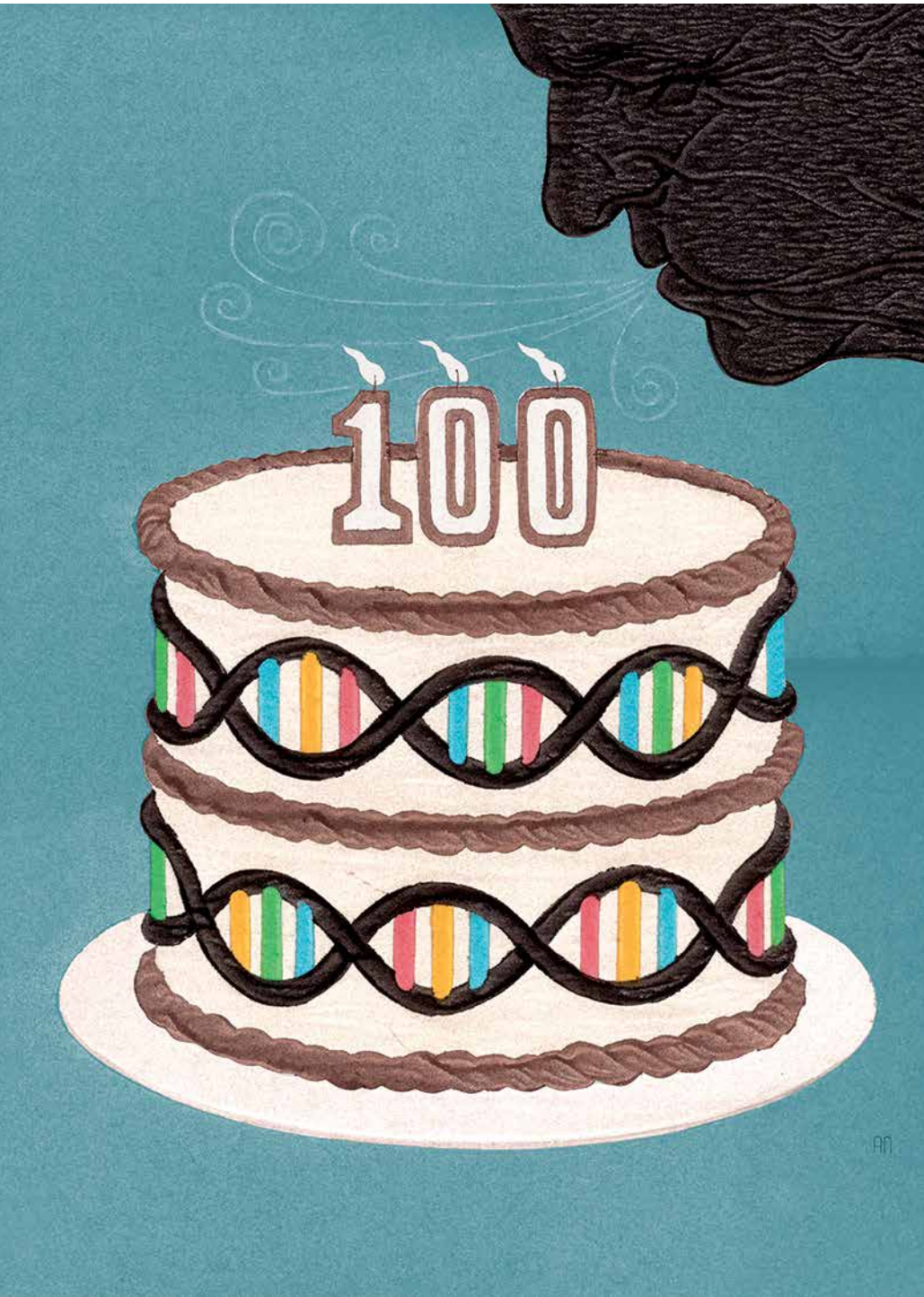


HEALTH & SCIENCE

A New Longevity Institute

Researchers seek to understand aging.

Many of us like to say we’re “young at heart.” But no matter how old you feel, your body’s true age has nothing to do with your birthday. In the not-too-distant future, you’ll be able to check into the Human Longevity Laboratory to find out how old you really are, physiologically speaking. At the lab, clinicians will check a litany of body systems, as well as your neurological and orthopedic health. And if the diagnosis is less than optimal, you’ll be prescribed an intervention to stave off further decline or — better yet — restore your vitality.







↑ Douglas Vaughan, director of the Potocsnak Longevity Institute

It may sound like sci-fi, but it's actually the mission of the new Potocsnak Longevity Institute, which recently launched at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

The Human Longevity Laboratory is just one part of the ambitious, multicenter institute, whose goal is to build on Northwestern's ongoing research in the rapidly advancing science of aging.

"The biological processes that drive aging may be malleable," says Douglas

Vaughan, director of the institute and chair of the Department of Medicine at Feinberg. "We think we can slow that process down, delay it, even theoretically reverse it. The curtain is being pulled back on what drives aging. We want to contribute to that larger discovery process."

Funded by a gift from Chicago industrialist John Potocsnak and his family, the institute aims to extend what Vaughan calls the human "healthspan." Scientists and clinicians will address the period of life when people are at the greatest risk for aging-related comorbidities — arthritis, dementia, heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, hypertension and frailty.

"We want to make it possible to live healthily for a longer period of time, not just live longer," says Vaughan, who is also the Irving S.

Cutter Professor of Medicine. "Aging is the most important risk factor for every disease we care for in adult medicine. If we can push that process back, we can push back the onset of disease."

The institute builds on the decades of work by Vaughan and scientists across the University, unifying programs that study populations who seem resistant to some of the negative consequences of aging. These include certain members of an Amish community in Berne, Ind., who carry a unique genetic mutation that promotes longevity, and a group of cognitively young octogenarians called SuperAgers. Other projects will continue to study HIV's impact on aging and capitalize on Northwestern's expertise in nanoscience, bioengineering and chemistry by investigating anti-aging approaches such as new drugs and therapeutic devices.

"At the Human Longevity Laboratory, we will design clinical trials to study important aspects of aging in order to identify ways to extend the healthspan and delay or prevent harmful aging processes," says Frank Palella '83, '92 GME, associate director of the institute and the Potocsnak Family C.S.C. Professor. "We plan to ascertain those factors that determine not just how long people live but how well they live."



#### INDIGENOUS CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Peru

"Even though Indigenous peoples bear the least responsibility for climate change, they are the most adversely affected because their livelihoods are based upon ecological balance and ecosystem integrity," says Reynaldo Morales, who teaches at the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications. A Quechuan Peruvian native, Morales served as a participating member of the Local Communities and Indigenous People's Platform at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland. The working group negotiated policy recommendations, sharing climate solutions and Indigenous traditional knowledge systems. A faculty fellow at the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, Morales is developing a documentary series about Indigenous solutions to meet the U.N.'s sustainable development goals.

TICKER ILLUSTRATIONS: LESLIE-ANNE MOCK; PERU: DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES

#### JOINING FORCES

## Global Collaborations

Faculty partnerships lead to international insights.



#### THE TOLL OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Democratic Republic of Congo

Jennifer Dunn, an associate professor of chemical and biological engineering, is working with Congolese anthropologist Gabriel Bamana to study the community effects of mining cobalt — an ingredient in rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. They found cobalt mining was associated with increases in violence, food and water insecurity, and physical and mental health challenges. "Together we can form a whole picture of the consequences of resource extraction," says study co-author Sera Young, associate professor of anthropology.

#### A MILKY WAY MYSTERY

South Africa

In the 1980s Farhad Yusef-Zadeh discovered mysterious strands in the Milky Way, some of which stretched 150 light years long, arranged like strings on a harp. Their origin is an unsolved mystery. But a new image has exposed 10 times more filaments than previously discovered, enabling Yusef-Zadeh, a professor of physics and astronomy, and his team to study a broader group of them. Astronomers spent three years at the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory constructing this image, which could help unravel the mystery.

NUCLEAR PROTEST: MATT CARDY/GETTY IMAGES; ANTIBIOTICS: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES; CONGO: NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY



#### INVESTIGATING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Pakistan

In Pakistan — like many other parts of the world — antibiotics are available over the counter, leading to overuse. "In Pakistan it's almost a postantibiotic world, in which people are surviving stage 4 cancers but dying of an infection caused by an antibiotic-resistant bacteria," says Mehreen Arshad, an assistant professor of pediatric infectious diseases. She is co-leading a Buffett Institute for Global Affairs working group on antibiotic resistance that includes partners from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Aga Khan University in Pakistan. The group will evaluate antimicrobial resistance in different parts of the world, with the goal of saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

#### NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Japan

Hirokazu Miyazaki lived in Tokyo when the Fukushima nuclear disaster occurred in 2011. In response, he and his colleagues from around the world launched Meridian 180 — now part of Northwestern's Buffett Institute for Global Affairs — to exchange ideas, focusing in part on disaster preparedness. Now Miyazaki is working with municipal leaders in the U.S. and Japan on "how to align nuclear disarmament with the urgent issue of climate change," says the Kay Davis Professor of Anthropology. "It is an opportune moment for us to re-engage citizens in conversations about sustainability and security."



## The Ticker

● Northwestern donated \$800,000 to the city of Evanston **to fund the purchase of a new fire engine**, an example of President Morton Schapiro's ongoing commitment to improving relations with the city. The engine is the second purchased with University-donated funds.



● The New York Times and NPR both named professor of history Kate Masur's latest book, *Until Justice Be Done: America's First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction*, **one of the best books of 2021**.



● Just three years after its launch, **The Garage's Propel program** earned the 2022 United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Excellence in Co-curricular Innovation Award. Propel has helped to increase the number of women who participate in The Garage's Residency program by 67%.



● The School of Communication launched the **Pritzker Pucker Studio Lab for the Promotion of Mental Health Via Cinematic Arts**, a student film incubator dedicated to combating inaccurate and stigmatized mental health portrayals in media. It was funded with a \$1 million grant from the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation and Jessy Pucker '19.





SPORTS

# Flipping Out

Northwestern captain Yohan Eskrick-Parkinson makes Jamaican diving history.

When Yohan Eskrick-Parkinson was a first-year student at Northwestern in 2018, he reached out via Instagram to pioneering Jamaican diver Yona Knight-Wisdom.

Eskrick-Parkinson had been diving for Northwestern for just a few months when he learned that the two-time Olympian was competing at a meet in Eskrick-Parkinson's hometown of Calgary, Alberta.

"I told Yona, 'Hope you liked my home pool,' and from there we chatted about diving," says Eskrick-Parkinson, who is half-Jamaican and aspired to represent his father's home country in international competitions. "I didn't have my [Jamaican] citizenship yet, but we decided to keep in touch."

Eskrick-Parkinson kept diving and broke the 1-meter and 3-meter school records at Northwestern, where he is majoring in neuroscience and considering medical school. He's now a senior captain on the swimming and diving team.

After Eskrick-Parkinson gained his Jamaican

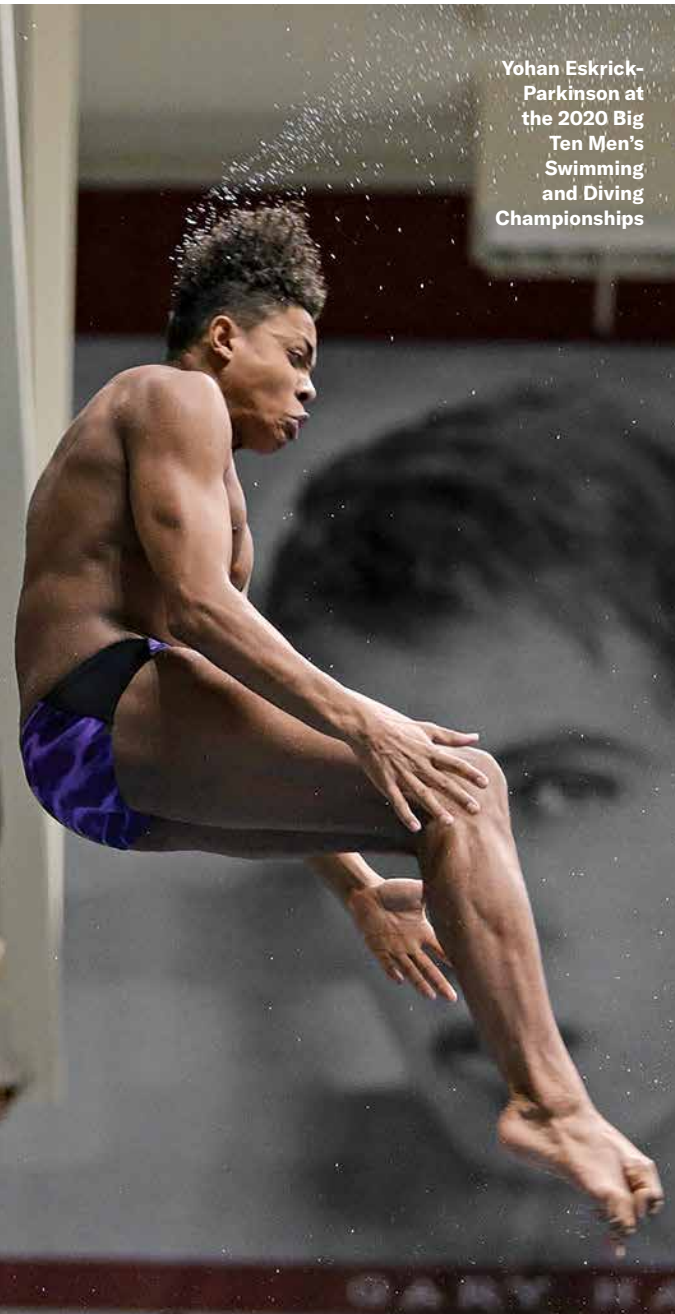
citizenship, he reconnected with Knight-Wisdom.

Last December, the 21-year-old joined Knight-Wisdom on Jamaica's first-ever synchronized diving team. The duo finished second in the 3-meter synchro at the Scottish National and Open Diving Championships in Edinburgh.

"It's been a learning experience to see the lifestyle of a pro athlete," says Eskrick-Parkinson, one of the Big Ten's top divers. "To spend a week with Yona, train with him, see his diet and work outside of practice — it's been really inspiring."

Discipline and time management — skills he honed while hitting the books in Evanston — have been crucial to Eskrick-Parkinson's success. While his neuroscience courses can be intimidating, he says he has grown comfortable balancing his sport and his studies.

And helping Jamaica make sports history? He's finding time for that too.



ESKRICK-PARKINSON: WALT MIDDLETON; KOSTER: COURTESY OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES; BLOCK MUSEUM: ©SEAN SU

ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

**Inclusive Making, a course created by professor Marcelo Worsley**, asks students to design solutions to accessibility problems through the lens of computer science. Students in the class have developed tactile digital interfaces for vision-impaired users and easy-to-use navigation tools to help disabled people find accessible entrances on Northwestern's campuses. "More important than the specific technical skills, students learn to identify and challenge many of the ableist viewpoints that pervade computer science education," says Worsley, assistant professor of computer science and learning sciences.

'CAT TALES

# Digging in the Dirt

In 1970 Northwestern anthropologist Stuart Struever '60 MA opened an archaeological field school in southern Illinois. For around a decade, dozens of Northwestern students and archaeologists ventured to Kampsville, Ill., every summer to conduct excavations at the Koster site, uncovering thousands of artifacts, including bones, remnants of prehistoric houses and other items.

Struever's dig led to the discovery of 25 distinct "horizons" — layers of artifacts from specific cultural time periods — dating back to the Archaic Period (8000 B.C. to 600 B.C.). The Koster site, which at one time drew more than 10,000 visitors annually, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in June 1972.

"I learned a little bit of geology, biology, ecology and human behavior," says Jim Carper '79, who participated in the Koster dig in summer 1977. "All these different scientists came together and explained what had happened there. I found that very interesting."

Read more at [alummag.nu/koster](http://alummag.nu/koster).



MUSEUMS

# Students Shape the Block

Undergraduates take on an expanded role at the museum.

The Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art has revamped its docent program to expand students' involvement. Now undergraduate student associates lead public and private tours, facilitate art discussions, act as advisers to museum staff and even add acquisitions to the museum collection.

"The Block really does care about student input," says Chayda Harding, a senior history major who has worked for the museum for nearly three years. "Now we're much more involved. This fall, I got to write wall labels for some of the artwork, and we were able to select a piece by [Chicago

artist] Leonard Suryajaya for the museum." The annual student-led acquisition is funded by individual donors and the Block Museum Student Impact Fund.

"The students are actually shaping the collection," says Erin Northington, the Susan and Stephen Wilson Associate Director of Campus and Community Education and Engagement at the Block.

Student associates also serve as ambassadors for the Block, finding unique ways to incorporate the museum's work into their broader academic and student life experiences.

Ayinoluwa Abegunde, a senior chemical engineering

major and a student associate, revised a homework assignment for her Fluid Mechanics course. She used aerial photographs of abandoned uranium mines on a Navajo Nation reservation to demonstrate the mines' impact on water supplies. "The images alone were very powerful," says Abegunde, "and then hearing photographer Will Wilson's story behind the images made us reconsider our work as chemical engineers from an ethical point of view. Art can show the gravity of how our decisions can impact communities disproportionately."

Northington is excited to see the program grow.



MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH

‘Dancing Molecules’ Repair Spinal Cord Injuries

With a single injection, paralyzed animals regained the ability to walk within four weeks.

Despite major medical advances across many fields, physicians and researchers have made little progress in treating spinal cord injuries. In fact, life expectancy for people with spinal cord injuries has not improved since the 1980s.

Now Northwestern researchers, led by professor Samuel I. Stupp ’77 PhD, have developed a new injectable therapy to reverse paralysis and repair tissue after severe injuries. In the study, researchers delivered a single injection to the injury site in paralyzed mice and restored their ability to walk after just four weeks.

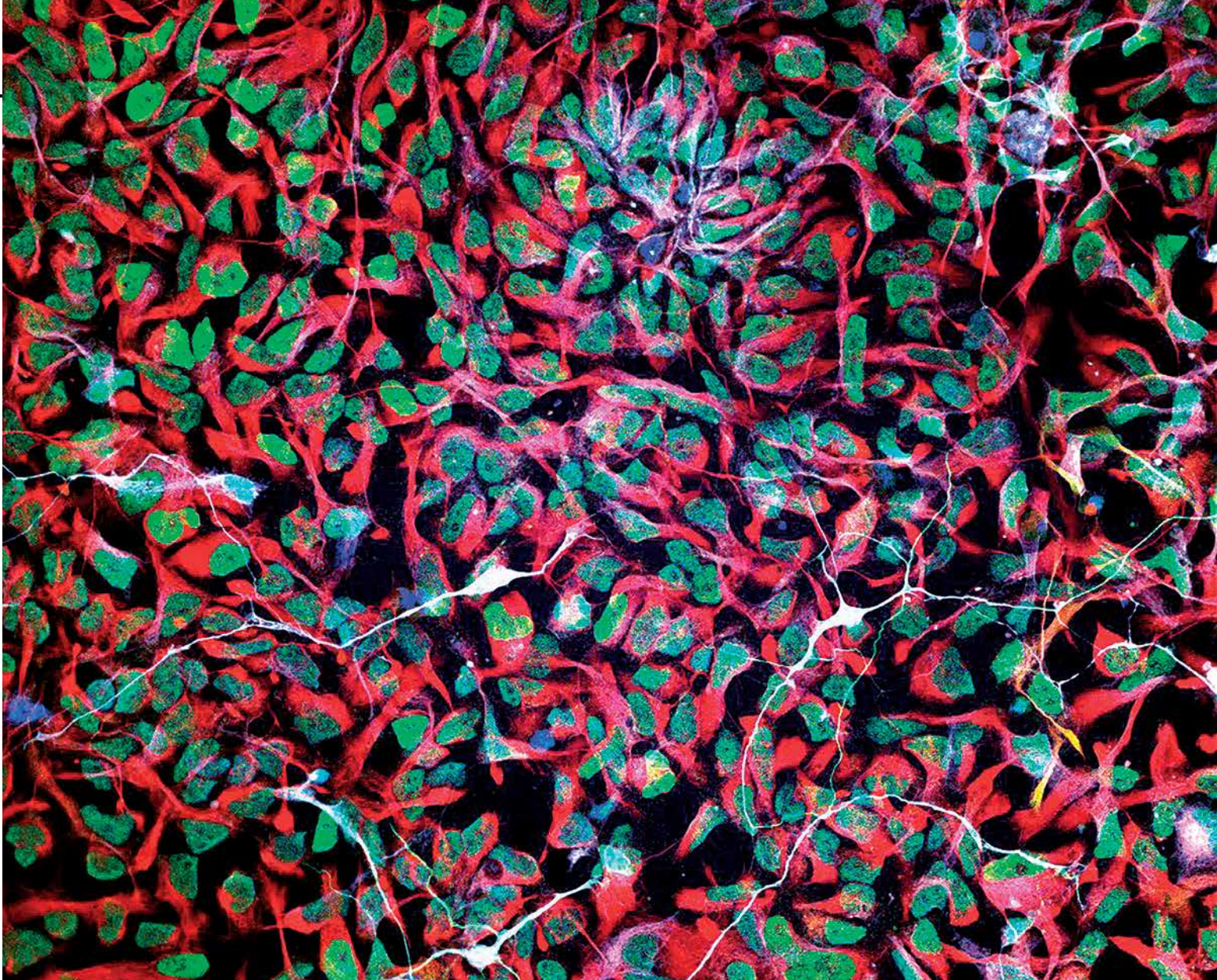
During a spinal cord injury, the long tails of neurons (called axons) are severed or damaged, resulting in the loss of feeling in the body or even paralysis. Similar to

electrical cables, axons send signals between the brain and the rest of the body. A spinal cord injury forms a scar that prohibits the axons from regenerating, preventing the body from healing.

“For decades, paralysis has remained a major challenge because our body’s nervous system, which includes the brain and spinal cord, does not have any capacity to repair itself after injury or after the onset of degenerative disease,” says Stupp, the Board of Trustees Professor of Materials Science and Engineering, Chemistry, Medicine and Biomedical Engineering at Northwestern, where he directs the Simpson Querrey Institute for BioNanotechnology and the Center for Bio-Inspired Energy Science.

The secret behind the therapy is novel “dancing

The nanofibers contain hundreds of thousands of dancing molecules that communicate with nearby cells.



Human stem cells (red and green) treated with a therapeutic material that was modified to have a high degree of “supramolecular motion.” The cells began to differentiate into neurons (white) in the presence of the material.

molecules,” developed in Stupp’s laboratory. Injected as a liquid, the therapy immediately gels into a complex network of nanofibers that mimic the natural environment around the spinal cord. The nanofibers contain hundreds of thousands of dancing molecules that communicate with nearby cells — sending bioactive signals that trigger regeneration and repair in the spinal cord.

“By making the molecules move, ‘dance’ or even leap temporarily out of these

structures, they are able to connect more effectively with cellular receptors,” says Stupp, a pioneer in regenerative nanomedicine. “Given that cells and their receptors are in constant motion, you can imagine that molecules moving more rapidly would encounter these receptors more often.”

After the therapy performs its function, the materials biodegrade into nutrients for the cells within 12 weeks and then disappear from the body without noticeable side effects. In the study, Stupp

HOLOGRAPHIC CAMERA: NATURE COMMUNICATIONS

SAMUEL I. STUPP LABORATORY

and his team found that the therapy improved severely injured spinal cords in five key ways: Neurons’ axons regenerated, scar tissue significantly diminished, myelin (the insulation around axons) reformed, new blood vessels formed to deliver nutrients to cells at the injury site, and more motor neurons survived the injury.

This year, Stupp will initiate discussions with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to receive clearance for human clinical trials. While the current therapy is best suited

to treating recent injuries and eventually eradicating paralysis, Stupp’s team is also adapting the therapy to help patients with chronic older injuries.

“This has been the most important study of my entire career due to its integrative nature with chemistry, materials science, biology and clinical medicine,” Stupp says. “We are going straight to the FDA to start the process of getting this new therapy approved for use in human patients, who currently have very few treatment options.”

NEW TECH

A Camera That Sees Through Fog and a Path to Pothole-Free Cities



1

HOLOGRAPHIC CAMERA

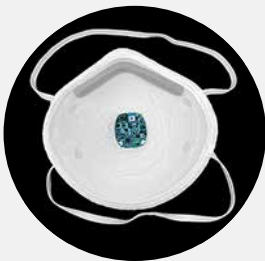
Imagine driving through thick fog, uncertain if another car or a deer might be hidden just ahead. A new holographic camera may someday make such a scenario safer and a lot less nerve-racking. The device harnesses scattered light to capture detailed, nearly instant snapshots of objects hidden by fog, around corners and even through the skin. “Our technology will usher in a new wave of imaging capabilities,” says Florian Willomitzer, research assistant professor at the McCormick School of Engineering.

2

SMART CEMENT

Chicago winters can wreak havoc on roads — and potholed streets can ruin your car tires. But cities of the future might be built with a new, crack-resistant

“smart cement.” Engineers incorporated nanoparticles into ordinary cement to create a more durable material. Production of the nano-reinforced cement has a smaller carbon footprint than its predecessors, so its use could make cities more resilient — and greener too.



3

FACEBIT

A new smart sensor system can sense how well your mask fits and how long you’ve worn it. Called FaceBit, the lightweight, quarter-sized sensor attaches to any mask and can measure your respiration and heart rate too — then wirelessly transmit that data to an app for real-time monitoring. The device is powered by a tiny battery that harvests energy from ambient sources — including the force of the user’s breathing and motion, as well as from the sun — extending the battery life and lengthening the time between charges.



# Innovation

## COCKTAIL COLLABORATION

## Something's Brewing

Four MBA students launch the first canned kombucha cocktail.

**C**onfidence Udegbye cooked up the idea for a kombucha cocktail long before he arrived at Northwestern. He was moonlighting in San Francisco as a personal trainer at the time and regularly heard his clients say they wanted a healthier way to drink alcohol while staying fit.

On his first day of orientation at the Kellogg School of Management, he met Ashley Sherman, a fellow MBA student with a background in alcohol distribution. From there, they brought on Catherine Lamb, who had been brewing her own kombucha for 10 years, and Dennis Wong, who had a background in finance.

Together they developed

Liquid Confidence, a cocktail of bourbon and kombucha (a fermented, fizzy tea chock full of vitamins, electrolytes and probiotics). Sherman says the process of getting started was anything but smooth, recalling the days she and her co-founders spent brewing kombucha out of their own kitchens.

"Right after we launched, we got our first really large order from a wine club for a hundred [liters]," she says. At the time, the team hadn't yet secured a contract packer (or co-packer) to package the beverage. "We didn't want to say no," Sherman explains, "but kombucha has to stay cold."

So the crew got creative: They found a free refrigerator



↑ From left: Catherine Lamb, Confidence Udegbye, Ashley Sherman and Dennis Wong, co-founders of Liquid Confidence

on Facebook Marketplace, borrowed a pickup truck to retrieve it and hauled it up three flights of stairs to one of their apartments.

"We all spent the whole day filling 100 bottles for this delivery," Sherman says. Since then, the team has leveraged resources from both Kellogg and The Garage. "Now we're in cans and we have a co-packer, but it was a journey to get there. And when our product actually got on shelves, that made it all worth it."

Liquid Confidence is available online and in

20 stores in the Chicago area, and the team hosts in-store tastings to get live feedback. "Chicagoans love to support local emerging brands," Sherman says.

And for the question on everyone's minds: Is the drink named after Udegbye himself?

"We did some initial brainstorming and just kept coming back to Liquid Confidence," Sherman says with a laugh. "It's such a fantastic story to tell when people are sampling the product, because he's right there in front of them."



## FOUNDERS CORNER



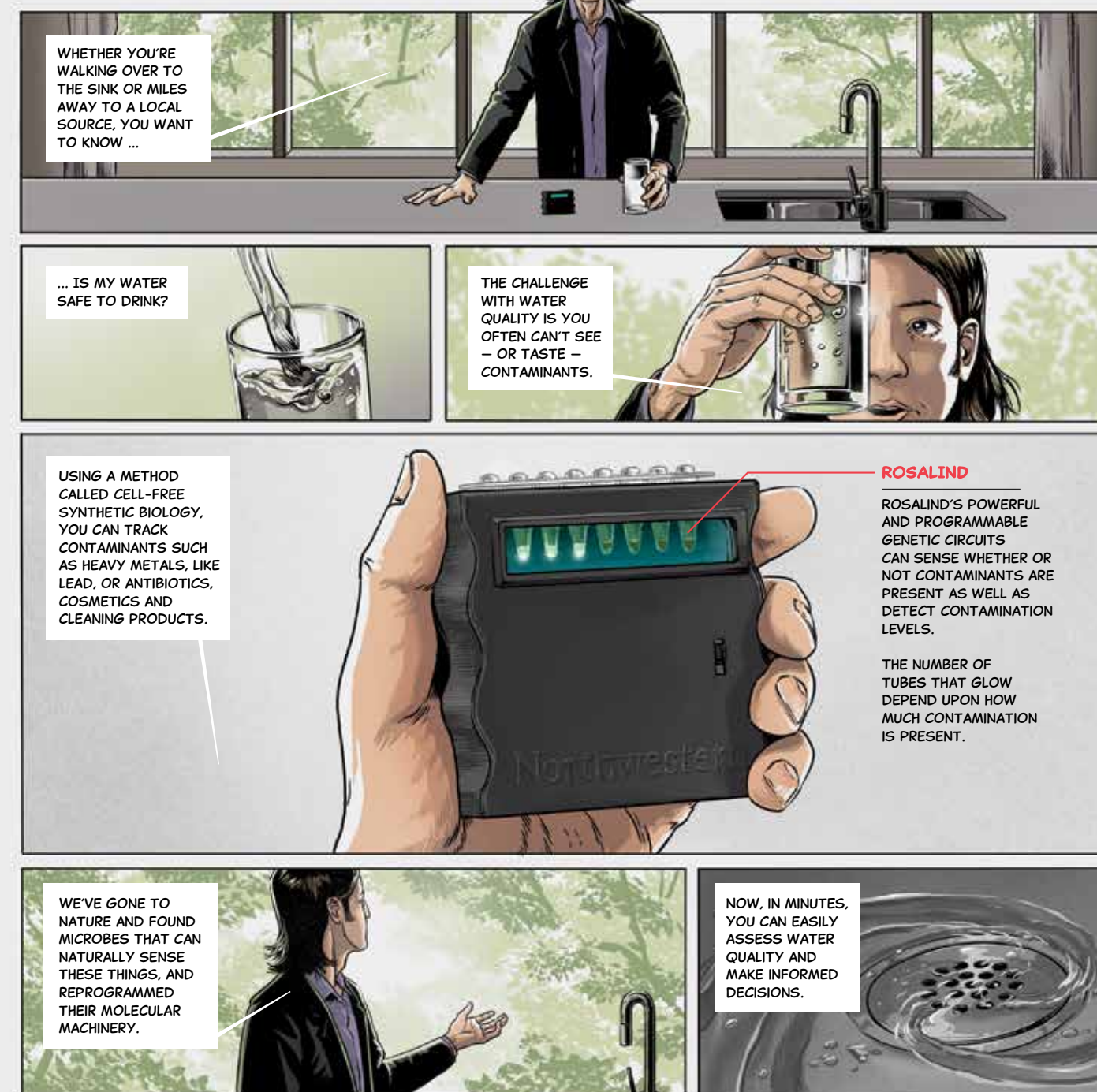
Giving a startup pitch can be nerve-wracking. **Rhetoric** gives founders real-time artificial intelligence feedback on their presentations — think speed, tone, energy and the use of filler words — while also creating a shareable recording for asynchronous critique from mentors and peers. Raman Malik, a founder-in-residence at The Garage, built on his work in data science at Lyft to launch Rhetoric. The startup won first place at the student innovation incubator's 2021 Jumpstart Demo Day.

## INVENTION

## Rosalind

Julius Lucks, a professor of chemical and biological engineering, along with postdoctoral fellow Khalid Alam and doctoral candidate Kirsten Jung, created a device to test water for 17 different contaminants. The technology,

nicknamed ROSALIND in honor of DNA pioneer Rosalind Franklin, can assess water safety and quality with just a single drop. Using "molecular taste buds," when the test detects a contaminant, it glows green.



MATTHEW TWOMBLY





CAMPUS

# Donor Gifts Honor President Schapiro's Legacy

Alumni and friends are recognizing the president's service to Northwestern through their philanthropy.

In just a few months, Morton Schapiro will step down as president of Northwestern after 13 years at the helm. During President Schapiro's tenure, the Evanston and Chicago campuses were transformed by more than 50 major construction projects and the creation of 17 new research institutes and centers. One of the most successful fundraising campaigns in the history of higher education, **We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern** stands among

his greatest accomplishments. (Turn to page 28 for more about Schapiro's presidency.) In recognition of the president's dedicated service to and impact on Northwestern, alumni and friends have made gifts toward several areas of the University in his honor. Under President Schapiro's leadership, Northwestern made a strategic commitment to enhance the student experience by creating campus community. The University opened a new student

residence hall at 560 Lincoln Street as part of this effort. Now, in honor of President Schapiro and his wife, Mimi, and their exemplary support for undergraduates, Northwestern will rename the building Schapiro Hall. More than 60 trustees and their families have contributed to fundraising for the residence hall, led by Board of Trustees Chair Lanny Martin '68, '73 JD. The gifts will fund the maintenance and renovation of common spaces and

programs for the building's residents. "For Morty, students have always come first," Martin says. "Throughout his tenure, he continued to teach several undergraduate courses, and he and Mimi hosted more than 10,000 students at their home for dinner. Naming Schapiro Hall in their honor is a fitting tribute."

The Schapiros also are known for their enthusiastic support for Jewish student life on campus. Because of this, Jonathan and Patti Kraft made a gift to name the Schapiro Executive Director of Northwestern Hillel position in their honor. Michael Simon, who became executive director of Northwestern Hillel in 2010, is the inaugural holder of the named position.

→ David Schonthal helps student entrepreneurs successfully launch or acquire new businesses.

← 560 Lincoln will be renamed Schapiro Hall later this year.

"By providing Jewish and non-Jewish students alike with opportunities to learn about and celebrate Jewish heritage, Northwestern Hillel epitomizes what has been so special about Morty's leadership," Jonathan Kraft says. "Patti and I are honored that Morty and Mimi allowed us to recognize their legacy with this gift."

Carol '64 and Larry Levy '66, '67 MBA also decided to honor President Schapiro with a gift benefiting students — specifically, entrepreneurs at the Kellogg School of Management. The Levys' support will complement the work of the Levy Institute for Entrepreneurial Practice, which the couple established, and enhance students' personalized journeys by providing funding for career treks and apprenticeships. The gift will bolster the development of Kellogg's founder-centered approach under David Schonthal

'09 MBA, director of the Levy Institute.

"Carol and I are delighted to celebrate President Schapiro's remarkable impact and dedication to the student experience by making this gift to create new, hands-on programming that is so important to our students' entrepreneurial growth," Larry Levy says.

Other families have made generous gifts to the University in honor of President Schapiro as well. Underscoring President Schapiro's commitment to financial aid and research, the Melchiorre family contributed to the Celeste Lizio Endowed Scholarship Fund, created the Melchiorre CFAAR Endowed Fund to advance research and education in the Center for Food Allergy & Asthma Research at Feinberg School of Medicine, and gave to the Morton and Mimi Schapiro Endowed Fund.



And in recognition of President Schapiro's dedication to the student-athlete experience, Trustee Eric Gleacher '62 and Paula Gleacher created an endowed fund to ensure the competitive excellence of Northwestern Athletics' golf programs.

It is President Schapiro's legacy as an economist and educator that inspired

↑ Students gather annually to celebrate Hanukkah at Northwestern Hillel.

the Patrick G. '59, '09 H and Shirley W. Ryan '61, '19 H Family to make their most recent gift to the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. The Ryan Family's support for the Center for Applied Economics will allow the University to expand its leadership in research and education in this critical field of study by fueling the recruitment and retention of top scholars and funding best-in-class data research teams. The center will be named in President Schapiro's honor.

"Northwestern strives to be excellent in everything that it does, and our economics programs are a shining example, with world-renowned economists like Morty himself conducting research and educating the next generation," Pat Ryan says. "Our family is grateful for the Schapiros' many contributions to Northwestern, which have helped the University to lead in a number of areas."



PAGE 18: JIM PRISCHING; PAGE 19: JEFF SCIORTINO



COMPUTER SCIENCE

# Professorships Named for First Woman to Lead IBM

The Ginni Rometty Professorships of Computer Science will bolster Northwestern’s artificial intelligence and machine learning programs.

Tech giant IBM has made a generous gift to endow two computer science professorships in Northwestern’s McCormick School of Engineering in honor of Virginia M. “Ginni” Rometty ’79, ’15 H, the first woman to lead the company.

Rometty, who is vice chair of the University’s Board of Trustees, retired as executive chairman of IBM in December 2020 after working her way up from systems engineer to president and chief executive officer. Her career at the company spanned nearly 40 years. The two Ginni Rometty Professorships of Computer Science will support research and teaching related to artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. They also align with Northwestern Engineering’s Computer Science Transformation Initiative, which launched in 2016 as part of a plan to hire 20 new faculty members.

“I cannot think of a better role model for our students and faculty than Ginni Rometty,” says Julio M. Ottino, Northwestern Engineering dean. “She has been a trailblazer in her field and has served as a valuable adviser and friend to the McCormick School of Engineering.”

The first Ginni Rometty Professorship is held by Jessica Hullman, associate professor of computer science and journalism. The second professorship, or chair, will fund the hire of a senior

scholar who has attained distinction in AI and/or machine learning, with a preference for candidates who have demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.

“Jessica Hullman is an outstanding inaugural recipient of the chair,” Ottino says. “Her pioneering work, in uncertainty visualization and modeling of how people interact with data-driven predictions, is key to ensuring that AI and machine learning can reach human users in ways that are both easily understood and actionable.”

Hullman, who joined Northwestern in 2018, is a researcher whose work addresses the design and evaluation of software interfaces that let people interact with data-driven models and predictions — combining techniques from interactive visualization, statistics and mathematical models of cognition.

This latest gift from IBM follows its previous support of the University, which included in-kind gifts of analytic software and cloud computing resources to the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications and equipment to Feinberg School of Medicine. The professorships are supported in part by alumni Patrick G. ’59, ’09 H and Shirley W. Ryan ’61, ’19 H through the Ryan Family Chair Challenge, which

matched gifts made by other Northwestern supporters to establish new endowed professorships across a wide range of disciplines.

Rometty’s passion for innovation is matched by her passion for education, making

“Developing trusted, responsible and inclusive artificial intelligence is a central challenge of our time.”

— Ginni Rometty

the professorships a fitting tribute. At IBM she was known as a champion of AI and a trailblazer for skills-based learning for the digital age. She also advanced IBM’s diversity and inclusion initiatives.

“I am deeply grateful to IBM and Northwestern University, which have had such a profound impact on my life, for this honor,” Rometty says. “Developing trusted, responsible and inclusive artificial intelligence is a central challenge of our time. Northwestern’s commitment to this endeavor is clear and inspiring, as evident by its Computer Science Transformation Initiative. It is a privilege to have my name associated with these distinguished professorships and the outstanding educators who will hold them.”

↓ Retired IBM Chairman and CEO Ginni Rometty is a McCormick School of Engineering alumna.



← The 2021 SciHigh cohort with Susan Quaggin, far right

and I will be forever grateful to Lou and Kimberly for their incredible generosity, compassion and commitment to social and health care justice.”

Last summer students worked in teams to research topics such as the effect of food insecurity on chronic kidney disease. They also received medical school-level instruction at Northwestern Simulation’s Innovations Laboratory and attended virtual sessions on research development and presentation best practices as well.

SciHigh gave high school junior Mia Mendoza insight into what a career in science could look like. “I learned very valuable lessons about the resources that will help me on my own professional and educational journey,” says Mendoza, who dreams of becoming an ophthalmologist or orthopedic surgeon.

SciHigh is modeled after Northwestern Medicine’s Pulmonary and Critical Care Summer Research Program — created by Scott Budinger ’85, chief of pulmonary and critical care, and co-managed by Karen Ridge, professor of medicine — which provides high school juniors and seniors who are interested in the biological sciences with intensive research training. Simpson and Querrey endowed the pulmonary program in 2018.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

## A New Generation of Scientists

The SciHigh Summer Program breaks down barriers for Chicago high school students.

Louis A. Simpson ’58 was a big believer in giving everyone access to education. Prior to his death in January, he spent two decades building a philanthropic legacy at Northwestern. Simpson and his wife, fellow University Trustee Kimberly K. Querrey, supported fields ranging from biomedical research to athletics and recreation. He also was committed to empowering aspiring scientists. (Read Simpson’s obituary on page 70.)

In 2018 the University’s George M. O’Brien Kidney Research Core Center, known as NU GoKidney, launched the SciHigh Summer Program — a paid, seven-week internship for rising juniors and seniors at Chicago high schools. The program was founded

to help students from under-represented backgrounds unleash their untapped potential and develop the confidence and skills to succeed in STEM fields. It provides interactive learning opportunities and mentorship designed to foster growth, self-discovery and wonder in a range of topics in science and medicine. Sessions are led by experienced researchers and physician-scientists, post-docs and medical students.

Simpson and Querrey endowed SciHigh in 2019. Their support has allowed the program to nearly triple in size. “The next great breakthroughs in medicine and science depend upon the future workforce,” says NU GoKidney Chair Susan Quaggin, the Charles H. Mayo, MD, Professor and chief of nephrology and hypertension at Feinberg School of Medicine. “The graduates of the SciHigh program, my team

### 2021 SciHigh Stats

6  
Chicago high schools  
partnered with SciHigh

13  
students made up  
the summer cohort

55  
hours of training were  
completed by each intern



# LGBTQ Health Care Gets a Checkup

Northwestern brings together research, policy work and inclusive medical care to create a more equitable system for sexual and gender minorities.

BY DIANA BABINEAU

ANNA & ELENA BALBUSSO



## V

Victoria Peek, a college student from small-town Indiana, first knew she was transgender when she was 4 years old, before she even had words for it.

"I always thought something went wrong, that God had made a mistake," Peek recalls.

"I am supposed to be a *girl*," she remembers thinking to herself.

"I thought I must be the only person that this has ever happened to and that no one would believe me."

Peek kept this a secret for many years. When she was 15, she got up the courage to write her mom a letter explaining that she was trans. She slipped the letter into her mom's suitcase before her mom left for an anniversary trip with Peek's stepdad.

As it turned out, Peek had nothing to worry about: "She read it, called me, and we cried for a long time. We talked about it for an hour, and she just said, 'I love you so much,'" Peek says, a smile breaking across her face.

When she returned home, Peek's mom put in hours of research to find a health care facility that could help Peek with her transition. Options for trans health care were extremely limited in their region. Finally, Peek and her mom found the gender and sex development clinic at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

"I was getting to a point where my life was so unbearable — but Lurie [Children's] changed that for me," Peek says, beaming with gratitude as she reflects on her experience. "They were like my family for three years."

Peek connected with a team of doctors who coordinated her care seamlessly. She received testosterone blockers and hormone therapy to help with her transition. As she got older, Lurie Children's referred her to Northwestern Medicine's Gender Pathways Program, a health program for trans and gender nonbinary adults where Peek underwent several gender-affirming surgeries.

"Every day, I wake up and I am so much happier than I was a year and a half ago, when I was pre-op, struggling with body dysmorphia daily," says Peek, now a 19-year-old first-year student and the first trans woman to be part of the Kappa Delta sorority at Purdue University. "My life is so much easier and happier and better overall."



In an ideal world, Peek’s health care experience would be the norm. But most LGBTQIA individuals face challenges when trying to access high-quality care.

Nearly 56% of lesbian, gay and bisexual people report experiencing discrimination from a health care provider, including being refused care or enduring verbal or physical abuse, according to a 2009 health care fairness survey by Lambda Legal, the first national survey on the issue. That figure jumps to 70% for transgender and gender-nonconforming people and nearly 63% for those living with HIV. Although the Affordable Care Act prohibits federally funded health institutions from discriminating against people based on gender identity, sex and sex stereotypes, many states do not have similar laws in place, leaving gaps in legal protections. Recent studies show that these forms of discrimination are ongoing.

“When we think of how the world is structured and who it’s been made for, it’s not LGBTQIA people,” says Lauren B. Beach, research assistant professor in the Department of Medical Social Sciences at Feinberg School of Medicine and a core faculty member of Northwestern’s Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing (ISGMH). Beach studies chronic physical health conditions among diverse sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations and people with HIV. (See “An Inclusive Glossary” above.)

“I think about barriers to care in multiple levels: structural, interpersonal and individual,” says Beach. For example, you may not receive sex education in school that applies to you. You may lack health insurance, or your insurance company may refuse to cover the cost of gender-affirming care. Your medical chart and paperwork may not use

AN INCLUSIVE GLOSSARY

**LGBTQIA:** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/agender.

**SGM:** sexual and gender minority. This acronym is meant to be an all-encompassing term to include people who identify as LGBTQIA, Two-Spirit (a term used by some Indigenous people), gender-fluid or nonbinary, as well as those whose sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or reproductive development falls outside of binary social constructs of sex, sexual orientation and gender.

**SSOGI:** sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, referring to data that is often collected via public health surveys and by hospitals and research centers.

inclusive language. Your doctor may misgender you or may lack expertise about SGM health.

Such roadblocks reflect prevailing societal stigmas and ultimately take a toll on the well-being of SGM populations. “If you have experienced discrimination from one health provider in the past, you are less likely to want to seek care in the future,” Beach explains. All of these factors have contributed to stark health disparities.

“There’s been tremendous progress in the social standing of the sexual and gender minority community in the last decade,” says Brian Mustanski ’99, professor of medical social sciences, psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Feinberg and director of ISGMH. “But we also have to remember that it wasn’t that long ago that people didn’t even come out because being gay or lesbian was extremely stigmatized.”

That stigma and fear, he explains, have made it difficult not only for SGM populations to be included in health studies but also for researchers and health professionals to pursue careers focused

HEALTH DISPARITIES

Sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations of all ages in the U.S. are at higher risk for certain health conditions and have poorer health outcomes than those who do not identify as SGM.

- Transphobic discrimination is linked to higher rates of heart disease in transgender and gender diverse people.
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual adults are more likely to be cigarette smokers compared with heterosexual adults.

- Sexual minority youth report higher rates of alcohol use, illicit drug use and suicidality compared with their heterosexual peers. In 2019 nearly 47% of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth seriously contemplated attempting suicide.
- Gay and bisexual men accounted for 65% of new HIV infections in 2019. And while nearly 15% of HIV infections in the U.S. are undiagnosed, more than 51% of 13- to 24-year-olds who are HIV positive are unaware of their status.

on studying these communities. This dearth of research has contributed to the lack of high-quality health care as well.

Mustanski set out to change that when he founded ISGMH in 2015, leveraging the partnerships he’d built with other University researchers and with LGBTQIA health organizations in Chicago. ISGMH has become a research powerhouse, conducting groundbreaking studies about the health of SGM communities and developing interventions to improve health care quality and access in Chicagoland and across the country. With 13 full-time faculty dedicated to research and implementation science, ISGMH is one of the largest university-wide research institutes in the nation focused exclusively on SGM populations and one of the top recipients of funding from the National Institutes of Health for SGM health research. Its faculty and staff serve as advisers not only to others at the University but also to federal and local agencies (such as the Centers for

ZOE RAIN



Vyctoria Peek received gender-affirming care through the Northwestern Medicine Gender Pathways Program.

Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] and the Chicago Department of Public Health), community organizations (such as Center on Halsted and Howard Brown Health) and other institutions across the U.S. that seek to improve SGM health and well-being.

“We’ve put a stake in the ground by creating a space where people can have successful careers doing this work and can be proud of research with the LGBTQ community,” says Mustanski, who has studied SGM communities for about 20 years.

Now, in partnership with Northwestern Medicine, Lurie Children’s and many

other community organizations, Northwestern faculty and staff are leading the way on SGM health research — and translating their findings into interventions that can help close the health equity gap.

O

One of the fundamental problems in addressing health inequities is that public health surveys and hospitals and research centers often do not collect

“Every day, I wake up and I am so much happier than I was a year and a half ago, when I was pre-op, struggling with body dysmorphia daily.”

— Vyctoria Peek

data that inclusively identifies SGM populations. Without information on people’s sex, sexual orientation and gender identity — what’s known as SSOGI data — it can be especially difficult to understand how these minority groups are affected by public health risks such as COVID-19.

When asked how such a widespread, foundational problem might be resolved, Beach gives an unwavering reply: “We change the law.”

Beach is part of a large coalition of public health experts, clinicians and community health organizations (such as AIDS Foundation Chicago and Equality Illinois) that came together to help pass Illinois Senate Bill 2133 into law in August 2021. Sponsored by Sen. Mike Simmons, the first openly gay member of the Illinois Senate, the law requires all state agencies, hospitals and major programs to collect SSOGI data and establishes a new state agency that will compile and maintain a SSOGI database.



“Now that it’s required, a state report will come out every year in July, and all of the data will be harmonized,” says Beach, who testified before the state Senate in support of the bill and will advise agencies on how best to collect and store the data.

Beach predicts the law’s effects will snowball: If you have data, you can prove there’s a problem affecting a specific group of people — and then you can obtain funding to study and resolve it.

With the state law now in effect, Beach has turned their attention toward creating standardized SSOGI questions and data collection methods on a national scale. Beach is a co-principal investigator of Project Recognize, a new five-year endeavor to evaluate and improve how SSOGI questions are asked and recorded in electronic medical records, federal health surveillance surveys and state-level epidemiological surveys.

Project Recognize is just one of several innovative, translational research endeavors at ISGMH that aim to break down barriers to care.

Kathryn Macapagal, research associate professor of medical social sciences and psychiatry and behavioral sciences and a core faculty member at ISGMH, conducts research focused on increasing access to sex education for queer youth. Despite the fact that queer youth are at higher risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections (STI), only 10 states require sex education to be inclusive with regard to sexual orientation, and only 18 states require sex education and HIV education to be medically accurate. Many sex ed programs stress abstinence and often do not affirm or discuss queer relationships or sexual encounters. In fact, a handful of states require programs to offer a negative view of non-heterosexual orientations.

Macapagal has launched an effort to address this educational gap by reaching youth online.

The internet acts as a kind of equalizer when it comes to accessing information, says Macapagal, who is one of the key investigators on a nationwide trial that studies online sex ed and HIV prevention interventions for gay, bisexual and queer teenage boys. “We advertise on social media so we can reach them directly,” she says. “It kind of jumps over having to get sex ed through schools or

having to go to your pediatrician and hope that they know something about being a queer teenager.”

In a similar vein, Mustanski also developed Keep It Up!, an online educational health program that uses videos, games and interactive animations to increase HIV knowledge and teach safer behaviors. Mustanski’s team found that the program reduced STI transmission and risky behavior. In 2018 it became the first online program to be classified by the CDC as having the “best evidence” for HIV prevention.

S

umanas Jordan ’17 GME, assistant professor of plastic surgery at Feinberg — and the first woman hired in her field at the University — has been performing gender-affirming surgeries at Northwestern Medicine since 2018. “I went into plastic surgery to make a big impact on people’s quality of life,” she says.

Jordan got her start in gender-affirming care as a Feinberg resident at Lurie Children’s, a Northwestern Medicine affiliate that has had a pediatric SGM health program since 2013.

“One of my mentors there had just started doing top surgeries on patients who were so uncomfortable with their bodies that they couldn’t shower with the lights on,” Jordan recalls with dismay. “But they were a completely different person after surgery. It was just a lovely thing to be a part of.”

In 2018, inspired by her experience at Lurie Children’s, Jordan co-founded Northwestern Medicine’s Gender Pathways Program, a large network of clinical providers who work together to coordinate care for SGM individuals. The program helps patients by connecting them directly with endocrinologists, psychiatrists, surgeons, urologists, gynecologists and other specialists who support SGM care.

“After I met with Dr. Jordan and the Northwestern team, I fell in love with them,” says Vyctoria Peek, who was referred to Gender Pathways after starting her transition at Lurie

Children’s. Peek became one of Jordan’s first gender-affirming surgical patients. “Dr. Jordan is so passionate about her work and her patients and the trans community in general that I felt completely comfortable putting my trust in her,” Peek says.

Piecing together a care team on one’s own, without the support of a program like Gender Pathways, can be extremely challenging.

“Trans folks have been charged with being experts in our own care and scrapbooking together our own care system,” says Ricky Hill, a research assistant professor at Feinberg who conducts qualitative research on SGM communities at ISGMH and has served as an adviser and advocate for Gender Pathways. “It can be a nightmare,” Hill says. “It’s hard for *me* to navigate the managed care system, and I’m highly specialized and skilled to do this. So imagine how hard it is for the average person.”

Gender Pathways helps alleviate that challenge. “The anxiety of walking into a doctor’s office not knowing whether or not the doctor is going to be affirming is a big deal,” Jordan says. “We give patients reassurance that we’ve talked

to these doctors, and they’re going to be in good hands.”

Jordan has witnessed the program’s effectiveness. “I definitely see it in my patients,” she says. “They are much more comfortable just being in our office. And after surgery, patients are so much happier.”

Peek, for one, is living her best life — thanks in part to her Northwestern team. She’s studying fashion marketing and plans to participate in a six-month program at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

Most of all, she’s grateful to just be herself.

“I am so lucky — I have the most supportive family and friends ever,” she says. “I have an older brother who’s protective of his transgender little sister, and we’re best friends. It just warms my heart.

“Now I’m just living my life, trying to be like every other normal college student — and having an amazing time.”

*Diana Babineau is a writer and editor in Northwestern’s Office of Global Marketing and Communications.*



Brian Mustanski

**“We’ve put a stake in the ground by creating a space where people can have successful careers doing this work and can be proud of research with the LGBTQ community.”**

— Brian Mustanski, founder of ISGMH

**But wait — there’s more to this story.**

Read about Lurie Children’s sex development program, see how other Northwestern researchers are changing LGBTQIA lives for the better and watch Vyctoria Peek share her story in an exclusive video. Visit [alummag.nu/LGBTQhealth](http://alummag.nu/LGBTQhealth).



Sumanas Jordan, left, co-founder of the Northwestern Medicine Gender Pathways Program, chats with Vyctoria Peek.

PEEK AND JORDAN: ZOE RAIN; MUSTANSKI: MICHAEL GOSS



In 13 years as Northwestern University president, Morty Schapiro transformed the campuses, expanded international opportunities and supported faculty research — all while diversifying the student population.

BY ALAN K. CUBBAGE

# THE MORTY YEARS

TOM MADAY '95





The Jewish faith encourages followers to strive to improve the world through their actions. For President Morton Schapiro, that principle has guided his four-decade career in higher education, including the past 13 years at the helm of Northwestern.

“My faith has always been the foundation for my personal and professional life,” Schapiro says. “And one of the principles from my Jewish tradition that I most cherish is *tikkun olam* [Hebrew for “repair the world”], which implores me to never stop reflecting, listening, learning and trying. I may not succeed at times, but the goals are constant.”

Working toward those goals exemplifies Schapiro’s tenure as Northwestern’s 16th president. When he steps down this summer, he leaves a university that has been transformed. During his tenure, research activity soared, the number of students who are the first in their families to attend college increased dramatically, the University’s fundraising reached record levels, Northwestern expanded its global footprint, and new buildings changed the face of the University’s campuses.

The University also faced financial challenges and several controversies, as well as an unprecedented pandemic. But, thanks to Schapiro’s leadership, Northwestern now stands as an internationally recognized research powerhouse that attracts top students and faculty from all over the world.

#### A FIRST-NAME PRESIDENT

As soon as he arrived at Northwestern in 2009 from his post as president of Williams College, Schapiro began engaging with students on their own turf, from fireside conversations in residence halls to meals at fraternity and sorority houses.

“Morty is an undergraduate student president,” says Julie Payne-Kirchmeier, vice president for student affairs. “He wants to be with the students in their environments. When they have access to a president in a casual setting, it helps students feel heard.”

Schapiro’s self-deprecating humor and quick wit instantly made him a popular and approachable figure. He and his wife,



Top, students at Wildcat Welcome. Above, President Schapiro at March Through the Arch. Right, Heather Headley '97, Stephen Colbert '86, '11 H and Adam Kantor '08 at *A Starry Night*.

Mimi, opened their Evanston home to students, inviting them over for dinners with faculty and distinguished guests. Over the course of his tenure, he estimates that as many as 10,000 students dined with them at their home.

Nolan Robinson '21 had dinner with the Schapiros and guests at least 10 times as a student, and several times he was invited to deliver the “dessert speech,” including during a visit by U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff in October 2019.

“When he introduced me that night, Morty said, ‘Nolan is a filmmaker, an actor, a singer, a dancer — and he really has become part of the family.’ That touched my heart,” says Robinson, who has an album of selfies from the many times he has bumped into the president on campus.

During his sophomore year, Robinson created *Where’s Noah*, a web series about the life of a Black student at a predominantly

white university. When Robinson didn’t have a place to host the premiere, Schapiro came to the rescue, offering Hardin Hall.

“I thought he wasn’t going to make the premiere,” says Robinson, “but as it was starting, he walked in. I’m like, ‘Oh, my goodness, you made it!’ He said, ‘Of course! I wasn’t gonna miss this.’ He and his wife were always rooting for me.”

Supporting students and creating a sense of community was key for Schapiro, who helped launch important student traditions such as the March Through the Arch, a rousing welcome for new students.

“In 2011 I was at an event where students were asked about their most meaningful moment at Northwestern,” says Schapiro, “and one student talked about walking through the Arch and how great it was to participate in this long-standing tradition.”

Schapiro smiles at the memory. “I didn’t have the heart to say that was only the second time we had done it. But it’s become an important symbolic event now.”

That event and others have helped to create a more unified Northwestern identity. And Schapiro, who has a notoriously vast collection of purple in his wardrobe, leads by example when it comes to wearing his pride.

“I was surprised when I got here to see people wearing sweatshirts from other universities. That really bothered me,” admits Schapiro, who told the *Wall Street Journal* that he has around 90 purple ties, 50 purple sweaters and 100 purple shirts. “So we gave out a lot of swag to students, and now you see people having pride in Northwestern purple.”

The effort has become so well known on campus that the *Daily Northwestern’s* guide for new students includes the term “Morty-fied,” defined as “being embarrassed because Morty spotted you not wearing purple.”

Schapiro’s passion for purple even caught the attention of Stephen Colbert '86, '11 H, who visited campus as part of the School of Communication’s *A Starry Night* celebration in 2018. The TV funny man and late-night host set his comedic sights on Schapiro in his opening monologue.

#### MORTY MOMENTS

*“Shortly after he arrived on campus, Morty set out to meet the deans,” says Barbara O’Keefe, former dean of the School of Communication. “When he came by for a one-hour meet-and-greet, we ended up talking for about two hours about our common interest in improving the undergraduate experience. And then he asked if I would take him on a tour of the School of Communication. I explained that it was spread out in five different buildings, but he was game, and off we went. At each building he stopped any faculty or staff at liberty for conversation. He was charming and engaged with every one of them and asked great questions about our work and our ambitions. After that day, I felt very happy to be a part of Morty’s army.”*

“A lot of people know me as the guy who tells jokes about the president,” Colbert began, “but the only president I want to talk about tonight ... is Morty Schapiro. Where are you, Morty? There he is! Of course he’s here! Morty’s everywhere! Everybody loves Morty. He’s always out shaking hands, making connections. ... It’s like he’s the mayor.”

“Morty’s done so much for the school. He took something great and made it greater. ... The man lives and breathes Northwestern. He wears purple, he bleeds purple, he is purple! He is more purple than if the Grimace gave birth to a baby fathered by Prince in a pool full of Welch’s grape juice.”





CREATING A RESEARCH POWERHOUSE

President Schapiro accelerated an effort championed by his predecessors, Henry Bienen '09 H and Arnold Weber '95 H, to build Northwestern's research enterprise. Here's a tally of the advancements during his tenure:

1 Million

The square footage of space added by the University for research.

\$893M

Total external funding for research in 2021, up from \$477 million in 2009.

2/3

The share of total research support dedicated to biomedical research conducted at Feinberg School of Medicine.

\$66.3M

Funding from National Science Foundation awards — for research and education in the nonmedical fields of science and engineering — in 2019, up from \$36 million in 2010.

240

Number of patents received in 2020 by Northwestern faculty from the U.S. Patent Office, compared with 58 patents in 2010.

"When Morty came, some faculty were concerned that he was too focused on the undergraduate experience and didn't appreciate the importance of research," says Robert Hariman, professor of communication studies and former Faculty Senate president. "I think he succeeded in being a comprehensive president who facilitated the improvement of every part of the University."

CHANGING THE FACE OF — AND FACES ON — CAMPUS

The new and renovated buildings on Northwestern campuses are an obvious sign of transformation, but perhaps a more important change is the increased diversity of the student body — a change spurred on by Schapiro's commitment to make higher education more accessible.

"Access to and affordability of higher education is my academic field," says Schapiro, a professor of economics at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. "When I got here, we didn't give as much aid as our peer institutions, and that was a barrier for potential students. I wanted to take that limitation off the table."

Carol Lee says Schapiro had a plan — and the confidence — to address this problem from the start. "I served on the committee that vetted candidates for the presidency in 2009," says Lee, a professor emeritus at the School of Education and Social Policy. "We asked all candidates how they thought about addressing the challenges of enhancing diversity at the University. Everyone talked about how hard it was.

"When we asked Morty, he looked at us and smiled. At that time he was president of Williams College. 'Addressing diversity is not a big deal to accomplish,' he said. ... That sold me on Morty. And when he arrived as president, one of his first initiatives was to build relationships and support for students from Chicago Public Schools to come to Northwestern."

On Schapiro's watch, the University significantly increased financial aid for undergraduate students and eliminated loans in financial aid packages for undergrads.

"It was critically important to provide the resources to recruit students who traditionally were not considering Northwestern — first-generation college students, Chicago Public Schools students, underrepresented minorities," says Christopher Watson, associate vice president of student outreach and dean of undergraduate enrollment. "President Schapiro saw that and committed the resources to recruit and enroll those students."

MORTY MOMENTS

*"Whether he's teaching a class, conducting his academic research or expanding the Northwestern community, Morty is focused on moving the University to the next level," says Bob McQuinn, vice president for alumni relations and development. "Morty's legacy will clearly include repositioning Northwestern as a destination for the most talented students, regardless of their family's financial circumstances, as well as building the global reputation of the University."*

Northwestern is now a national leader among selective universities in enrolling and retaining first-generation and low-income students, including those who qualify for the Federal Pell Grant. At the same time, the median ACT and SAT scores of the entering class increased throughout Schapiro's tenure, and applications soared as Northwestern changed from a school that often was a second choice for the very best students to one that is now among the most sought-after universities in the country by those students.

MORTY IN THE CLASSROOM

Even with the never-ending demands on a president's time, Schapiro has maintained his economics research and teaching at Northwestern. "I like interacting with students in a variety of settings, particularly in a classroom," Schapiro says. "Having a class where you're engaged in a lively discussion, exchanging ideas and opinions, is when higher education is truly exciting."

In his previous roles as president of Williams and dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California, Schapiro also found time to teach.

And his enthusiasm for teaching is infectious.

"I have never met a teacher as inspiring as Morty, and he makes it look so easy," says professor Gary Saul Morson, who has co-taught a popular undergraduate course with Schapiro for the past decade. The course, Alternatives: Modeling Choice Across the Disciplines, explores the intersections of literature, economics and a variety of other disciplines — and is always fully enrolled.

"Morty's students learn not only the subject matter and how to reexamine their own most cherished ideas but also what the life of the mind really is," says Morson, the Lawrence B. Dumas Professor of the Arts and Humanities and professor of Slavic languages and literatures at Weinberg College. "Years later, students write to say, 'That was when I realized how much fun it can be to play with ideas.'"

Schapiro co-wrote two books and co-edited a third with Morson and collaborated with other colleagues on commentaries, articles and essays that have appeared in



Left, President Schapiro with students at the Great Wall of China

numerous publications.

"His energy as a scholar is apparently boundless," says David Figlio, dean of the School of Education and Social Policy (and soon-to-be provost of the University of Rochester). "Whenever Morty goes on 'vacation,' the new text and analysis come flying

toward me at breathtaking speed. I even had to admonish him once when he called me from the beach in Maui to discuss edits."

Schapiro, who holds faculty appointments at Weinberg College, the Kellogg School of Management and the School of Education and Social Policy, has taught an upper-level economics seminar and is a regular guest lecturer in engineering, law, marketing communications and education classes, including Figlio's Economics of the University course.

"It's very rewarding for a president to continue to do research and to stay in the classroom," Schapiro says. "Doing so keeps you in touch with faculty and students in ways that you wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

"That might just make you a better leader, which benefits the University. But even if it doesn't, I would do it anyway for the sake of my sanity"



PURPLE PRIDE WORLDWIDE

Early in his presidency Schapiro set his sights on expanding Northwestern’s impact abroad.

“Morty and I quickly realized we were on the same page in regard to international affairs,” says Dévora Grynspan ’76, ’77 MA, ’82 PhD, vice president for international relations. “Beyond internationalizing the curriculum, Morty has focused on global engagement more generally, as a way to increase Northwestern’s visibility and reputation.”

An avid traveler, Schapiro ramped up efforts to connect with alumni abroad. When representing Northwestern internationally, he often meets with local alumni and parents, gives presentations to civic and business groups, leads faculty panel discussions and meets with partners at peer institutions — all with grace and his signature lighthearted humor.

“I will miss his easiness,” says Grynspan. “Morty has this ability to get in front of any audience at the drop of a hat. He can get up there and be friendly and engaging and make everyone feel important.”

The relationships he built abroad helped increase opportunities for Northwestern students, whether opening doors to unusual historical sites in China, lobbying university presidents to provide better facilities and programming for Northwestern students, or fundraising from alumni to create new study abroad experiences.

Schapiro also embraced opportunities to experience international history and culture with students studying abroad. He climbed the Great Wall of China with undergraduates several times and connected with Northwestern groups in Cape Town, South Africa, and Mexico City, as well as in London and Paris. Because of Schapiro’s vision, “Northwestern has been able to expand its global footprint,” Grynspan says.

Back on the Evanston campus, Schapiro focused on the recruitment of international students and on increasing financial aid for them, Grynspan says, “because he wanted to bring the world’s best students to Northwestern, regardless of income. He succeeded not only in increasing the number of underrepresented and international students but also Northwestern’s rankings as a result.”

And just like at home, Schapiro enjoys sharing a meal with alumni and students abroad, taking them to his favorite local restaurants that he has discovered during his travels.

“Now you have to understand,” Grynspan explains, “that Morty is not an adventurous eater, and he won’t eat many of the things that he insists students and friends must try.

“Once, in a fancy restaurant, the chef came out and started giving us the menu. And I laughed, thinking, “There is nothing here that Morty is going to eat.” So, we all had a fabulous meal — except Morty. He just derives pleasure from everyone else’s enjoyment of a global experience.”

CHEERING ON THE ‘CATS

In his first few weeks at Northwestern in fall 2009, Schapiro — an enthusiastic Wildcat backer — dropped by a field hockey game.

“He was on our sideline,” recalls head coach Tracey Fuchs, “and my assistant asked me if I wanted her to move ‘that guy’ to the other side of the field. I laughed and said, ‘No, that’s our president!’”



President Schapiro accompanies football team captains to a pregame coin toss.

MORTY MOMENTS

*“My favorite memory of Morty was his role in a 2017 memorial for Sanford ‘Sandy’ Sacks ’56 in Manhattan,” recalls William “Willie” Weinbaum ’82, ’83 MS, an ESPN producer and writer. “Under normal circumstances, Morty’s participation wouldn’t have been unusual. After all, Sandy was a Wildcat nonpareil as a student and alum. But this was extraordinary, as Morty had come from Salt Lake City, where the ‘Cats were in the NCAA men’s basketball March Madness for the first time. To pay his respects, Morty — Northwestern athletics’ biggest presidential fan ever — missed the epic second-round game against powerhouse Gonzaga. Morty’s uplifting remarks were the ultimate honor. I sat beside him as a fellow eulogist, and when I tearfully whispered thanks, he said there was never a question about where he would be that day.”*

From his first fall on campus, when he opted to watch football games from the sidelines rather than the Ryan Field skybox, Schapiro has been a vocal supporter.

“There is no more passionate Wildcats fan than Morty, and his belief in our students is unmatched,” says Pat Fitzgerald ’97, the Dan and Susan Jones Family Head Football Coach.

“I believe that if the University is going to do something, we should do it well,” says Schapiro. “We don’t hold back on our music and arts programs, our research or our teaching, so we shouldn’t hold back on athletics. Those are our students, and they deserve our support.”

The Wildcats, once the doormat of the Big Ten, have achieved remarkable success in recent years. The football team has won the Big Ten West Division twice in the last four years, the men’s basketball team was invited to the NCAA Tournament for the first time ever in 2017, and in 2020 the women’s basketball team won its first Big Ten championship since 1990, followed by an invitation to the NCAA Tournament in 2021. The women’s lacrosse team has captured seven national championships, the

RAY WHITEHOUSE '12

field hockey team won the NCAA title last fall, and Wildcats also won individual national championships in wrestling and diving.

Northwestern student-athletes’ success extends to the classroom. According to the NCAA’s 2020–21 Graduation Success Rate (GSR) data (a long-term assessment of student-athletes’ academic success), Northwestern scored a 98% GSR overall, which ranks second among all Football Bowl Subdivision institutions and best in the Big Ten.

“I’ve had the privilege to work for the best university president in higher education,” Fitzgerald says. “The transformational past decade for Northwestern Athletics and Recreation simply would not have been possible without his unwavering support, leadership and vision.”

FACING CHALLENGES

All university presidents deal with controversies, and Schapiro is no exception. During his tenure, Northwestern experienced faculty members engaging in inappropriate relationships with students, football players seeking to unionize, a reexamination of the problematic history of University founder John Evans and allegations of sexual assault at fraternities. Those issues and others, and the University’s response to them, drew attention and criticism from students, faculty, alumni and the public.

In fall 2020 a number of strident demonstrations took place outside the president’s house, and marches on campus called for abolishing the Northwestern University Police Department. Vandalism occurred during some of the demonstrations. Schapiro responded by sending an email to the campus community criticizing some of the demonstrators’ actions and characterizing some of the language demonstrators used as antisemitic. Some felt the response exacerbated the problem rather than easing it. In response, Schapiro and other senior leaders held a series of listening sessions with students, faculty, staff and alumni and then stepped up efforts to follow through on social justice commitments.

Northwestern also endured a financial crisis in 2017–18, when the University found itself facing a multimillion-dollar budget deficit. As a result, more than 80 staff members were laid off — the first layoffs in more than 40 years — budgets were reduced, a temporary hiring freeze was implemented, and Northwestern had to withdraw more money than usual from its endowment earnings in order to balance the budget. However, the fiscal restructuring brought the University back to a stable financial status within two years. And while the University weathered the pandemic better than many other institutions, COVID-19 resulted in significant additional expenses and required similar cost-cutting measures.

When asked if he regretted how he handled some of the controversies, Schapiro was philosophical. “There are always things you say and do and write that could have been better,” he says. “I just try to learn and not make the same mistakes twice.”

Through it all, Schapiro has remained grounded in his faith, says Michael Simon, executive director of Northwestern Hillel. “Morty Schapiro has been a courageous leader, called by his tradition to do the right thing, and providing an inspiring example for a generation of Northwestern students and alumni.”

Every Shabbat, Schapiro recites a prayer that reads: “For human community, our common past and future hope, our oneness transcending all separation, our capacity to work for peace and justice in the midst of hostility and oppression.”

“While it’s in the Hebrew prayer book, it wasn’t written by a rabbi or Jewish biblical scholar. That prayer comes from a poem written by a Unitarian minister, reminding me once again that healing the world, that working for peace and justice, is a universal precept,” says Schapiro, who encouraged interfaith dialogue at Northwestern and focused on faith and humanity at the annual Baccalaureate Service.

Reflecting on his tenure, Schapiro remains modest about his success in leading Northwestern. “I just hope that when people look back at my presidency, they think that I’m worthy of being mentioned in the same breath as Henry Bienen [’09 H] and Arnie Weber [’95 H],” says Schapiro. “They did an unbelievable job setting the stage for me and this university, and I’ve tried my best to do the same for my successor. I’ve had a good run, and it’s worked out well. I think things are in good shape for the next president.”

*Alan K. Cubbage ’78 MS, ’87 MS served as Northwestern’s vice president for university relations for more than 20 years. He wrote Transforming a University: Northwestern in the New Millennium.*

**More Morty** Learn about Schapiro’s efforts to improve relations with Evanston and read more “Morty Moments.” **See [alummag.nu/morty](https://alummag.nu/morty).**

COLLECTING KUDOS

In the past 13 years, Northwestern faculty and students and the University as a whole have gained increasing recognition. Here are a few examples:

70

Northwestern faculty memberships in the National Academies of Sciences, Medicine, Engineering and Education.

2

Nobel Prizes awarded to Northwestern faculty — one to Sir Fraser Stoddart, the Board of Trustees Professor of Chemistry, in 2016, and one to Dale Mortensen, a former professor of economics, in 2009.

200+

Students and alumni awarded Fulbrights in the past 10 years, the sixth-most among all U.S. universities.

No. 9

Northwestern has been ranked among the top 10 U.S. universities for undergraduate education by *U.S. News & World Report* for the past four years.



# Are You Listening?

**Northwestern journalists stand out  
in the exploding podcast industry by  
telling important and immersive stories.**

BY CLARE MILLIKEN



In the 4,000-person town of Austin, Ind., addiction to an opioid painkiller led to the largest HIV outbreak in the state's history. The drug, called Opana, was linked to more than 200 cases of HIV in the southern Indiana town.

"Why are people doing this particular drug?" Kelly McEvers '97 MS asks in the first episode of *Embedded*, a podcast that dives deep into issues in the news. "Why are they sharing needles? What is this drug?"

During the half-hour episode, McEvers introduces Clyde, whose son is in a drug rehab facility; Jeff, a veteran who became addicted to Opana after returning home from Iraq; Joy, a nurse whose addiction began after a back injury; and Devin and Samantha, an HIV-positive couple with a plan to move into recovery.

Listeners learn what these individuals' lives were like before Opana. They hear about the social, financial and emotional impact of addiction, and what withdrawal feels like.

By the end of the story, McEvers realizes that people who are addicted to opioids can't just quit on their own. She wants listeners to have that takeaway too.

"You want people to have empathy," McEvers says. "My goal was for listeners to understand that opioid addiction is hard, that it messes with your brain, that it shouldn't be criminalized, that we need to help people medically for a medical condition. That's what I learned in the reporting, and that's what I wanted everyone else to learn."

As a former foreign correspondent and daily news radio host for NPR, and now host and executive producer of *Embedded*, McEvers wants you to feel like you're sitting on her shoulder.

"I am a stand-in for the listener. So how do I make them feel like they're in the middle of this?" she asks. "And if I can make them feel like they're standing right where I am, then they will give a shit about what's going on, right?"

McEvers' ability to bring listeners into a story made her a natural fit for a transition from radio to narrative nonfiction podcasting.

These highly produced podcasts incorporate interviews, narration and sound editing into immersive, intimate audio stories. Unlike interview-based

podcasts like *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend* or political commentary podcasts like *Pod Save America*, narrative nonfiction podcasts are similar to documentary films, story-driven and dramatic. But without the visual element, McEvers says, audio leaves something to the imagination.

"Audio holds back enough that your mind has to work to fill in the blanks," she says. "You're only hearing words and sounds, and so your brain has to fill in the image. I love that so much — that the person who's listening completes the story themselves."

McEvers is among the Northwestern alumni who are applying their journalism training to narrative nonfiction podcasting. Whether they're transporting us to faraway places, helping us understand all sides of a complex situation or digging into a

**"Audio holds back enough that your mind has to work to fill in the blanks. ... I love that so much — that the person who's listening completes the story themselves."**

©JAY L. GLENDENIN



Kelly McEvers

## WE'RE ALL EARS

**41%** Share of the U.S. population age 12 and older who listened to at least one podcast in a given month last year, up from 9% in 2008

**80 million** People who listened to a podcast in the past week in 2021

**1.7 million+** Podcasts available at the beginning of last year

**\$2 billion** Projected advertising revenue for U.S. podcasts by 2023

single story to shed light on broader social issues, these alumni are delivering diverse, compelling experiences straight to your earbuds.



In a given month last year, 41% of the U.S. population age 12 and older listened to at least one podcast, up from 9% in 2008, according to Edison Research, and 28% listened to a podcast in the past week, compared with 7% in 2013. And there's no shortage of podcasts to choose from: According to Nielsen, there were more than 1.7 million podcasts at the start of 2021.

Some of the biggest media companies are getting in on the action. In 2019, Spotify paid a reported \$230 million to acquire podcast company Gimlet Media. The following year, SiriusXM bought podcast platform Stitcher — an acquisition valued at up to \$325 million — and in 2021 Amazon acquired podcast network Wondery in a deal valued at a reported \$300 million.

Celebrities are paying attention too. Jason Bateman, Brie Larson and Meghan Markle '03 are involved with podcast projects. Even Barack Obama '06 H and Bruce Springsteen teamed up last year for an eight-episode podcast series.

The appeal of podcasts is multifaceted, says Neil Verma, an assistant professor of radio/TV/film in the School of Communication who researches podcast trends. Beyond just the practical attributes of being commuter-friendly and accessible on demand, podcasts offer a social benefit as well, Verma says.

"An important thing about podcasts ... is that they're a source of parasocial relationships. So people listen to a podcast, and then they tweet about it and make friends and form online communities through social media," Verma explains. "Our experience of podcasts is profoundly social because we tend to share them and talk about them."

Narrative podcasts consistently rank among the most buzzworthy. Think *Serial*, which spawned two HBO miniseries and is considered one of the most popular podcasts of all time, or the radio show and podcast *This American Life*, which is downloaded by 2.3 million people weekly.

For Jack Doppelt, professor emeritus at the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications, McEvers is uniquely suited to narrative podcasting.

"She was always into more in-depth reporting. Let's get behind the scenes, get to know the people, get to know the nature of the people," says Doppelt, who taught McEvers and has stayed in touch with her throughout her career.

By its very nature, narrative nonfiction podcasting has allowed McEvers to go deep, to fully immerse herself, and by extension her listeners, in a story. It's a skill she first honed as a Middle East correspondent for NPR, where she sought to do things differently.

The standard way to do radio "is called 'acts and tracks,'" McEvers explains. "You've got the copy and then the sound bite and then the copy and then the sound bite. It's super boring. It sounds like a term paper."

NPR correspondents Rob Gifford and Ofeibea Quist-Arcton showed McEvers that audio reporting could be more like theater. "You don't just pull a quote out of an amazing conversation," says McEvers. "It's theater because the interaction between human beings is actually interesting. That was the big lightbulb moment for me."

Over the years, McEvers developed techniques to bring listeners into a scene.

"I had all kinds of crazy tricks," she says. "Counting was one of my favorites. I could say, 'Five tanks just rolled by,' or, 'Oh my God, oh my God, here come the tanks. One, two, three, four, five.'"

"Part of the theater is acting it out. I want you thinking, 'Holy shit, what does it feel like to be a protester when your own government's tanks roll in to attack you?' Give me five seconds to feel that."

*Embedded* is now in its 11th season, having covered such disparate topics as homelessness and policing, coal country, and the 2018 mass shooting at the *Capitol Gazette*. The *Capitol Gazette* season was named by *The Atlantic* as one of the best podcasts of 2021. This spring *Embedded* is diving into police reform in Yonkers, N.Y., where the police force is under U.S. Department of Justice oversight.





**S**purred by a desire to show the full complexity of Black American life, James Edwards, like McEvers, also came to narrative podcasting by way of radio.

“[When it comes to] telling stories from a Black perspective about a Black community, an important thing for me is going beyond the sensational or just focusing on the negative, and then trying to tell a broad spectrum of stories and perspectives,” he says. “For Black Americans, our lives are complex and multifaceted and not just one thing.”

As host of FRONTLINE’s *Un(re)solved* podcast, a five-episode series exploring the U.S. government’s effort to investigate unsolved civil rights-era killings, Edwards ’08 MS pored over legal documents and

interviewed government officials, civil rights activists and grieving families. Rather than focus solely on the trauma, Edwards sought to find out more about the people involved — their lives before and after the killings.

“Early on I told myself, ‘Don’t be set to a particular story or agenda, because you don’t know where it’s going to take you,’” Edwards says. “And I just kept telling myself that — to be as open and flexible as possible.”

*Un(re)solved* debuted as a Narrative Nonfiction Official Selection at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival. The podcast was nominated for an NAACP Image Award. To complement the series, FRONTLINE also released an interactive website, a documentary, a touring augmented-reality installation and a high school curriculum guide.



James Edwards

## PODCAST PICKS

**Kelly McEvers, James Edwards and Antonia Cereijido share some of their favorite podcast series.**

### Kelly McEvers

*This American Life*: A weekly show focused on a single theme each week.

*Serial*: An investigative podcast from the creators of *This American Life*. “There’s nobody better in the business, period, than *This American Life* and *Serial*.”

*Floodlines*: A series about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. “Masterfully, wonderfully great. I would love to know everything about how they made this.”

### James Edwards

*Bear Brook*: A podcast about a cold case in New Hampshire. “Might be the best true-crime podcast I’ve ever listened to.”

*MOONFACE*: A fictional show about a Korean American man struggling to come out to his mom. “I don’t listen to a lot of audio fiction, so I’m glad I was lucky to find my way to this one. Really beautiful storytelling.”

### Antonia Cereijido

*The Turning: The Sisters Who Left*: A podcast about the Missionaries of Charity. “A complicated look at Mother Teresa.”

*LOUD*: A show about the history of reggaeton. “Ivy Queen is a perfect host. This series is thoughtful, epic and makes you want to dance.”

**“[When it comes to] telling stories from a Black perspective about a Black community, an important thing for me is ... trying to tell a broad spectrum of stories.”**

SIMON SIMARD



Antonia Cereijido

TEAMWORKS MEDIA

Despite his initial reservations about hosting a podcast, particularly during a pandemic, Edwards soon came to embrace the role.

“With *Un(re)solved*, it was really different [from my previous in-person podcast work] because it was all remote. It was just me in my closet with my laptop and microphone,” says Edwards, who moved to Boston just weeks before the city shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “We would ship out microphones to folks and walk them through the setup. I was worried, going in, that we were going to lose the intimacy of the conversations, but after the first couple interviews, it was just like having a phone call with somebody. A lot of those interviews ended up going two or three hours.”

During the series, Edwards speaks with Emma Jean Jackson, whose brother Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed by police in 1965. Jackson describes growing up with Jimmie Lee — who some refer to as the first martyr of the voting rights movement — in segregated Marion, Ala. In another episode, listeners meet Cordero Ducksworth, who was 5 years old when his father, Roman Ducksworth Jr., was killed at a bus station on his way home to his pregnant wife.

Throughout the podcast, listeners hear Edwards reflect on these conversations and connect them to his own lived experience.

“I think about all that’s changed, and all that hasn’t,” Edwards says in the third episode. “I even think back to when I was in school ... and how I usually never had more than one or two white classmates until I got to college ... where for the first time I was in the minority.”

Born and raised on Chicago’s South Side, Edwards was steeped in radio from an early age. “Chicago is a place where the DJs are celebrities,” he says. “Herb Kent on WVON [1690 AM] and Tom Joyner on WGCI [107.5 FM].” At Medill, Edwards honed his investigative skills, taking an urban reporting class with former *Chicago Tribune* columnist John McCarron ’70, ’73 MS, which Edwards says “opened me up to the urban affairs, policy-driven journalism that I was really passionate about.”

At WBEZ (Chicago’s NPR affiliate), Edwards worked as lead producer on *16 Shots*, a critically acclaimed podcast that covered the shooting of Chicago teenager Laquan McDonald and the subsequent murder trial of Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke. A collaboration between WBEZ and the *Chicago Tribune*, *16 Shots* was, for Edwards, an opportunity to widen the lens and tell the stories surrounding the shooting.

“With *16 Shots*, [we were] really trying to tell the story about not just this incident and the fallout,” Edwards says. “It was a story about the city as a whole and

**“We’re seeing a diverse crop of podcasters who are tackling subjects and issues and stories that feel really relevant. I think that’s so exciting.”**

how we all responded — from the media perspective, a community perspective, an activist’s perspective, the police perspective and a political perspective. It was really an ensemble piece, trying to get a sense of the whole story.”

Named best podcast by the National Headliner Awards in 2019, *16 Shots* also won an Amnesty Media Award for domestic reporting from Amnesty International USA.

While at WBEZ, Edwards longed to linger on the stories he was telling. He wanted to learn more about the people he was interviewing. Edwards got a chance to go deeper with the *South Side Stories* podcast, which spotlighted people and places on Chicago’s South Side.

A collaboration with Comedy Central, *South Side Stories*, like *Un(re)solved* more recently, provided the creative freedom that Edwards had been missing.

“We would be a fly on the wall,” Edwards says of producing the 2019 series. “We went out to this nightclub called the 50 Yard Line for the episode about steppin’ [a form of partner dance with roots in Chicago]. This is a Monday night, and we were there for four or five hours, just talking to people: ‘How long have you been steppin’? What brings you here?’

“It’s cool to have that time and space. Being able to have these conversations at length, it’s just a joy for me.”



THE NEW GUARD

Northwestern students are eager to get in on the podcasting fun, and the University is responding to that demand. In addition to audio reporting courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications also offers podcast-specific courses, including a narrative podcasting course just launched this spring.

“I think many students see [podcasting] as an opportunity to extend their reporting to new spaces,” says journalist and Medill lecturer Arionne Nettles ’16 MS, who teaches both audio reporting and podcasting. WBEZ reporter and *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist and adjunct lecturer Natalie Moore ’99 MS also teaches audio reporting at Medill.

SOUND MAKERS

Podcasting has been a key part of the School of Communication’s Sound Arts and Industries graduate program since it was created six years ago, says radio/TV/film professor and program co-founder and director Jacob Smith.

“There are many folks who are interested in music production and sound design,” Smith says, “but then there’s also a growing cohort of very podcast-specific students who love the storytelling and social engagement that’s happening through podcasting.”

SKILL BUILDERS

At the undergraduate level, the School of Communication offers a sound design minor, which Smith says is being reimagined to address the growing interest in podcasting.

“Our students are going to move from one medium to another throughout their careers. That’s what we want to prepare them for,” says radio/TV/film assistant professor Neil Verma. “Rather than [just] offer classes on podcasting, we also offer perspective on [the sound industry] and tool-building, skill-building and network-building.”

Antonia Cereijido ’14 always knew she wanted to work in audio storytelling. A lifelong *This American Life* listener, Cereijido got her start as a producer at Latino USA, the longest-running national radio program for Latino news and culture.

“I never lacked for ideas, [and I wasn’t afraid to be pushy] about them,” she says of her time at Latino USA. “Everywhere around me, I was constantly trying to probe things to see whether they would hold up to an episode or a segment.”

Cereijido was most drawn to multifaceted stories — stories that were ostensibly about one topic but then could be probed deeper to illuminate all the intersectional issues.

“I love a true-crime podcast. But so often they don’t go the extra step to think about issues like wrongful incrimination, overpolicing or the politics of the moment,” she says. “I think all of those things really add to the story. I think you miss out on a lot of important context if you’re not thinking from those perspectives.”

*Anything for Selena* was Cereijido’s chance to bring multiple perspectives to podcasting. Named one of the best podcasts of 2021 by Apple Podcasts,

*Anything for Selena* blends personal narrative with an exploration of the life and legacy of American performer Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, the “queen of Tejano music” who was murdered in 1995. Hosted by Selena superfan and journalist Maria Garcia, the show’s nine episodes examine issues of race, body politics, language and the history of Tejano music, among other topics.

“One of the things I loved about *Anything for Selena* is that it took the concept of pop stardom seriously,” says Cereijido, who co-produced the series and wrote two of the episodes. “What are pop stars if not a reflection of us? They don’t make themselves; we make them.”

Cereijido moved into hosting in 2021 with *Norco* ’80, a true-crime podcast based on a book by Peter Houlihan. Over eight episodes, the podcast tells the action-packed story — and aftermath — of an attempted bank robbery in Southern California in the 1980s. Billed as “part caper, part human drama, part cautionary tale,” the series explores hot-button issues around law enforcement, guns, survivalism and economic uncertainty.

In the second episode, Cereijido interviews Deputy Sheriff Andrew Delgado-Monti, who discusses the racism

he faced within his own department. He recalls one incident when one of his fellow deputies called him derogatory names while their colleagues looked on.

“That squabble might have seemed unimportant in another person’s telling of that story,” Cereijido says. “But to me it was very indicative of the dynamics inside the department. When you’re able to tell a story about one thing but then show all the [other] dynamics — that, to me, is thrilling.”

Now the executive producer at Los Angeles’ LAist/KPCC, one of the largest public radio stations in the country, Cereijido oversees more than eight podcast projects. Among those, she is producing a podcast in partnership with the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. Each season of *Academy Museum* is based on an exhibit in the museum, with the first season — released in March — focused on the Academy Awards ceremony. In each episode, former Northwestern associate professor Jacqueline Stewart, the museum’s chief artistic and programming officer and a 2021 MacArthur Fellow, examines a different year at the Oscars “and the stories behind the scenes that illuminate what we were dealing with as a country at the time,” Cereijido says.

As the number of podcasts grows, Cereijido says, attracting increasingly segmented audiences becomes more challenging. Even so, she is encouraged.

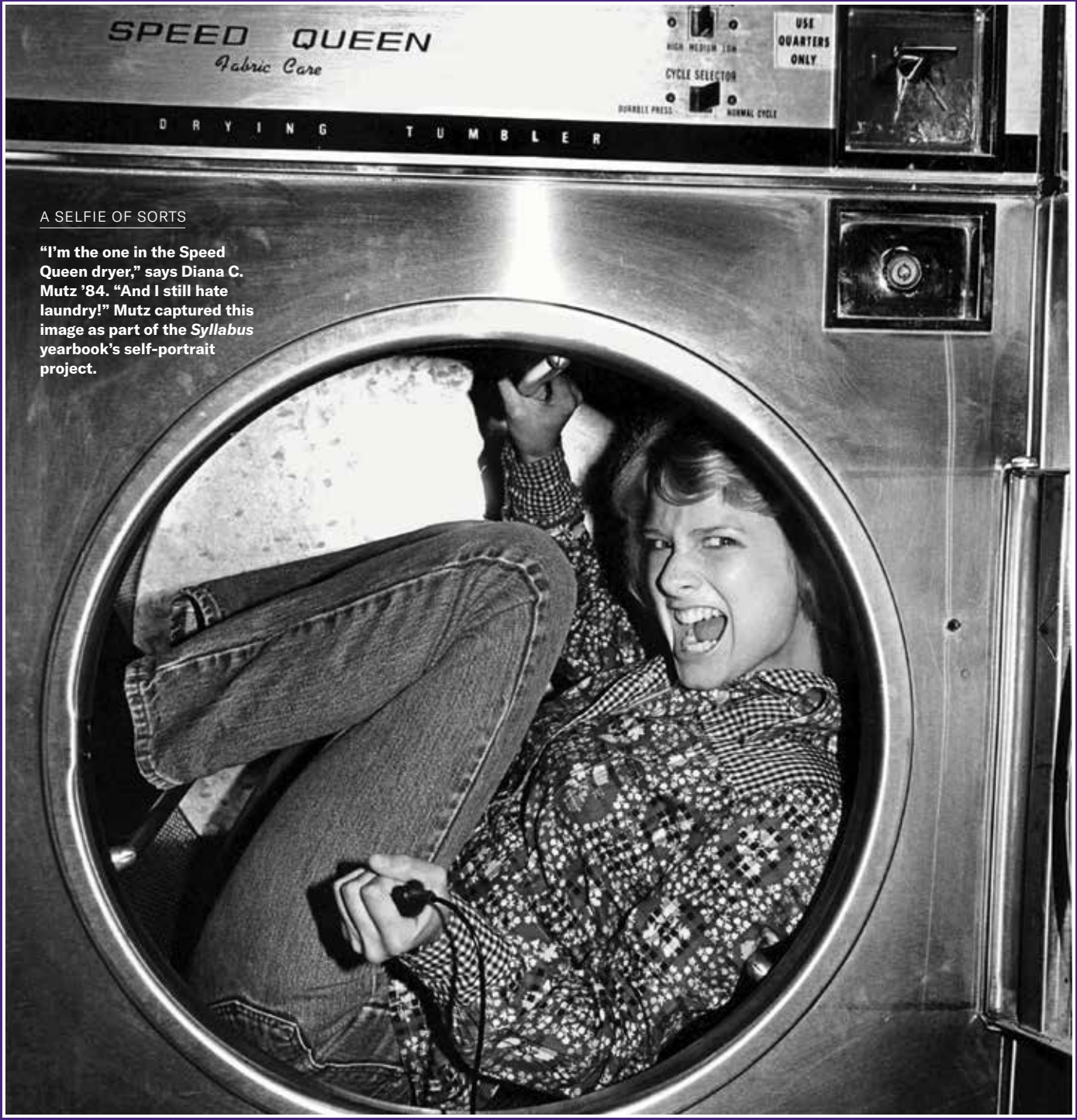
“Ira Glass and Jad Abumrad [creators of *This American Life* and *Radiolab*, respectively] did a very cool thing by taking audio stories and making them cinematic pieces on their own,” Cereijido says. “That’s what got me into radio. And I think that now we’re seeing a diverse crop of podcasters who are tackling subjects and issues and stories that feel really relevant. I think that’s so exciting.”

Clare Milliken is senior writer and producer in Northwestern’s Office of Global Marketing and Communications.

**Keep Listening** Curious to hear one of James Edwards’ standout podcasting moments? Or what Antonia Cereijido considers a great privilege of her work? Hear from our podcasting alums. Visit [alummag.nu/podcasts](http://alummag.nu/podcasts).

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# Alumni



A SELFIE OF SORTS

“I’m the one in the Speed Queen dryer,” says Diana C. Mutz ’84. “And I still hate laundry!” Mutz captured this image as part of the *Syllabus* yearbook’s self-portrait project.

PHOTO REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF STUDENTS PUBLISHING CO.



# Creation



LATE NIGHT LAUGHS

## Five Questions with Jenny Hagel '09 MFA

A TV comedy writer finds the funny in failure.

↑ Jenny Hagel '09 MFA performs with Seth Meyers '96, '16 H on the set of NBC's *Late Night with Seth Meyers*.

# 1

**What does a writer for *Late Night with Seth Meyers* do?**

I come up with a constant flow of jokes for a host to deliver, inspired by the news. It's like being in a batting cage where you just take swings all the time. Sometimes you connect a lot, and sometimes you absolutely strike out. Then every day you get back in the cage and keep swinging. Also I have no sports background, so I feel confident this analogy is flawless.

# 2

**In baseball, three hits out of 10 at-bats is elite. Does a similar ratio for comedy writing get demoralizing?**

Once you've failed enough, it's extremely empowering. When you first start out you think, "What if I say something and nobody laughs? Then I die?" Once that happens a few times and you're still alive, you realize, "Oh, this is a whole emperor's new clothes situation."

Now I'm also the head writer at *The Amber Ruffin Show*, and I always say when we hire a writer, "I do *not* care if every pitch of yours is funny. I *do* care that you are trying." I just care that we're all taking swings because eventually something will connect.

# 3

**How did the "Jokes Seth Can't Tell" segment come to be?**

There was some lesbian-related headline my first week, and I wrote like 10 jokes off of it. Later I saw my boss and jokingly said, "Let me know if you need more lesbian jokes!" And he was like, "We absolutely cannot use them." I realized, "Oh right, Seth can't dump on lesbians!" So I pulled aside my friend Amber Ruffin and said, "What if we did a sketch where we told jokes about our respective identities?" [Hagel is gay

and Puerto Rican; Ruffin is Black.] We both laughed, like, "Nobody will ever let us do that on television." Then, to our great surprise, they did.

# 4

**How do you balance your jobs at both *Late Night* and *The Amber Ruffin Show*?**

They work different parts of my brain. At *Late Night* I write as many jokes as I can and set them free like a baby bird from the nest and hope they fly. Then at Amber's show I get to think big picture. Do these five sketches create a well-balanced show? What order should they go in? I still get to write jokes, but it's neat to be part of comedy problem solving.

I also get to help other writers revise. I like when a writer brings in a sketch that's three-fourths of the way there, and I can tell what they're trying to say and help them say it more clearly.

# 5

**What part of your routine at *Late Night* is the most fun?**

Once a week we do what's called a table read, which is probably my favorite thing of the whole week. Everybody on staff is invited to turn in a sketch or a bit. There's no assignment, it's just whatever is in your weird little heart. It's kind of great because nobody knows what's being turned in. We all sit down with Seth, who hasn't seen them either, and it's like sketch Christmas.

[Read an extended Q&A at alummag.nu/jennyhagel](http://alummag.nu/jennyhagel).



SLOW JOURNALISM

Michael Sean Comerford '83 MS encountered storms, breakdowns and good Samaritans as he rode a 40-year-old bicycle nearly 2,500 miles along Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles to gather Americans' COVID-19 stories. People shared heartbreak, humor and conspiracy theories as he interviewed them for "The Story Cycle: Americans in a Pandemic," a video project created in partnership with the University of Florida's Samuel Proctor Oral History Program. "The most astounding dimension of the trip was how articulate everyday people are when talking about life and death and their own feelings," says Comerford. He is completing a book, *The Beast of Main Street*, about the experience.

CONTENT CREATOR

## TikTok on the Clock



As an associate producer at *The Washington Post*, Chris Vazquez '21, '21 MS is part of a three-person team tasked with creating content for the publication's TikTok channel. Every day, he scripts, records and edits short videos that offer a comedic take on current events, ranging from mask mandates to inflation to President Joe Biden's approval rating.

"We have to walk a really thin line of delivering [information] in a way that is fair to everyone involved and that doesn't make light of things that are really serious," says Vazquez. "Finding that balance has been the hardest part of my job so far."

Acknowledging that TikTok still "functions more as an escapist place than a place people go for information," Vazquez says the app has unique advantages. "We are reaching a lot of people who might not be tuning into a news site or newspaper," he says. "We give them news in a way that is really digestible."

[Read more at alummag.nu/chrisvazquez](http://alummag.nu/chrisvazquez).





QUEER NARRATIVES

# Looking ‘Pritty’

Coming-of-age film showcases radical acceptance.

A year out of Northwestern, Keith Miller ’10 was working at a youth mentoring organization and moonlighting as a model in New York City when he wrote a manuscript focused on Jay, a queer African American young man coming of age in the Deep South in the early 2000s. Now that manuscript is the basis for an animated short film, *Pritty*, and a two-book deal with Harper Collins. Miller has completed the first novel in the series. And after a Kickstarter campaign that raised more than \$115,000 in spring 2021, Miller worked with filmmaker Terrance Daye and Powerhouse Animation Studios on the 20-minute rough animatic, the final step before having the film animated. “Oftentimes queer-centered narratives solely focus on the trauma of rejection, isolation and pain, but *Pritty* focuses on what is often overlooked: loving and relationships,” Miller says. “There is pain, there is harm. But through his community and his relationships, Jay learns to love himself. It is the opposite of what many would expect a young, Black, queer boy to experience.” Miller came to Northwestern from

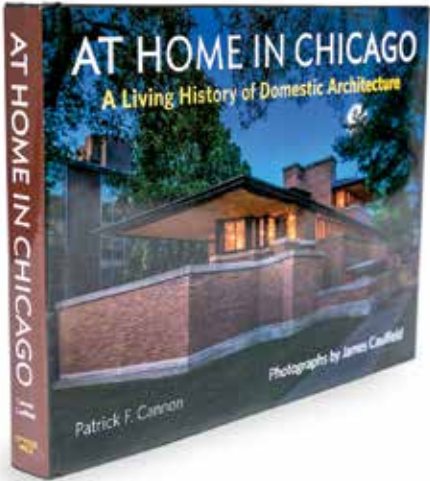
Savannah, Ga., as a Gates Millennium Scholar, intending to major in chemistry. But “I ended up going on this interesting journey,” says Miller, who double-majored in dance and gender and sexuality studies. “I remember being blown away in [professor emeritus] Nicola Beisel’s Gender and Society class as she talked about taboo topics, from homosexuality to gender politics. I remember looking over my shoulder like, ‘Is someone gonna come in? Can she say that?’” Miller also studied Race, Gender and the Politics of Beauty with Tessie Liu, associate professor of history, and Intro to Queer Cinema with Nicolas Davis, an Alumnae of Northwestern Teaching Professor. Miller also saw School of Communication dean E. Patrick Johnson’s performance of *Sweet Tea* — a collection of stories about gay Black men living in the South — five different times. “All these experiences [helped] create the space for me to understand what it means to identify as queer and to move through space as an artist,” Miller says. *Read more at [alummag.nu/pritty](http://alummag.nu/pritty).*

HISTORY

# At Home in Chicago

by Patrick Cannon

In his new book, Patrick Cannon ’69 is your docent on a tour of Chicago’s most interesting homes, including 19th-century log cabins, Gilded Age mansions, Chicago bungalows and worker housing in the historic Pullman community. “From modest to grandiose, every housing type is represented in the book,” says Cannon. “By telling stories of houses and who built them, you learn a history of the city and the region.” *At Home in Chicago: A Living History of Domestic Architecture* is the sixth book on Chicago-area architecture by Cannon and photographer James Caulfield. Cannon, who studied English at Northwestern, says his interest in architecture began when he took a class with Carl Condit, a leading authority on the history of tall buildings. After a career in publishing and public relations, Cannon became a docent for the Frank Lloyd Wright Trust in Oak Park, Ill.



ALL THE INTERNET’S A STAGE

# First Impressions

A stand-up comedian skyrockets to TikTok stardom.

Pre-pandemic, Lukas Arnold ’17 was performing at a New York City comedy club’s open mic when another performer gave him a tip: Get on TikTok. “Just make videos,” he told me. “It’s a great way to

develop a following,” Arnold recalls. He didn’t immediately heed the advice, but when the pandemic shut down the stand-up scene, Arnold gave it a shot. He never expected that one of his very first videos —

about the hit documentary *Tiger King* — would go viral. “I did a sketch where I imitated different celebrities and characters auditioning to play [animal rights activist and *Tiger King* star] Carole Baskin,” Arnold says. “I did a bunch of impressions of people saying ‘Hey, all you cool cats and kittens’ — just that one line — and that did pretty well.” “Pretty well” is putting it mildly. Arnold’s video got hundreds of thousands of likes. “I started doing more impression videos, and it just skyrocketed,” he says. Arnold now has about 2.2 million followers on TikTok. His videos range from quick puns or impressions — some as short as 8 seconds — to random musings about life. In one video he asks, “Hey, why are there no *cute* conspiracy theories? All conspiracy theories are way too intense; they’re like, ‘The Earth is flat!’ or ‘The elections are rigged!’ ... I would love it if someone tried to convince me that Aztecs invented the cannoli!” Arnold also develops sketch series that touch on

social issues. One series, for example, compares shopping for women’s clothing to a demonic form of torture. The idea came to him when he was trying to buy women’s leggings online for a Halloween costume and became frustrated by inaccurate sizing. “The more I looked into it, the more it seemed confusing by design,” he says. In the videos, he plays the role of a “fiendish, Gollum-like dude thinking up ways to make shopping for clothes more difficult for women.” Arnold took the opportunity to use his platform to promote brands that defy these common fashion pitfalls, doing branded posts for Snag, a clothing brand that is women-owned, women-run and environmentally friendly. While he can’t deny that he’s now a “TikToker,” Arnold does not want to be pigeonholed. “I just want to be thought of as a good stand-up comic, that’s all.” *Read more at [alummag.nu/lukasarnold](http://alummag.nu/lukasarnold).*

SMART STARTUP

# A Better Cranial Drill

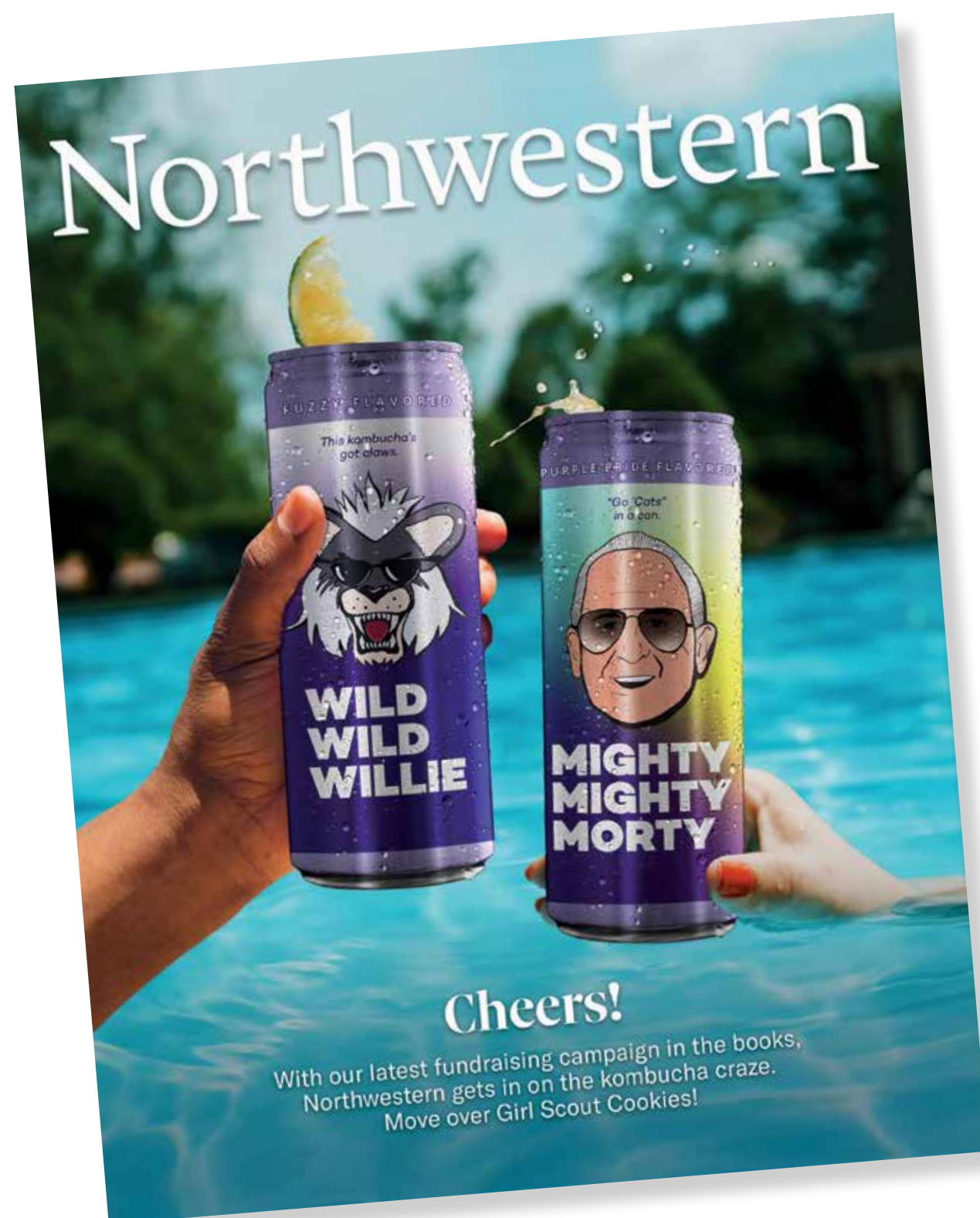
At just 22 years old, Casey Grage ’19 became CEO of a startup set on revolutionizing neurosurgery. As an undergraduate, Grage earned a spot in NUvention Medical, a graduate-level course offered through the Farley Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation that challenges students to solve problems faced by physicians. Grage’s team launched Hubly Surgical, and together they invented a lightweight neurosurgical drill that Grage says offers key advantages over conventional drills used to gain access to the brain in cases of stroke, aneurysm, trauma or other emergencies. The battery-powered

Hubly Electric Drill System automatically stops upon breaking through the skull in order to prevent accidental drilling into the brain. The system offers catheter guidance, allowing surgeons to precisely place a catheter to drain fluid from the brain (a procedure known as a ventriculostomy). Grage says the Hubly drill is also easier for surgeons and can be used with just one hand. “That’s really important because when this procedure is done in an emergency setting, the patient is actually awake,” she says. “It’s helpful if the surgeon can place one hand on a patient’s shoulder to stabilize them as they drill into the skull.” Clinical trials of the Hubly drill are now underway.



JARED KNOPMAN: WEILL CORNELL BRAIN AND SPINE CENTER





To read about a real kombucha cocktail, see page 16. And for a look back on “The Morty Years,” see page 28.

SARINA BENOIT

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**The number of podcasts available at the beginning of 2021. Find out how Northwestern alumni are leading the podcast explosion. Turn to page 36.**

