

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON COLLEGE OF LETTERS & SCIENCE

FALL 2021

Letters & Science

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CELEBRATING ALL WAYS FORWARD

ALL WAYS FORWARD

In 2015, the university announced an ambitious fundraising goal of \$3 billion. Today, UW-Madison has far surpassed that, making All Ways Forward the most successful comprehensive campaign in the history of the university. The College of Letters & Science played a key role, greatly exceeding its own goal of \$500 million and helping to transform campus, build faculty excellence and create life-changing experiences for more students.

\$652,920,670

L&S ALL WAYS FORWARD CAMPAIGN TOTAL

\$4B

UW-MADISON
TOTAL

41,617

DONORS TO L&S

\$182.9M

CREATES

~100

NEW ENDOWED FACULTY FUNDS

3

NEW BUILDINGS
L&S DONORS GAVE

\$106.1M

TO HELP TRANSFORM CAMPUS

\$62.9M

SUPPORTS NEW STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

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The new Chemistry Tower is a nine-floor wonder of glass, steel and concrete that looks out on the heart of campus and meets critical student needs.

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You don't have to write a million-dollar check to help make a big impact in L&S. Giving back at any level powers our success — and UW's digital campaigns are just plain fun.

BY SCOTT A. CARTER



PHOTO: JEFF MILLER

Fill the Hill relies on digital engagement to spread the word. For every gift, a flamingo is added to Bascom Hill. This year, red flamingos will signal the celebration of the All Ways Forward success!

ON THE COVER

This illustration draws from a long list of supporters who gave extraordinarily generous gifts of \$25K and above to help us exceed our goal.

Why I Give...

“My husband, Eric, and I continue to invest in SuccessWorks, the L&S career center, because the innovative staff has created a critical link between talented UW students from diverse backgrounds and a global community that is seeking their extensive skills. Executive Director Rebekah Paré and her team share practical employment advice and provide resources to help students explore their passion, including semester-long courses and technology to help connect them with opportunities in Wisconsin, across the U.S. and around the world.”

DONNA COLSON
College of Letters & Science
Board of Visitors member

“I discovered CAE [L&S Center for Academic Excellence] while searching for a first internship in my junior year. I feel fortunate to have crossed paths with the program because everyone there played an important role in where I am today. They gave me the opportunity to build experience that set me up for success as a professional. When I was suspended from UW-Madison because of my academic struggles, they provided the support system I needed to ultimately graduate as the Dean’s List student I never imagined becoming. I give back because my challenges weren’t unique, and I believe that every student deserves the support and opportunities they need to succeed. CAE is completely invested in students’ success, and I know they will impact more lives just as they did mine.”

KEVIN BANNERMAN HUTCHFUL, BS '17

I grew up in a family with a piano at the center of daily life. My mother and her father played by ear, and we all took piano and other musical lessons from

an early age. We each had a “number” that we would have to sing or play on cue for family and friends. My late husband, David, also came from a musical family.

As a development director for the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association (WFAA), I was inspired by the many dedicated donors and supporters working in tandem with the talented faculty and students to turn the vision of the Hamel Music Center into reality. When I retired and thought of my own philanthropy, the Mead Witter School of Music was a natural choice. Before my late husband, David Bedri, passed away from pancreatic cancer, we gave a gift to the Hamel Music Center campaign. It gave both of us great joy to do this while he was still alive. After he died in January of 2018, I created a professorship in both of our names through a charitable gift annuity. I continue to support the MWSOM through service on the Board of Advisors and annual gifts supporting a jazz fund in the name of my late mother, Anita.

JON SORENSON
former Associate Vice President
and Managing Senior Director, WFAA

“I didn’t always know where my history major would take me, but I knew it would help me be a lifelong learner. I learned how to think critically and communicate effectively – two skills that prepared me for any occupation I wanted to pursue. My passion for history led me to be a supporter of the history department, serving as a member of the Department of History Board of Visitors. It is an honor and a pleasure to be a part of a group that believes in the value of a history degree, one I strongly encourage others to consider.”

GISELLE BLOCKER, BA '18
Department of History Board of Visitors member

Letters&Science

FALL 2021

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor: Mary Ellen Gabriel
Assistant Dean for Strategic Communications
and Advancement: Denise P. Hickey
Staff Writer: Aaron R. Conklin
Design: Landesberg Design

EDITORIAL OFFICES

UW-Madison College of Letters & Science
405 South Hall, 1055 Bascom Mall
Madison, WI 53706
info@ls.wisc.edu

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FROM THE DEAN

With Gratitude



This fall marks a return to in-person classes and events, and it is exciting to be back on campus with students and colleagues! Our classrooms are full, our labs are humming, and the frisbees are flying again on Bascom Hill. UW-Madison welcomed our largest-ever freshman class, with more than 8,400 new students. And this semester, we celebrate the phenomenal success of the All Ways Forward campaign, as we close the books in December on this transformative fundraising initiative.

This fall's magazine is dedicated to expressing our excitement and gratitude to you for the many successes we've experienced in the College of Letters & Science. Alongside our usual faculty profiles, research features and student stories, you will find a sidebar or mention of the donor(s) who helped make it possible. I am thrilled and deeply thankful that so many of our professorships are underwritten by private support, enabling us to attract and retain the most talented faculty in a global market. Scholarships are especially impactful, as well. Our story on the Summer Collegiate Experience—a six-week pre-college program for students from underrepresented groups—shows how high students can soar when they receive the support they need. I hope these stories begin to convey just how wide and deep the impact of this campaign has been, and will continue to be, for many years to come.

Our cover feature spotlights key moments in the All Ways Forward journey, when our most generous supporters stepped forward to make transformative gifts, including George and Pamela Hamel, who pledged the lead gift for the new Hamel Music Center, now a sparkling gem of our Mead Witter School of Music; John and Tashia Morgridge, whose \$100 million plus “match” opportunities have funded 90 different professorships and distinguished chairs across 25 departments in L&S alone, and whose recent commitment of \$125 million

will lead private funding for the new building to house our School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences; and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which steadfastly supported the creation of innovative public humanities programming on the UW-Madison campus and beyond.

While these and other remarkable gifts turned dreams into reality seemingly overnight, there were many, many other contributions, some from our recent alumni, others from longtime loyal supporters who responded to our Annual Fund campaigns and other appeals with gifts that, together, make a huge difference in L&S. Our feature, “Every Gift Matters,” highlights this generosity and underscores our gratitude for each and every one of our loyal supporters.

As we go to press with this issue, we are making progress with our funding goal for the new L&S academic building, which will house 10 L&S departments. We are immensely grateful for the bipartisan support the project received from Wisconsin's governor and legislature as part of the 2021–23 biennial budget, and for a private leadership gift of \$20 million we received from the Levy Family and the Levy Family Foundation (spearheaded by Jeff, Marv, and the late Phil Levy in memory of their parents, Irving and Dorothy Levy). We'll be conducting a significant fund-raising campaign for the next couple years to complete this tremendous project.

Gratitude is a wonderful feeling. Reflecting on the ways in which our supporters have lifted us, smoothed our path, and transformed our visions into reality is, for me, both humbling and awe-inspiring. Thank *you* for all you do to champion the liberal arts in today's world. Every gift truly does make a difference.

Eric M. Wilcots

*Dean and Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy,
College of Letters & Science*



The art installation “Shift,” designed by Julia Schilling, illuminates an underpass near campus.

Sky Vision

For commuters going to and from campus and the UW Hospital and Clinics, the Highland Avenue underpass never beckoned as a place to linger — until now. Planning and Landscape Architecture alumnus Julia Schilling (BS '15) worked with multiple partners and collaborators for seven years to bring *Shift*, Madison's latest major public art project, to fruition. Her goal: to create the opposite of a dark, undesirable tunnel, improving safety and bringing beauty into an unlikely place. In April, the city unveiled two 70-foot panels made from perforated weathered steel, spanning each side of the underpass beneath Campus Drive. Punched-out patterns forming “circle packing” algorithms sparkle when hidden LED lighting comes on, creating a “bright, intricate, sky-like place,” in Schilling's words.

Schilling started the community project as an undergraduate, in Professor Sam Dennis's class. She is now an employee of Saiki Design.

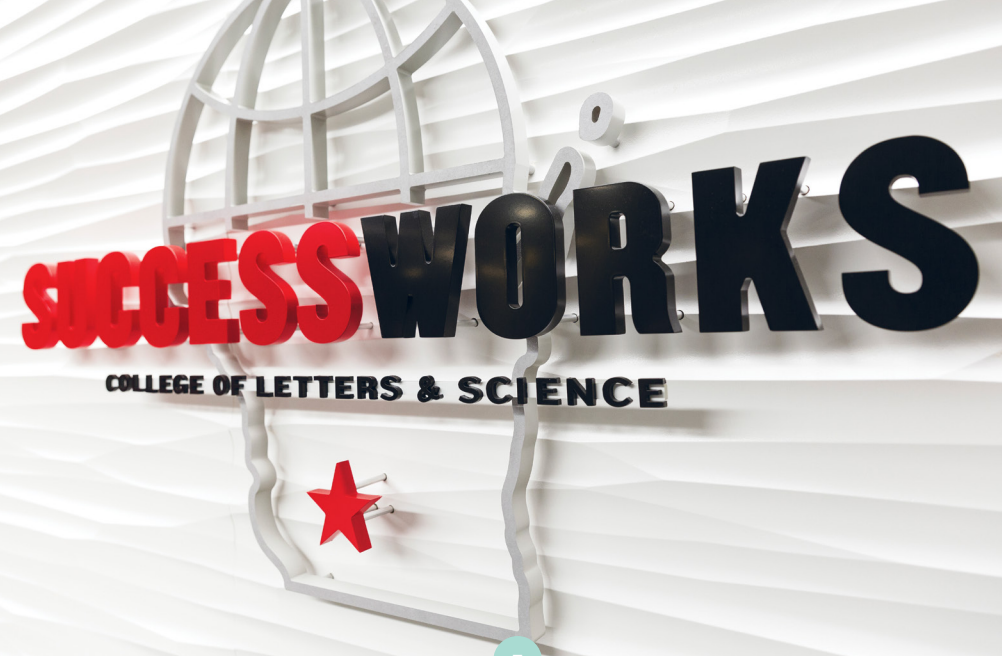
PHOTO: COLTON MANSAVAGE

High Energy

The Wisconsin Energy Institute's graduate students and postdoctoral researchers play an enormous role in the transition to a sustainable, resilient and affordable energy future centered on social and economic equality. WEI recently profiled one of its research assistants, L&S graduate student Surajudeen Omolabake, from Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Omolabake, a PhD candidate in chemistry professor Shannon Stahl's lab, is studying the conversion of waste woody materials, known as lignin, to useful chemicals via oxidation chemistry. “These chemicals are mostly derived from petroleum sources,” says Omolabake, who grew up in the oil-producing Niger Delta region where pollution is a huge problem. “I have seen some of the negative effects of petrol. It would be cool if we could primarily obtain these compounds from renewable sources like trees, so we can keep our planet pristine.” —condensed from a Q&A by Mary Riker

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SURAJUDEEN OMOLABAKE





3

Always Be Networking

SuccessWorks has served more than 42,000 unique students since opening in 2017. In addition to fairs and networking events, SuccessWorks hosts “Mock Interviews” where students get practice and employers have opportunities to pitch their positions to their top prospective recruits.

“Every semester we’ve hosted Mock Interviews, at least one of our students has gotten hired for a position in the company they did the practice interview with,” says Executive Director Rebekah Pryor Paré.

A year ago, as COVID-19 was sending shockwaves through the college labor market, SuccessWorks developed approaches to meet employers’ needs and offered

more than 40 opportunities over the year for students to virtually connect with employers, including traditional career fairs, panels and low-key networking events. During the 2020–2021 academic year, 168 employers worked with SuccessWorks on hiring and recruitment programs, outside of traditional career fairs. That network is made of employers large and small, including organizations with operations in Wisconsin, such as Deloitte, Yahara Software, GE Healthcare, Epic, and American Family Insurance. “These connections between students and employers, plus our strategic consulting with companies, have never before been done on this scale at UW–Madison,” Paré says.

4

Growth of UW–Madison’s Computer Sciences major in the last decade. “Many of our students go to work for banks, in financial tech, in the insurance industry. Some even go into agriculture, which is being transformed by technology,” says Department of Computer Sciences chair, Remzi Arpacı-Dusseau.

800%

5

Humanities Prize

Noah Mapes (BA ’21, Art History) received the 2021 Iwanter Prize for Undergraduate Research for his senior thesis on the “Indian Brand” sculpture series created by Onondaga artist Peter B. Jones in 1968. Mapes highlights how the series reflected a greater need to reconsider Indigenous representation in commercial settings; he also argues for a new artistic category, “Native Pop,” which represents a unique branch of Pop art concerning Indigenous issues and empowerment. Mapes, a member of the inaugural group of L&S Dean’s Ambassadors, says his interest in the topic was spurred by his interdisciplinary experiences in Indigenous and material culture studies at UW–Madison. Two more recent L&S graduates received the \$500 Honorable Mention prize: Alyssa Hamrick (BA ’21, History) and Taylor Leigh Scofield (BA ’21, Art History, Political Science).

The \$2000 prize for outstanding humanities-based scholarship was established in 2000 by alumnus Sidney E. Iwanter (BA ’71, History). “In this academic year, featuring a landscape of such chaos and uncertainty, it is uplifting to witness such a continuing form of scholarship from these seniors,” said Iwanter.




5



How does a spider weave its web?

BY KELLY APRIL TYRRELL





Emily Setton removes the lid from a small, plastic dish on her lab bench. Within the clear, rectangular plate are half-circle wells containing hundreds of round beads about the color and size of couscous — the large kind.

Setton, a graduate student in the lab of Integrative Biology Professor Prashant Sharma, is just back from a field trip to desert-like southeastern Colorado, where she stealthily collected these eggs from the grips of the female Texas brown tarantulas guarding them within their burrows in the sand. She needed the embryos for her research into spiders' unique forms and abilities.

"I really wanted to understand how spiders make spinnerets, and how their legs may have been modified over time to make them. What's the genetic architecture of the web-weaving appendages?" says Setton. "I am interested in how you make novel structures — how do they evolve and how does nature create novelty at the genetic level?"

Setton tried to use the eggs of common house spiders, but they're just too small to apply the research methods she needed. Tarantula eggs, she found, were much better suited to the task. Keeping a few furry spiders around as pets isn't so bad, either. They don't eat much, though taking them for walks is discouraged.

The spinneret of a spider is an incredibly unique organ. No other animal possesses one like it. Setton is profoundly curious how this happens.

"Spinnerets are one of... those inventions of evolution that has allowed a group of animals to become incredibly successful," she says. "They're found all over the world, except in Antarctica, where it's too cold."

Sharma's lab studies spiders and their ancestors to ask questions about how their unique forms came about. Does creating the spinneret of the spider involve co-opting genes that already existed for other purposes — say, genes involved in respiratory organs or leg development — or does nature evolve new genes for new functions?

"My advisor wants to know why daddy long legs (or harvestmen, which are not spiders) have long legs. I want to know: How do spiders weave webs?" Setton explains. "The answer is, we don't know. We don't know how silk is made or how the spinnerets and the spigots in spinnerets are made, at the genetic level. There is so much we don't know; my inner child wants to know."

So, Setton has embarked on a mining expedition of sorts, examining the appendages of developing spider embryos over time, looking for which genes get turned on and when — and where in their bodies.

She's comparing to other species to see if she can tell just how old or new any particular gene is, and what these genes do in other related species.

"Some trends are emerging that indicate spinnerets express a significant number of 'old' genes and a significant number of 'new' genes," she explains, based on her recent research, funded in part by the Emlen, John and Virginia Award Fund for Outstanding Graduate Work in Zoology.

The work is hard, and there's virtually no playbook. Few have trod where Setton finds herself today.

"I never thought I would work in a lab where tarantula hunting was a thing we did," she says. "I like the troubleshooting. I like the challenge of it, studying a non-model system. It's frustrating sometimes, but it's also very fun because a lot of it is new." ■



FACULTY

Moving Up

Ananth Seshadri explores the factors that determine social and economic mobility.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

Ananth Seshadri spends much of his time studying the economic and social factors that allow — or prevent — a richer, fuller life for each succeeding generation.

“If America has a civic religion, it is that every child should have the same economic opportunity and have

an equal chance at the American Dream,” says Seshadri, who holds the Todd E. and Elizabeth H. Warnock Chair in Economics.

But it only takes a quick scan of the news headlines to realize that the reality is far different from the dream.

Over the past four decades, significantly fewer people have achieved a higher standard of living than their parents did in previous generations. According to a 2019 study, only 44 percent of Millennials (children born between 1981 and 1996) were in jobs with higher pay than their parents when both were age 30, while 49 percent had positions with a lower salary.

“While talent is broadly distributed across America, economic opportunity is not,” Seshadri notes. To economists, economic opportunity is a dynamic concept that includes how resources accumulated by one generation are translated into the next one.

While location clearly plays a role — it’s easier to move up in a thriving city than in an economically depressed one — there are also several other factors at play. Over the



Ananth Seshadri

PHOTO: PAULUS MUSTEKIS

past decade, Seshadri has been among the leading researchers trying to understand what has changed, by examining the connection between parents' education and financial success and the social mobility of their children.

"What I am trying to do is to disentangle the causal effect of a mother's education and earnings on her children's education," Seshadri explains. "In the age-old literature, they used to call it nature versus nurture — the advantages you were born with as opposed to what you learn. If you hold fixed the child's education, what can you say about the child's possible earnings, conditional on the mother's education? The answer to this question helps isolate the significance of being raised by educated parents."

From a public policy standpoint, it is a critical question to answer. If the correlation between generations is largely causal — your parents are well off and educated, and therefore, so are you — then it's possible that policy initiatives could have a significant and long-lasting impact on social mobility. If that's not the case, such policies would have far less impact.

"While talent is broadly distributed across America, economic opportunity is not."

ANANTH SESHADRI
Professor of Economics,
Todd E. and Elizabeth H. Warnock
Chair in Economics

One of the causal factors identified by Seshadri's research is called "parental spillover" — the idea that a parent's human capital — the available time and ability they have to teach and interact with their children — has a significant effect in determining how talented those children will grow up to be. Not surprisingly, that concept is tied to the parent's economic standing. If the parents are working constantly and struggling to make ends meet, they're less likely to have time and energy to invest in their children's human capital.

"Conditional on measures of innate ability, the correlation between parental income and children's educational attainment is larger now than it was decades ago," says Seshadri. This means that children are more likely to do better if their parents are doing well right now.

Where might social policy make a difference? Seshadri's research indicates that the opportunity for greatest impact comes in early childhood. Shifting education subsidies to the period when children are ages 0–5, instead of waiting until they're college-age, appears to have the largest effect on the next generation's social mobility.

"Learning earlier affects the ability to learn later," he explains. "Small differences early on could generate large differences later in life, which are then transmitted into future generations."

More recently, Seshadri has turned his attention to identifying and exploring some of the factors that impact the timing of children, as well as how many children parents end up having — which is proving to also affect social mobility.

Unintentional pregnancies tend to be more prevalent among low-income adults. Seshadri's research reveals that unintended children are likely to have worse future outcomes because their parents are likely to be more financially constrained and the family structure is likely to be less stable.

"These two facts combined generate a poverty trap that significantly reduces social mobility," Seshadri says. "In fact, unintended fertility rate is the strongest predictor of intergenerational mobility among all traditional measures including residential segregation, inequality and social capital."

Seshadri and his co-researcher looked at the rates of unintended pregnancies in each state, finding that states with higher rates also have lower rates of intergenerational mobility.

"Ensuring equal access to family planning and contraceptives would help to reduce this gap and boost mobility across generations," he says. ■

The available time and ability that parents have to interact with their children has a significant effect on determining how talented those children will grow up to be.

PHOTO: EGEGEGJIEW / GETTY

STUDENTS

Warm Welcome

UW-Madison can seem intimidating for many students who are the first in their families to attend college or who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups. The L&S Summer Collegiate Experience (SCE) prepares these new students for success. Students get a jump on coursework, learn good study habits, find out where to go and who to ask for help, and hone their writing skills. Along the way, most end up making lifelong friends. Director Nick Ewoldt and two students offer insights on SCE's impact, its temporary virtual format, and what it's like to be a peer mentor.

INTERVIEWS BY
MARY ELLEN GABRIEL





Nick Ewoldt

Director, Summer Collegiate Experience

S **CE has grown!** In the early days, there were around 20 students in the program. This summer, we have the largest cohort with nearly 200 students. We canceled 2020's program due to COVID-19, but for summer 2021, we tried a virtual format. However, the beauty of SCE is that it's very much an in-person, lived experience. Students eat meals together, study together and live together in Tripp Residence Hall. It's a community. We tried to replicate that remotely, but it had a different feel and we can't wait until next summer, when we can be together on campus.

Our curriculum has changed greatly. Ten years ago, there were only two course offerings. This summer we have ten – including communication arts, computer sciences, math, political science, and, of course, writing. These mirror the broad L&S curriculum and help students fulfill general education requirements. House fellows – undergraduate peers assigned to the floors of Tripp Hall – have been part of the program since the beginning, but a few years ago, we added graduate students as house fellows. They offer a different perspective.

SCE is populated by several partner programs, including the pre-college PEOPLE program, the First Wave program, and our L&S Center for Academic Excellence program. All of these have been growing and serving more students, which means growth for SCE.

Our peer mentors model what it's like to be a successful student at UW. They open up conversations about it. What is it like to work here? What's it like to study abroad? What's it like to do undergraduate research?

SCE students are talented, curious learners. But do they feel welcomed at UW? Can they find a home here? The peer-to-peer mentoring helps them envision that.

Hope Ngirwe '23

SCE peer mentor

HOMETOWN *Spencer, Wis.*

MAJOR *Communication Sciences and Disorders*

I **was born** in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We came to Wisconsin 15 years ago because there was war and we had to relocate.

I went through SCE in 2019, before the pandemic. I think that was when I came out of my shell. In SCE, not only did I get to explore different parts of myself, like my Congolese heritage, but I got to meet people who listened and wanted to get to know me. It was in SCE that I met my two best friends.

Our house fellows took us to class and created events where we'd all come in, play games and talk. They'd cook for us. They really facilitated community by bringing everyone together. We call them peer mentors now — I was a peer mentor this summer, even though it was virtual. It's harder online, but we all worked together really well to make fun events and find our similarities.

When I first started, new in SCE, those first couple days were — oh, I didn't know anybody! I went to events, met people from First Wave and the PEOPLE program, and soon realized we weren't just from these different groups, we were all UW students, going through this together.

I remember we were playing this card game called Spoons. I was surrounded by a bunch of people that I didn't know, and we were just all laughing. It didn't matter where we were from, or what program we were from, it just mattered that we were building these connections.

This year, I am also a peer mentor for the L&S Center for Academic Excellence as well as a late-night coordinator for Housing during the weekends. After graduation, I hope to become a physician's assistant.





Monica Prado '22

SCE peer mentor

HOMETOWN *Beaver Dam, Wis.*

MAJOR *Psychology*

I went through SCE in 2018. I remember opening my letter from UW and thinking — oh no, I have to complete this program over the summer? I'm not going to have time with my friends and family!

I was super-anxious when move-in day came, but my house fellow was so welcoming. She said, "Come on, I can help you with whatever you need or whatever questions you have." My mom came with me from Beaver Dam and told me, "You shouldn't be scared about anything. People seem like they care and want to see you succeed."

It was at study table where I met people that I am still friends with to this day. SCE helped me with study habits, time management, and communicating with professors or advisors. I didn't get much of that in high school. If it wasn't for SCE, I would be more timid about reaching out.

SCE made me a stronger writer. When I write papers now, I remember specific skills taught by [writing instructor] Larry Edgerton.

Coming from a small high school and from a small home (I have a single mother) and going to such a big place — it was a complete culture shock to me. SCE was an important part of my transition from high school to college. It helped me feel a lot more at home.

By the end I was, like, how could I have not wanted to do this?

I was an SCE peer mentor this summer. Peer mentors do a lot of the groundwork — communicating with students, making sure they complete the work in their classes, making sure they have their laptops and other items. We are really caring people, too — we want them to have the best journey possible throughout college.

I'm also a CAE scholar, a member of the CAE advisory board, and I work in the L&S scholarships office. I'm also a part of a student organization called Badger Support Network. I'm graduating in May. After a gap year, I am thinking I want to go to law school. ■

INVESTING IN STUDENTS' SUCCESS

MORE THAN 70 STUDENTS are supported in their SCE experience thanks to the Shinners Family Fund Scholarship, which supports Wisconsin residents participating in the Center for Academic Excellence.

"George Shinners cherishes the opportunity to meet the students, chat with them about what's going on, and know that their experience is fulfilling. He's not only interested in offering

them financial support but also in how they are doing," says Ewoldt.

"The university gave me a lot of opportunities," says Shinners, who received a BS in Psychology in 1961 and an MS in Industrial Relations in 1964. "This is a way for us to offer opportunities. I hope that every one of these students is successful. I expect them to be."

CULTURE

Producer's Notes

With the support of the Kahl family and others, Professor Eric Hoyt is able to advance the production of an amazing digital film archive.

BY LOUISA KAMPS

When Eric Hoyt moved to Hollywood after college, the cinema-besotted

Kansas native landed a job in the mailroom of a prominent talent agency. His plan was to work his way up to becoming a producer. Hoyt, now the Kahl Family Professor of Media Production and a professor of film, media and cultural studies in the Department of Communication

Arts, found himself drawn to the industry trade papers that he passed out from his mail cart and pored over during his lunch hour.

Hoyt recognized that *Variety*, the *Hollywood Reporter* and others didn't just provide straightforward news about movie deals; they also reflected important trends playing out in the culture at large. Often the papers would indulge in hyperbole, or they would serve, as he says, "as community gatekeepers, by determining who's in and who's out." But invariably, they opened up interesting new questions about the film world and the impact of movies on society.

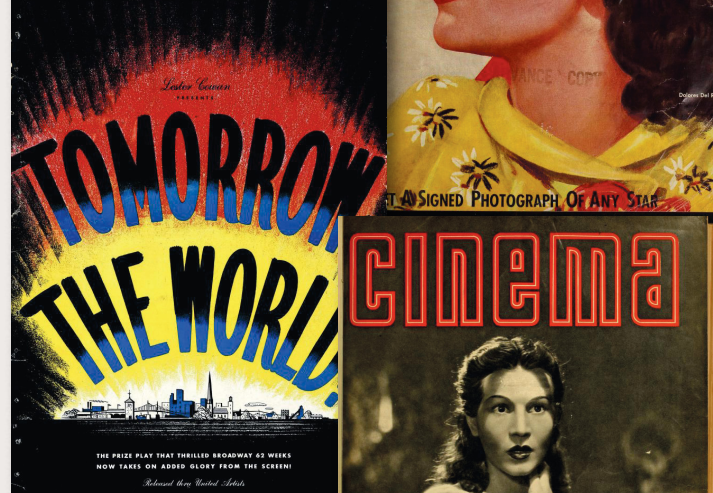
"Partly through being a critical thinker from college, and partly through the culture of the agency, I learned how to read the papers critically," Hoyt says.

At UW-Madison, Hoyt has worked to build up the Media History Digital Library (MHDL), a remarkable cache of more than 2.5 million digitized pages of historic film books and magazines that are available online for free public access. With help from the MHDL's founder, David Pierce, and other project supporters, Hoyt served as lead developer of Lantern, the MHDL's search platform, and Arclight, a data analytics and visualization app that allows users to see when certain Hollywood stories and movie stars were written about most often in the trades (Bette Davis's coverage peaked in 1940, per Arclight).

Since 2017, Hoyt has led the MHDL, which is now housed at UW-Madison and complements the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, a world-renowned archive of movie, theater, and television materials, established by UW in 1960 and also directed by Hoyt.

Hoyt is delighted that UW-Madison has become such a rich digital research destination not only for film and media scholars but for anyone interested in the history of movies and television. He says people have used the MHDL to investigate how movies fit into people's lives in England in the 1930s, and in Italy in the 1950s, as well as to explore how film magazines reflected trends in labor and media censorship and changing attitudes toward race, gender and beauty norms.

Rather than becoming a film producer, Hoyt is now a producer of digital resources that help us understand the history of movies and broadcasting. "I am incredibly fortunate to get to write about these media forms and, especially, to teach and work with students who bring their own passions and curiosity to [them]," he says. ■



In 2020, Hoyt received the first Kahl Family Media Production Professorship, created by Kelly Kahl, BA, Communication Arts, '89, the president of CBS Entertainment, and Kim Kahl, a film publicist. Hoyt says the Kahls' support has proven transformative. "This work is exciting and dynamic and collaborative, but it can also be expensive and resource-intensive. The Kahl family's funding, along with support from the ACLS [American Council of Learned Societies], is helping us globalize the collection as we enter into new partnerships with libraries based in France, Italy, and the New York Public Library, which has a tremendous Spanish language collection," he says.





CHANGE AGENTS

Social Justice Tradition

Rob Buono and Liz Cicchelli give back to help create a more just world.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

Even before they met at UW-Madison and decided to spend their lives together, Rob Buono (BA, Political Science/International Relations, '86) and Liz Cicchelli (BA, English, '91) understood the value and importance of social justice and education.

Buono's mother was a well-known early education specialist who co-founded a popular preschool on a farm in Minnesota. Cicchelli's

family includes several educators, including her sister, who founded a for-profit school in Chicago.

"If you want to live in a just and fair world, you need to be healthy and you need to be educated," says Buono, a member of the College of Letters & Science Board of Visitors. "The idea of access to these things as a basic social obligation is something Liz and I think a lot about."

That's a big part of what drove the couple to donate and establish a new faculty fellowship fund in the College of Letters & Science. Buono and Cicchelli asked that their fund be held at the College level rather than directed to a specific department, so that funds could be awarded to faculty across different fields of study each year. The fund's focus is to support faculty research in social justice, including areas such as global public health, healthcare delivery systems, human rights and investigative journalism.

The first recipient will be Lori Kido Lopez, Professor of Communication Arts and Director of the Asian American Studies Program, whose research includes topics such as the ways racial minorities are using digital platforms for

community organizing and advocacy. More recently, Lopez helped research and produce the #AtlantaSyllabus, an extensive list of resources designed to help members of the public combat anti-Asian hate and spark discussion about the Asian American experience.

"You have to give back to your community," Cicchelli says. "Others are struggling and don't have a voice — you need to take that responsibility."

Buono and Cicchelli have long been involved with international organizations like Human Rights Watch, where Cicchelli has served in multiple administrative roles with the group's Chicago chapter, as well as having been a member of the Board of Trustees for Partners In Health and a founding member of the Women's Alliance for Partners in Health in Chicago.

Buono and Cicchelli are in a unique position to understand social justice issues from both a rural and an urban perspective. The child of an Italian father who came to America in the 1960s, Buono owns Henry Street Partners, a Chicago-based real estate development company. He and Liz also own and operate Granor Farm, a 400-acre organic grain and vegetable farm located in Three Oaks, Michigan, near the shores of Lake Michigan. The farm offers programming and summer camps to youth in the surrounding communities.

"The farm is based on the idea of educating people on where food comes from, and the amount of work and energy that goes into growing it," Cicchelli explains.

Buono, meanwhile, has long been an integral part of the UW-Madison alumni and donor community (and daughter Eleanor is a UW-Madison freshman). He describes his four years as an undergraduate here as life-changing.

"And that's not intended to be a dramatic statement," he says. "L&S was instrumental in helping me develop critical thinking skills that I continue to benefit from today." ■

RESEARCH

Gold's Price

Meeting demand for gold comes at a high cost to the environment.

BY MARY MAGNUSON

If you're wearing gold jewelry right now, there's a good chance it came from an illegal mining operation in the tropics and surfaced only after some rainforest was sacrificed, according to a team of University of Wisconsin–Madison researchers and alumni who studied regulatory efforts to curb some of these environmentally damaging activities in the Amazon.

The researchers, including Mary Herman Rubinstein Professor of Geography Lisa Naughton, investigated mining-related deforestation in a biodiverse and ecologically sensitive area of the Peruvian Amazon to see whether formalizing and legalizing these mining operations might curb some of their negative effects.

Their study, published June 2 in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*, was co-authored by a group including UW–Madison alumnae Nora Álvarez-Berrios (PhD, Geography), now studying land use and climate impacts at the International Institute of Tropical Forestry, and Jessica L'Roe (PhD, Geography), now a geography professor at Middlebury College.

The team focused on an area around the Tambopata National Reserve in Peru from 2001 to 2014. During this period, Naughton says, demand for gold rose, roads penetrated the region and mining surged. In turn, mining-related deforestation rose by almost 100,000 acres over their study period.

"Because the gold is in the sediment scattered under the forest floor, to extract the gold, you have to remove the forest and dig," Álvarez-Berrios says. "You have to excavate sensitive waterways."

While these mining operations are often called "artisanal" or "small-scale," in aggregate they are very destructive. In many countries, they operate outside the law, and millions of people are involved across the tropics. Álvarez-Berrios says the typical first step to reducing the environmental impact of "artisanal" mining is to bring it under governmental oversight, formalizing the activity.

That way, local agencies can manage the impacts and protect both ecologically sensitive areas and the economic well-being of poor mine workers.

"Peruvian authorities, like authorities in other gold-rush sites, have given up on trying to stop gold mining. They're trying to confine it and contain it," L'Roe says. "Most of the studies about formalization are mainly about trying to help the poor or make it more fair for the poor. Seldom, almost never, as far as we can tell, have these formalization projects been assessed for their environmental impact. So that's what we were looking at."

During their study period, local agencies issued provisional titles to miners to conduct their operations safely. After receiving a provisional title, miners would, in theory, undergo a series of environmental impact and compliance assessments.

But, as L'Roe says they found, many miners simply took their provisional title as a green light to start mining and never went through with the environmental impact assessments. Over their study period, no mining operations made it through the full compliance process.

Naughton says that while formalizing mining has the potential to decrease environmental damage, it needs enforcement and regulations that match the local context. Formalization without environmental impact assessment or enforcement could just encourage more damaging and dangerous mining, or the expansion of these operations under the pretense that what they're doing is legal.

"To sort out in a fair way who owns what land, with what rights, that is a slow process," Naughton says. "This gold rush is explosive. By the time you have well-regulated and transparent public land and property rights, the forest will be gone."

The team plans to go back to Tambopata to present its results to local stakeholders. Many members of the community are already aware of the problems. The three co-authors hope their study will set a precedent for monitoring formalization interventions in Tambopata and other tropical sites losing forest to mining. ■



PHOTO: ERNESTO BENAVIDES / GETTY

View of an illegal dredger used for extracting gold dust in the Amazon rainforest of southeastern Peru.

TEACHING

Behind Their Words

Morris Young, the Charles Q. Anderson Professor of English, trains the graduate students who teach English 100, providing them with structure and strategies to effectively teach writing and communication skills to undergraduates in the largest writing course: 60+ sections.

INTERVIEW BY AARON R. CONKLIN

Our goal in English 100 is for students to be able to plan their own writing as they respond to particular writing purposes in their lives. I want them to develop the confidence and ability to ask questions about writing, whether that means asking an instructor for more information or clarification about an assignment, offering feedback to peers about their writing, or asking critical questions to make sense of what is going on in the world.

This past year made it clear that information literacy, critical thinking and ethical argument are necessary not only in our academic work but

in our daily lives. The COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and other Black victims, anti-Asian violence, a humanitarian crisis on the border, and increasing conflict in our political discourse raised fear, outrage and confusion among students and instructors. How can writing help them make sense of what's going on? How can students be critical users of information and critical communicators?

Our approach in preparing instructors is to model how they might approach their own students. We “teach” how to teach the course, and we want to provide a balance of guidance and flexibility to our instructors so they know they have the room to develop their own approach within the framework. Our goal is not to have instructors simply deliver a ready-made course; we want them to make the course their own so that they can teach it because they believe in it.

Overall, our goal is to be accessible, inclusive and anti-racist, which means including diverse writers and experiences, but also much more. It's about attending to our students and their real-life circumstances and understanding how violence and crises in the world are affecting them.

I want students to recognize the ubiquity and meaning of writing in their lives. Students often have a very limited idea of writing, because they experience it in very specific contexts such as school, where it is presented as a high-stakes assessment or as busywork, something to be done because it results in a grade. Or they imagine it as something highly creative or intellectual and leading to a vocation that they don't aspire to. Many students don't see where writing fits into their lives except as something that is simply transactional, functional or a burden because it's required. But writing is more than that if you let it be part of your life and find a place for it.

I was honored to be appointed the inaugural Charles Q. Anderson Professor of English in July 2020. This professorship was established by Dr. Erling Anderson, a UW-Madison alum who graduated with an English major in 1972, to honor his father, Charles Q. Anderson. Erling Anderson earned a PhD in clinical psychology and was an associate professor in the Department of Anesthesiology at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He felt strongly about the value of a liberal arts education and believed that his English degree set him up for success in the sciences. ■

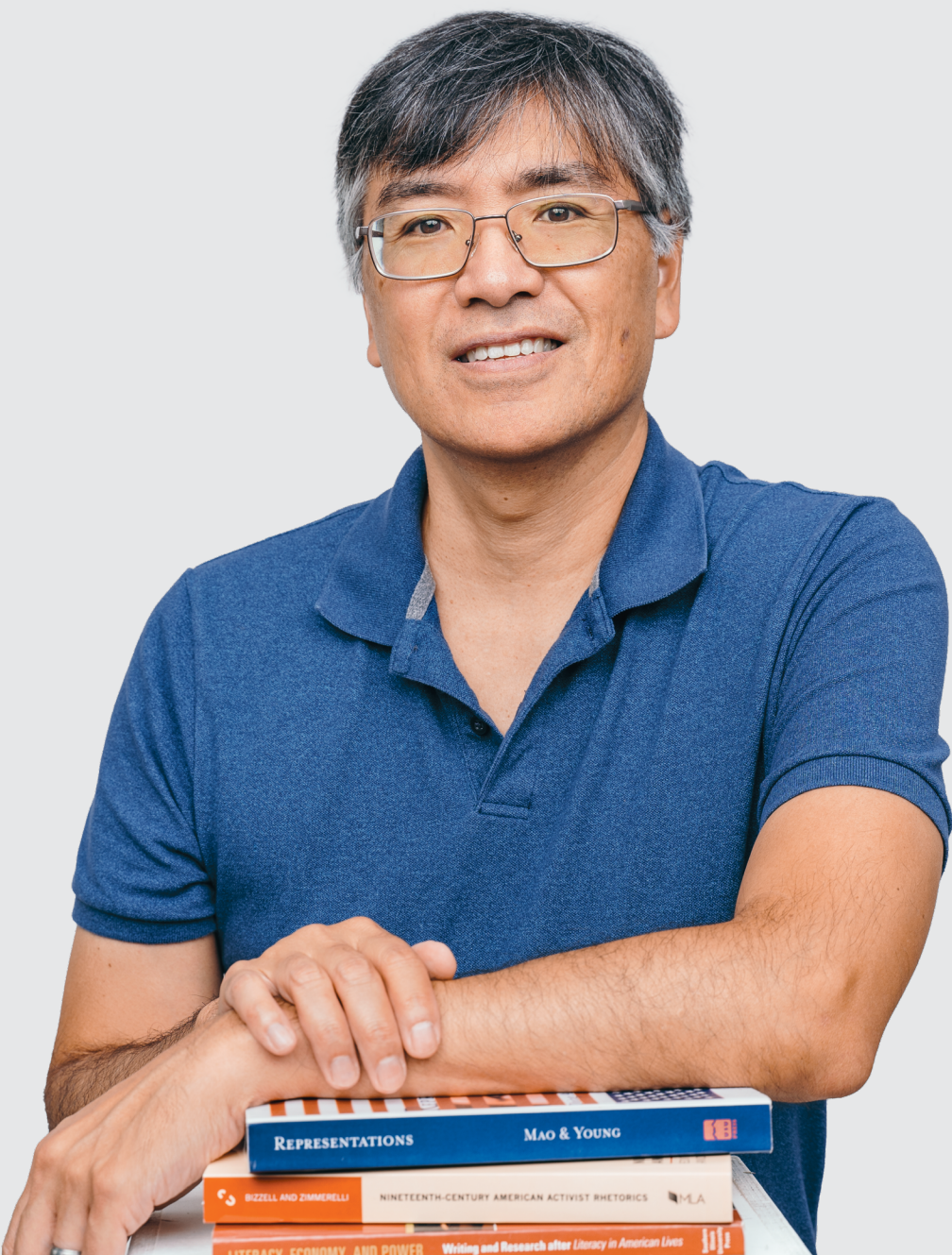




PHOTO: COLTON MANSavage

Jordan Ellenberg's latest book is *Shape: The Hidden Geometry of Information, Biology, Strategy, Democracy, and Everything Else*. His essays have appeared in *Slate*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other publications.

Math is Hard

If you want children to learn and understand math, you need to tell them how difficult it really is.

That was the message delivered by Professor of Mathematics Jordan Ellenberg in an insightful and thought-provoking essay published in the *Washington Post* in June. Ellenberg argued that when teachers and parents try to encourage students by telling them that grasping difficult concepts in algebra and trigonometry is “simple” — when it actually isn’t — the students end up feeling inadequate and quitting. “Following a recipe is easy once you know how to cook,” writes Ellenberg. “But recipes require tacit

knowledge and substantial experience that novices just don’t have. How much salt is a dash? What’s a rolling boil? You learn to cook by cooking, in the presence of someone who knows how.”

Dragon Man

Earlier this year, an international team of Chinese anthropologists discovered a fossilized skull wrapped up at the bottom of a well near Harbin, China. The discovery of what’s come to be known as the “Dragon Man Skull” has caused the scientific world to rethink the path of human evolution. While Professor of Anthropology John Hawks wasn’t involved in the discovery of the skull,

he was one of the foremost experts tapped to help media around the world put it into proper context. Hawks was quoted by the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Axios*, *Popular Science*, *Ars Technica* and *New Scientist*. His take, in a nutshell: The fossil is an amazing and important specimen, but may not, as others have argued, represent a new branch of the human species.

Fiction's Feels

More than any other genre, fiction is the realm of emotion. “Getting lost in a story” means entering a world we don’t want to leave. Now it appears that this rich, often fraught, journey of the imagination is good training for reading the emotions of people in real life.

A new study by a team of psychology researchers

The Dragon Man Skull





Ellen Zweibel, the W.L. Kraushaar Professor of Astronomy and Physics, was part of the largest group of female professors to gain induction to the National Academy of Sciences. In 2021, 59 of the 120 new NAS members were women.



Seth Pollak, the College of Letters & Science Distinguished Professor of Psychology, has been named a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, one of 184 artists, writers, scholars and scientists selected through a rigorous peer-review process from more than 3,000 applicants.



Professor of Physics **Victor Brar** was named a Sloan Research Fellow, winning an award given to early-career researchers. Brar's research focuses on developing new microscopy techniques to look at quantum systems.

at UW-Madison provides important new insight into a likely causal link between reading fiction and emotion recognition, combining behavioral experiments with methods from the digital humanities to show that exploring the mental states of fictional characters helps people recognize the expression of emotion in other human beings.

"For years, researchers had this sense that fiction readers were getting practice simulating other people's minds," explains Steven Schwering, a PhD student in psychology and the lead author on the study. "Our experiments help explain why people's experience with fiction affects their emotion recognition capabilities."

The team included professors of psychology Maryellen MacDonald (director of UW's Language & Cognitive Neuroscience Lab) and Paula Niedenthal (who leads the Niedenthal Emotions Lab). MacDonald, who studies how we comprehend and produce language, says fiction is rich with descriptions of emotion.

"Descriptions of characters' behaviors and emotions may provide a 'virtual reality' of sorts that readers can bring to their real-life experiences," she says. "It seems almost counterintuitive that an introverted activity like reading can actually help people learn to better recognize emotion in others."

Summoning Ghosts

Descended, the short film by Mead Witter School of Music trumpet professor Jean Laurenz, was showered with awards earlier this year: Best Musical Film (International Music Video Underground), Best Musical Film (Rome Music Video Awards), Best Female Composer (Toronto International Women's Film Festival), Best Experimental Music Video (International Short Film Awards) and Best Music (Hollywood International Golden Age Festival). Laurenz stars in and co-directed the film, a ghost story about 19th-century writer Lafcadio Hearn, from whom Laurenz is descended. Hearn was an Irish American who eventually emigrated to Japan, where he spent the rest of his life writing about that country's legends and ghost stories.



Troxell award recipient
Maria Ekern

Awards for Women

Four L&S students were awarded the Louise Troxell and Edna Kernwood Glicksman Award, given to outstanding women undergraduates, juniors or seniors, who demonstrate excellent intellectual ability and curiosity, engaged citizenry, appreciation of the broader world and participation in its affairs. Maria Ekern (Communication Arts and Political Science), Delaney Dvorak (Molecular and Cell Biology, Gender & Women's Studies), and Christabel Martinez (Social Work) received Troxell Awards, named for the UW-Madison Dean of Women from 1931 to 1956. Jinan Sous (Biochemistry) was given a Glicksman Award, named for the early-20th-century leader in the state's League of Women Voters and the State Federation of Women's Clubs. ■



the VISION



VARIES

AT THE BEGINNING, the goal seemed almost beyond reach: Raise \$500 million for L&S as part of the university's ambitious All Ways Forward campaign. Six years later, L&S surpassed that goal, thanks to thousands of supporters who believed in a world-class educational experience for our students. The gifts of many helped us realize this vision of excellence, but along the way there were moments that made us catch our breath as transformative change unfolded in real time. We extend deepest gratitude to those whose extraordinary generosity helped turn dreams into reality. Their profound impact on our campus, and on the lives of our students, will be felt long into the future.

BY MARY ELLEN GABRIEL

Shaping the Future

IN 2015, **JOHN AND TASHIA MORGRIDGE** announced their \$100 million lead gift to the All Ways Forward comprehensive campaign. Representing the largest single contribution from individual donors in the history of the institution, the gift was structured to match donations for new and enhanced professorships, chairs and distinguished chairs.

“This extraordinary gift, and the gifts it will inspire, will shape UW’s future in ways we cannot even foresee right now,” said Chancellor Rebecca Blank. Her words proved prescient. The “Morgridge Match” has helped to create 90 different professorships and distinguished chairs in L&S alone, across 25 departments. In the past, the Morgridges’ generosity helped shape the Morgridge Institute for Research, the School of Education and the Wisconsin School of Business. In February 2020, the Morgridges announced another \$70 million matching opportunity to support faculty recruitment and retention. Their most recent pledge: \$125 million to help fund a new headquarters for the School of Computer, Data, & Information Sciences — \$50 million of which is in the form of a challenge grant to double the impact of other donors’ gifts. Along with \$50 million from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), the new CDIS building will energize a new “tech corridor” in the heart of campus.



Gift of Love

JOEL BERMAN’S LOVE FOR HIS WIFE, Sandra Rosenbaum, has transformed the School of Social Work at UW-Madison. Three years ago, Berman, a member of the Letters & Science Board of Visitors, approached the school’s leadership to fulfill a promise he’d made to his wife of 27 years. Sandra, who received her graduate degree in social work from UW-Madison in 1976, wanted him to donate to the school to put dedicated, well-trained social workers into the field quickly while reducing the financial barriers to earning the degree. When Sandra passed away that summer, Berman created a scholarship in her name and that of her mother, Harriet, a New York social worker who had inspired Sandra’s love of the field. He wasn’t done. In June 2020, Berman fulfilled his promise to his wife and then some, donating the largest gift in the school’s history to rename the school the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work, placing it among an elite group of top named social work programs in the country.

Music to Our Ears

IT BEGAN WITH THE DREAM of a “campus arts corridor,” anchored by the Chazen Museum and a world-class performance venue where visiting artists could appear and where UW’s music students — long confined to the basement of the humanities building — could practice, learn and perform. Pamela Hamel and her husband, George (BA, Communication Arts, ’80), stepped forward with a naming gift, and the Mead and Witter families from Wisconsin Rapids offered critical support, enabling the new music venue to be built in one phase. The Hamel Music Center, designed by Holzman Moss Bottino Architecture, in partnership with local firm Strang and with acoustic design by Talaske/Sound Thinking of Oak Park, Illinois, opened in October 2019. Featuring the Sing Man & Florence Lee/Annette Kaufman Rehearsal Hall, the 650-seat Mead Witter Foundation Concert Hall, and the 315-seat Collins Recital Hall, the HMC enjoyed a triumphant first season. Director of Bands Scott Teeple calls the space a “state-of-the-art musical lab.” The interior color scheme reflects Wisconsin’s natural landscape: the blue lakes and the rich plums and golds of the maple leaf, our state tree. “It is the Wisconsin Idea made audible,” declared Susan Cook, director of the newly named Mead Witter School of Music.



Pioneering Spirit

WHEN MARY HERMAN RUBINSTEIN earned her MD from UW-Madison in 1960, she was one of four women in her medical school class. Her path to science started when she was a child surrounded by nature, and by age 12, she was picking out insects from mud samples at the research lab and thinking about medical school. After earning her MD, Rubinstein served as the sole female intern at a hospital affiliated with Dartmouth College before returning to Madison for a residency in neurology, then on to Stanford where she helped build up a new neuropathology program with her husband, Lucien Rubinstein. She eventually joined a team at the National Institute of Mental Health in schizophrenia research. After retiring, Rubinstein returned to Madison. She passed away in 2017, but not before establishing the inaugural chair in neuroscience at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health and endowing up to seven professorships in Letters & Science. “Everything about her life speaks to creativity and resilience and being unafraid to change course,” says Anne Pringle, the first Letters & Science Mary Herman Rubinstein Professor of Botany. “I am glad to honor her legacy.”





Training Future Leaders

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN in the U.S. Senate for 24 years, Herb Kohl demonstrated his deep commitment to public service and his ethos of civility in public debate and policymaking. In May 2019, he extended that legacy by announcing a \$10 million gift from Herb Kohl Philanthropies to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs.

The Kohl Initiative is the largest donation in the La Follette School's history and allows the school to support undergraduate public policy internship opportunities, increase partnerships with nonpartisan organizations, host conferences on critical policy topics, and teach more high-demand classes in areas such as public and nonprofit leadership, economic development and social entrepreneurship. "Our democracy is being threatened by bitter partisanship, and the La Follette School is poised to lead by example — fostering cooperation, respectful discourse and service to others," said Kohl, who was a founding member of the La Follette School's Board of Visitors. In 2016, Kohl's \$1.5 million donation to the La Follette School launched the Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition, supporting collaborative faculty-student research.

PHOTO In May, master's degree students at the La Follette School celebrate graduation in the Assembly Chamber of the State Capitol.

Career Success

IN 2014, then-L&S Dean Karl Scholz set forth an ambitious goal: to completely transform how we prepare every liberal arts student — not just the highly motivated or well-connected few — for success after graduation. Today, a busy, thriving career center inspires L&S students to identify their passions, network with alumni and connect with employers. SuccessWorks was launched with a significant proportion of private funding and continues to increase its impact on students' lives thanks to generous donors. Experts from peer universities have toured SuccessWorks to learn more about best practices, which include Career Communities anchored by dedicated advisors who empower students to explore clusters of occupations like Business & Entrepreneurship or Tech, Data & Analytics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SuccessWorks advisors and staff have connected students with remote job opportunities, as well as micro-internships and short-term projects. Associate Dean and Executive Director of SuccessWorks Rebekah Pryor Paré said the pandemic has highlighted what SuccessWorks was created to do. "We are very invested in how our students are taking advantage of their education. Whether they are heading to graduate school or entering the world of work, we have services that support them," she told Wisconsin Public Radio in spring 2020.

PHOTO Chancellor Rebecca Blank, then-L&S Dean Karl Scholz (now Provost) and Executive Director Rebekah Paré celebrate the opening of SuccessWorks.





Supporting Science

HIS NAME IS SYNONYMOUS WITH SCIENCE on campus, and Wayland Evan Noland supports the College of Letters & Science to ensure that intellectual pursuit remains strong into the future. As an undergraduate at UW-Madison, Noland took a wide range of classes. “I had a splendid run of teachers in all different areas,” he said, including his own father, Lowell E. Noland, for whom Noland Hall (home to the Department of Integrative Biology) is named. After a stint in the Army as a medic, Noland earned a master’s degree and a PhD in chemistry at Harvard University and began a 64-year career as a professor of chemistry at the University of Minnesota. To ensure that future generations enjoy the high quality of teaching and the excitement of discovery that set Noland on his life’s path, he established distinguished chairs in the areas of chemistry, integrative biology and limnology, and contributes funds to help those units support student research. “He is an amazing alumnus who embodies the Wisconsin Idea,” says Jake Vander Zanden, the director of UW’s Center for Limnology and a recipient of one of the three Wayland E. Noland Distinguished Chairs.

Championing Humanities

NO FUNDING ENTITY HAS DONE MORE for the humanities at UW-Madison than the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Responding to multiple bold proposals from UW’s Center for the Humanities, the foundation granted support for innovative programming, faculty excellence and a radical re-envisioning of the humanities that focused on public outreach and shared learning. Four new professorships — as well as a distinguished chair in ancient Greek philosophy — opened interesting fields of study and enabled departments to offer a “constellation” of linked courses, one of the high-impact practices that enrich the student experience here. Mellon funds helped create the Public Humanities Exchange for Undergraduates to help students connect their humanities scholarship with the community. Another new initiative, Engaging the Humanities, created public humanities graduate fellowships; launched the UW’s first-ever graduate certificate in the public humanities; and offered a chance for faculty in the humanities to reorient their work to reach audiences outside of the university. In January 2017, with support from the Mellon Foundation, the Consortium of Humanities, Centers & Institutes (CHCI) moved to UW-Madison. CHCI includes 220 members from 25 countries, and its relocation to Madison from Duke University amplifies the spotlight on humanities outreach and scholarship here. ■

PHOTO Undergraduates in the humanities worked on the Quarantine Quilt Project in partnership with the Wisconsin Museum of Quilts & Fiber Arts.





TOWERING POTENTIAL

The new Chemistry Tower is a nine-floor wonder of glass, steel and concrete that looks out on the heart of campus from the south side of University Avenue and will meet critical needs with efficiency and flair.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

The Department of Chemistry had a problem, and its name was Chemistry 344. In some ways, it was a good problem—the basic organic chemistry laboratory course fulfilled a requirement for UW’s undergraduate students, and with more and more of them gravitating toward STEM degrees, the chemistry undergraduate program was attracting upwards of 7,000 students per semester. The bad news was that the current instructional facilities in the 1960s-era Daniels Building were ill-suited to accommodate them, while the Shain Tower, built in 2000, was designed for research. The result: a massive enrollment bottleneck.

Despite chemistry faculty and staff offering courses almost around the clock, nearly 20 percent of undergraduates were forced to take Chemistry 344 somewhere other than on the UW-Madison campus — in some cases, as far away as UW-Whitewater. And more and more students were forced to delay graduation because they couldn't access the course.

"The enrollment pressure was tremendous," says Robert McMahon, the former chair of the department and member of the building committee for the new Chemistry Tower. "And the truth was, many of our incoming freshmen, coming to UW's flagship campus, had better lab facilities in their high schools."

For more than a decade, campus leaders and UW supporters lobbied and fundraised for new facilities to better meet

students' needs. In 2015, the Wisconsin state legislature agreed to provide \$90 million of the tower's \$135 million price tag as part of the 2016 state budget, leaving the remaining \$45 million to be raised by UW.

With UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank leading the charge, the campus and donor community stepped up in a major way. Most of the donations came from individuals who had no direct connection with the Department of Chemistry. Instead, they came from what McMahon calls "the great cast of campus stewards."

"The new Chemistry Tower is really a testament to the power of our campus community to recognize a problem and then join together to find a successful solution," Blank says. "Ensuring that we can meet the evolving instructional needs

of our students goes to the very heart of our mission at UW-Madison, and that's exactly what this project accomplishes."

The new tower accomplishes, but it also astonishes. Entering from Mills Street, the first thing visitors see is a grand staircase, split into twin pathways of red and white marble terrazzo. Those stairs lead down to a sub-basement where two oversized lecture halls, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and named in honor of supporters John and Tashia Morgridge, seat 362 and 250 students, respectively. The space outside the lecture halls has been designed to encourage student and teacher interaction between classes, something that couldn't occur organically in the old space. The walls are adorned with erasable glass boards to capture post-class notes and chemical formulas. Around the corner, a large and well-stocked lecture demonstration area allows class assistants to stock carts with the proper chemicals and equipment and wheel them in to waiting instructors less than 50 yards away.

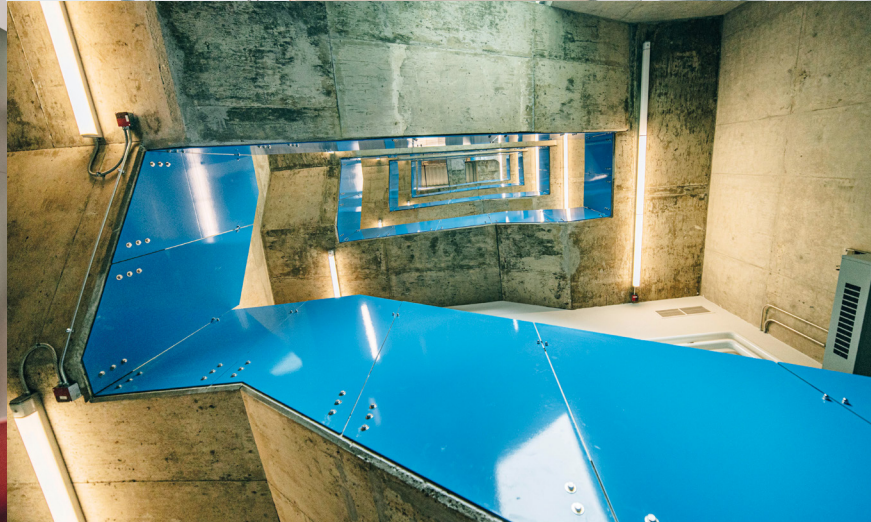
The tower's fifth and sixth floors are where the bottleneck issue really gets addressed. Five organic chemistry labs and an organic synthesis lab feature enough space to accommodate students, and there are individual "write-up rooms" where students can capture data and take notes. The '60s-era stations have been upgraded as well — for example, each lab station features a transparent fume hood instead of the old metal hoods.

"Rather than having a feeling of standing in a canyon, surrounded by these metal boxes, these stations have a remarkably open appearance and feel," says McMahon. "After all these years, we're setting a national standard for how chemistry labs will be designed and conducted."

The tower also includes a new Undergraduate Special Projects Lab, designed to allow students to get experience conducting smaller research projects with chemistry faculty and staff.

One of the most important new features is a multipurpose learning studio that can be used for classes, poster sessions





“After all these years, we’re setting a national standard for how chemistry labs will be designed and conducted.”

ROBERT McMAHON
Professor of Chemistry

and receptions. John Moore, the emeritus professor of chemistry who advised the building commission on curricular issues, is excited about this. The space’s active learning components dovetail nicely with the Redesigning for Active Learning in High-Enrollment Courses (REACH) Initiative, a project the chemistry department has been spearheading since 2018.

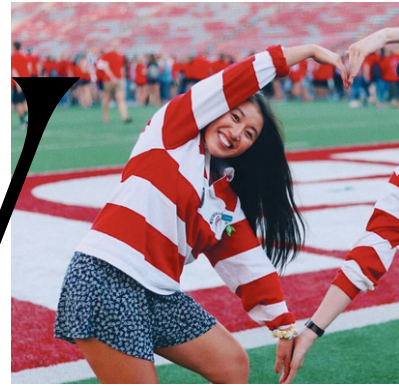
“In a room like this, I could go back and forth between lecturing and having students work in groups,” says Moore. “In the old space, we had to schedule these activities on different days and in different buildings.”

On the second floor, the Phillip W. Gross Information Commons takes the concept of a chemistry library almost entirely virtual. Instead of rows of bookshelves, there are both enclosed study rooms and open public study spaces, encouraging multiple types of interactions.

“We became the poster child for the library of the future when we were designing it, because the library system was moving all their books, repositories and bound journals online as we were doing this,” explains Moore.

Construction on the new Chemistry Tower is almost completed and the hotly anticipated space is expected to be open to students later this academic year. Attention then turns to renovating three floors of the Daniels Building, which houses multiple floors of general chemistry labs, undergraduate program offices and meeting rooms. Over the next year, it will be modernized into the permanent home of the general chemistry programs.

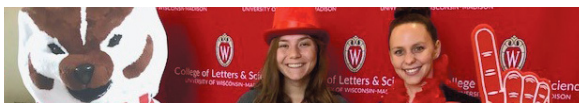
“We still have a couple of years’ worth of work ahead of us,” says McMahon. “Although obviously we’ll have a much less dramatic scale than building a whole new tower.” ■



Every Gift Matter

You don't have to write a million-dollar check to help make a big impact in L&S. Giving back at any level furthers discovery, enriches the student experience and feels great.

BY SCOTT A. CARTER





While major philanthropic gifts like endowed professorships and named facilities receive big headlines, annual gifts to discretionary funds power the everyday innovations occurring throughout the College of Letters & Science.

Just ask Erica Noble, a second-year graduate student in anthropology whose research was funded by the Arvin B. Weinstein Prize, an award supported by gifts to the department's annual fund. Noble's work explores the evolution of the pelvis in hominids — the taxonomic family that includes *Homo sapiens* — and its role in making us a bipedal species.

Noble will present her work at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in November 2021 in Baltimore, Maryland, which will also be her first time attending a national conference.

"It's very exciting," says Noble. "I'm really looking forward to networking with other biological anthropologists. I don't know that I would have been able to attend without support from the department."

Or talk to Sissel Schroeder, Professor of Anthropology and former department chair, who has directed gifts to the department's annual fund toward critical support for student and faculty research.

"Anthropology relies on gifts from our alumni and friends to provide hands-on field and research experiences for our undergraduate and graduate students," explains Schroeder. She has leveraged annual funds in recent years to support graduate student travel, invite visiting scholars, and host community-building events within the department.

The importance of annual giving has increased greatly over the past few years, driven by social media campaigns like Day of the Badger and Fill the Hill. Launched in 2019, Day of the Badger brings the UW community together in celebration of their shared connection to campus, raising spirits as well as funds to support the university's mission. (Not to brag, but L&S led campus in the number of gifts and revenue raised for both the 2019 and 2021 campaigns.)

Fill the Hill, the annual fall fundraiser that adds a pink flamingo to Bascom Hill every time

"I want to see the Badgers who come after me succeed."

CLAIRE ALLEN (BA '14)

a gift is made, is another highly anticipated digital campaign; these are a growing part of the College's advancement strategy. In 2020, 29 percent of gifts to the College and its departments were made online, a 55 percent increase since 2017. While most gifts continue to arrive by physical mail, online giving and social media allow supporters to give publicly and share their love of UW with alumni and friends around the globe.

Ambassadors play a key role. Seap Bhardwaj (BA, Economics/Political Science, '21) served as a social media ambassador for the Department of Political Science during the 2021 Day of the Badger campaign.

"Over the past four years, I have been able to participate in amazing opportunities, all thanks to support from political science," says Bhardwaj. "I wanted to encourage others to give back!"

Another ambassador during last year's Day of the Badger campaign was Louis Holland, Jr., a longtime L&S supporter and current chair of the L&S Board of Visitors.

"As a member of the College of Letters & Science's Board of Visitors, I get to hear firsthand about all of the amazing work taking place on campus," he shared with followers. "Our faculty have launched startups that will power the Wisconsin economy for decades to come, and they ensure that L&S students will leave Madison prepared for whatever lies ahead."

For young alumni, small gifts allow them to establish a philanthropic relationship with their department or College early in their careers while also making an immediate impact on the next generation. "I want to see the Badgers who come after me succeed," says Claire Allen (BA '14). "I loved my time as a student at UW-Madison and want to do my small part to ensure that others have a great experience." ■



Venturing Toward Better Health

Kristi (Guenther) Ebong
helps shape the cutting-edge
digital companies that are
redefining how we access care.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

Kristi Ebong
(BA, International
Studies/Political
Science, '04)

Kristi Ebong's pivotal moment came early in her tenure as a freshman at UW-Madison. Ebong was scarcely a week into her first classes when she watched New York City's Twin Towers fall on September 11, 2001. The experience rocked the Minnesota native's sense of, well, just about everything.

"From then on, I became interested in learning about how the world works and understanding the power dynamics between people," says Ebong.

“I think there’s this misconception that you need to have a computer science degree or hard STEM background to offer value in the technology industry.”

KRISTI EBONG

At UW, that interest translated into a political science and international studies major, where she learned to connect the dots between power structures and the people who create and run them. Ebong then leveraged that interest — and a deep passion for improving healthcare access — into a cutting-edge career at the heart of the digital healthcare industry in Silicon Valley.

As Head of Partnerships and Market Development for Define Ventures, an early-stage venture capital firm that invests in digital health companies, Ebong helps to manage more than \$315 million in investments in nearly 20 emerging companies. Define Ventures’ partner companies include both startups and companies looking to grow and transform the way we access healthcare services digitally.

“I’ve been really focused on digital health and innovation and figuring out how we bring emerging technologies and to-scale solutions to some of the hardest healthcare problems,” Ebong says. “What’s so exciting about this is that we are actually meeting the needs of a huge population whose needs have not been met, historically.”

Define Ventures’ partners include companies like Folx, a direct-to-consumer platform that provides products and services to members of the LGBTQ community, and MedArrive, a company founded by the former head of healthcare at Uber and Lyft that leverages EMS ambulance providers to deliver care to vulnerable senior patients in their homes. Define Ventures was also an initial investor in Hims and Hers Health Inc., the online prescription and personal-care products website that went public in 2017. Ebong’s job involves recruiting executive leadership talent, guiding business development, and fostering relationships between her partner companies and buyers and care providers.

Ebong gravitated to digital healthcare swiftly. After graduating from UW-Madison, she landed a job at Epic Systems, before the medical records software company became the behemoth it is today. (“I had a three-digit employee number,” she jokes.) The three years she spent there gave her an understanding of both the technology infrastructure within healthcare delivery operations and the flaws in the U.S. healthcare system.

“When you’re in the trenches facing problems firsthand, you’re either trying to solve them with technology, operations or both,” says Ebong. “It was a baptism by fire for me.”

After Epic, Ebong spent several years consulting — including a brief stint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under then-President Barack Obama. Ebong then headed back to Johns Hopkins University to earn graduate degrees in public health and business administration. She eventually landed at a Boston-based startup company called Orbita, which was focused on two-way conversational technology — think chatbots and automated phone agents. She took the role while on maternity leave with her third child in four years, commuting regularly from San Francisco to Boston. When the opportunity arose to work in San Francisco near her home, Ebong was excited to partner with Silicon Valley talent — and embrace a bike commute to her new office.

The skills Ebong developed at Epic, as a generalist who was able to convey the needs and experiences of a physician to a software engineer and then translate those needs to business entities and buyers, continue to serve her well. She also brings experience as a fundraiser and an investor to the entrepreneurs with whom she now partners.

“I think there’s this misconception that you need to have a computer science degree or hard STEM background to offer value in the technology industry,” says Ebong. “I think the biggest need is for people who understand business and can code-switch between different players.”

Ebong, who lives and works in the shadow of the Presidio of San Francisco with her husband and three young children, credits her UW-Madison liberal arts education for the skills she has honed over the years.

“It’s that mentality of knowing how to think,” she says. “If you want job security, become somebody who understands the industry and the ecosystem, and can apply problem-solving in a really creative way.” ■



Sharing Wisdom

Allan “Bud” Selig ’56, commissioner emeritus of Major League Baseball, plays two important roles in his popular UW history course: instructor and storyteller of some of his sport’s landmark moments.

INTERVIEW BY
JENNY PRICE ’96

It’s a weekday afternoon during the 2021 baseball season and Allan “Bud” Selig (BS, History/Political Science, ’56) is over the moon.

The Milwaukee Brewers have just stormed back from a 7–0 deficit against the Chicago Cubs, thanks in part to a grand slam from shortstop Willie Adames. But Selig expresses just as much joy when the conversation turns to the UW–Madison students enrolled in the history course he has been teaching with Professor David McDonald since 2015. “I’m lucky,” he says during a phone conversation from his office in Milwaukee during the fourth inning. “Because once I retired, I didn’t know what my life would be, and this has been remarkable.”

The 600-level seminar, Major League Baseball and Society Since World War II, focuses on how sports interact with social change, exemplified by Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in baseball. But with Selig as their instructor, students get a firsthand account of every aspect of modern baseball, from the scouting of talent to labor–management relations to the financing of stadium construction. Selig shared his experiences in the classroom in this interview, edited and condensed for length.

Supporting Excellence



As one of the university's most involved and supportive alumni, Bud Selig (who founded the Milwaukee Brewers in 1970 and served from 1998 to 2015 as acting and official Commissioner of Major League Baseball) and his wife, Suzanne, have given generously to support faculty excellence and student success. In 2010, they

endowed the Allan H. Selig Chair in History, focused on the relationship between sports and U.S. society from 1900 to the present. They have since endowed two more chairs in history, one of which is held by the department chair and provides resources to meet the department's most pressing priorities. Endowed chairs are enormously important in helping the history department attract and retain the very best faculty, and scholarships help attract the brightest undergraduates. In addition, Bud and Sue inspired the creation of a UW-Madison Great People Scholarship, which their friends from Major League Baseball have endowed as a tribute to the couple and their commitment to UW-Madison. The Suzanne and Allan "Bud" Selig Great People Scholarship has already supported more than 100 undergraduates from Wisconsin, many of them first-generation college students. The Seligs have also generously supported UW-Madison's student athletes.

In 2010, baseball great Hank Aaron and his wife, Billie, established the Hank Aaron Chasing the Dream Foundation 4 for 4 Scholarship in Honor of Commissioner Allan H. "Bud" Selig. This four-year scholarship is designated for a UW-Madison undergraduate student who has participated in Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee programs.

This fall will be the 13th time you've taught the course. What have you learned from this experience over time?

When I was a kid at the university, back in the '50s, I wanted to be a history professor. It has been a remarkable experience. I love my relationship with the students. I'm thrilled with my career, but I guess maybe it would have worked out fine because I've really enjoyed this.

What is it like to have discussions with students about the controversies you've lived through, including steroids, labor relations and issues of equity and diversity?

It's fascinating because I often wondered about how history would treat these issues and how people would look at them. Whether it's the steroid issue or labor relations ... in my era we had a lot of controversies. I love watching how the students react. Sometimes they don't always agree or come up with the things that I think, but that's great. That's why they're there.

What is your favorite topic to teach in this course? Why?

The Jackie Robinson stories. I think baseball is a social institution, and I really think that proves it. There are a lot of things that I enjoy, but that is certainly, if not my favorite, one of my favorites.

How do you see baseball as a social institution?

Baseball makes an enormous impact on our society, and it has the pluses and the minuses of any social institution, but it clearly is one. I just talked about Jackie Robinson [and] how that changed America. In fact, I think to this day that Jackie Robinson and [Brooklyn Dodgers General Manager] Branch Rickey, who signed him, are two of the most influential people of the 20th century.

How does engaging with our history in this way prepare these students for life after UW-Madison?

A history education to me is invaluable. It teaches us so much about life and about where we are and what we're doing and how we're doing it. It's a rare opportunity for them — they all say that to me — but it's a rare opportunity for me, too. My impression of the students gives me great comfort for the future. I say this to people all the time: You ought to come on Tuesdays and observe this class. These kids are smart, well prepared, thoughtful, sensitive — I can't say enough about them.

How long do you want to keep teaching this course? It sounds like you have no plans of stopping?

Well, I don't at this time. It's keeping me young, and it's so thought-provoking. We discuss all these events that I either did or lived through or watched. I know they enjoy it — I hope they know how much I enjoy it.

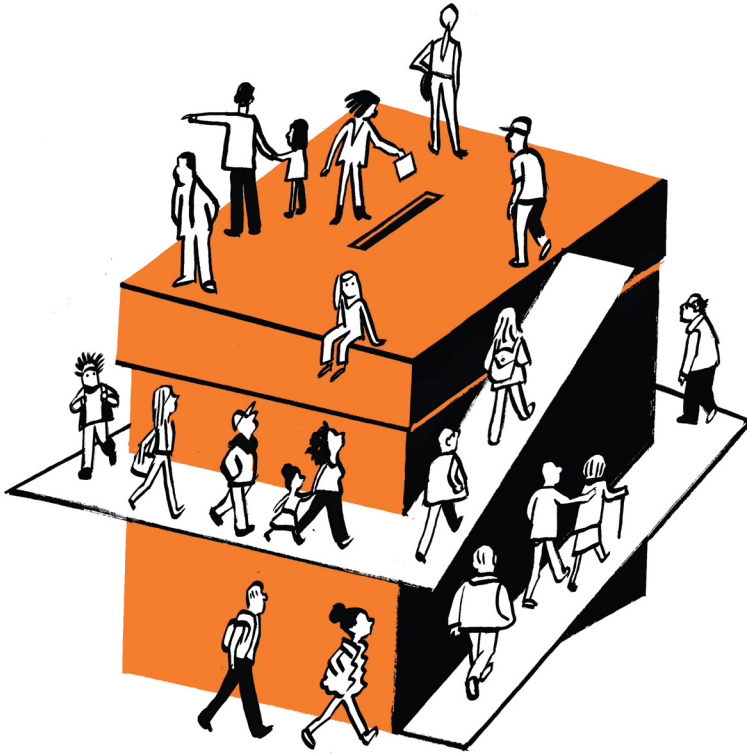
What kind of feedback do you get from the students?

What's made me happy is I've had more students either say to me or to others that it's the best course they took at UW — and that makes me really feel good. ■



Real World View

BY TAMIA FOWLKES



Democracy dies in darkness,” the slogan of the *Washington Post*, has deeply impacted my perception of the world and how it should function.

If you had asked me when I was younger if I was willing to die for democracy, I am entirely certain that the answer would have been “no.” On April 7, 2020, however, the morning of Wisconsin’s primary election and the day I was supposed to cover the election for a project in my J335 class, it became undeniably clear that my answer was “yes,” at least in this circumstance. Earlier in the spring, amid a national pandemic that was disproportionately taking the lives of African-American people, my entire family sat down at our living room table to request our absentee ballots, sure that they would arrive in time for us to vote early and safely. My ballot arrived in the mail first, my mother’s the week after, but my grandfather’s did not



Senior Tamia Fowlkes, a journalism and political science major, is the inaugural recipient of the Fred Risser Excellence in Civic Engagement Undergraduate Award and a finalist for the prestigious Truman Scholarship, as well as the 2021 recipient of the Richard Ralph Winter Phoenix Rising Humanitarian Scholarship, which provides a one-time award recognizing humanitarian achievement and service, encouraging excellence and commitment in the application of humanitarian ideals, and affirming the moral obligation to provide for human welfare. That scholarship is made available by the generosity of Charles Manthey Winter and the Richard Ralph Winter Phoenix Rising Humanitarian Scholarship.

come. On election day, I stood in line for my grandfather, who was undergoing treatment for Stage 4 stomach cancer. I held his place for almost three hours, terrified that if he took the risk of standing in line for so long, he would be exposed to the virus and possibly lose his life because of it. I became certain that the frustrations that fueled me that day would guide my life’s path and drive my passion and commitment to advocating for the people who failed to make it in person and whose vote would not be cast as a consequence of fear, pre-existing conditions, lack of access to a vehicle, disability, misinformation, and discrimination. And when I finally made it to the front, my grandfather arrived and took his rightful place.

I returned to campus in the fall to my position at the Morgridge Center of Public Service and worked the entire semester mobilizing student voters with the Badgers Vote Coalition. “I feel like I don’t know enough to vote or talk about politics” was a statement I heard constantly from my peers. Through meaningful student-led learning experiences and the development of social media pages that would regularly disseminate voting information and resources to students, in my role, I helped to establish Badgers Vote as a hub for election information during a time in which our campus was not only highly polarized, but also entirely virtual. I led the Badgers Vote Student Coalition, created agendas and plans for our team meetings, and collaborated with the team to recruit our 15 Student Vote Organizers who worked to specifically engage low-turnout groups like students of color, STEM students, and graduate students. Also, I co-hosted a podcast called “Pod-Cast Your Vote,” a civic engagement podcast centering diverse student and community voices on issues like immigration, the power of the youth vote, and voter suppression, and I wrote articles throughout the semester to help inform the community.

I hope to start a nonprofit organization that works to immerse middle- and high-school students in critical conversations about news literacy, politics, activism, and civic engagement — especially those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds. The organization would establish programs and digital workshops to expand youth understanding of government structure, the role of news in our society, and how they can contribute to social change. ■

OUR UW

"I was able to begin graduate study in Mathematics at UW-Madison thanks to funding as a teaching assistant. But in 1952, when there were fewer veterans at UW, the funding for teaching assistants was reduced, and I had to drop out of graduate school. I have established a scholarship fund in the Department of Mathematics, and included UW in my will, to help any student finish their studies undeterred by financial constraints."

MAURICE AEGERTER
MS, Mathematics, '52

"I attended UW in the early 1950s, having grown up in rural Wisconsin. My mother went back to work to help pay for my studies. I wanted to study music. Living in Chadbourne Hall, I could hear opera singers rehearsing, but my family was sacrificing heavily for me to attend college, and I was steered in a more practical direction. I have established a scholarship fund for students in the Mead Witter School of Music and included UW in my will to enable students to follow their passion."

BARBARA AEGERTER



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Last Word

The musicians are back on the field! The University of Wisconsin Marching Band is (and always has been) a proud part of the College of Letters & Science. In 2019, Dr. Corey Pompey took the reins as director of the UW Marching Band, succeeding longtime director Mike Leckrone. His faculty appointment within the Mead Witter School of Music is, officially, Associate Director of Bands (with Scott Teeple, a professor of music, serving as Director of Bands). The Marching Band, Varsity Band, Wind Ensemble, Concert Band and University Bands give numerous performances at every level, from UW-Madison athletic events to professional music conferences and tours. Auditioned and non-auditioned ensembles are offered each semester for music majors and non-music majors alike. On, Wisconsin!

PHOTO: JEFF MILLER

