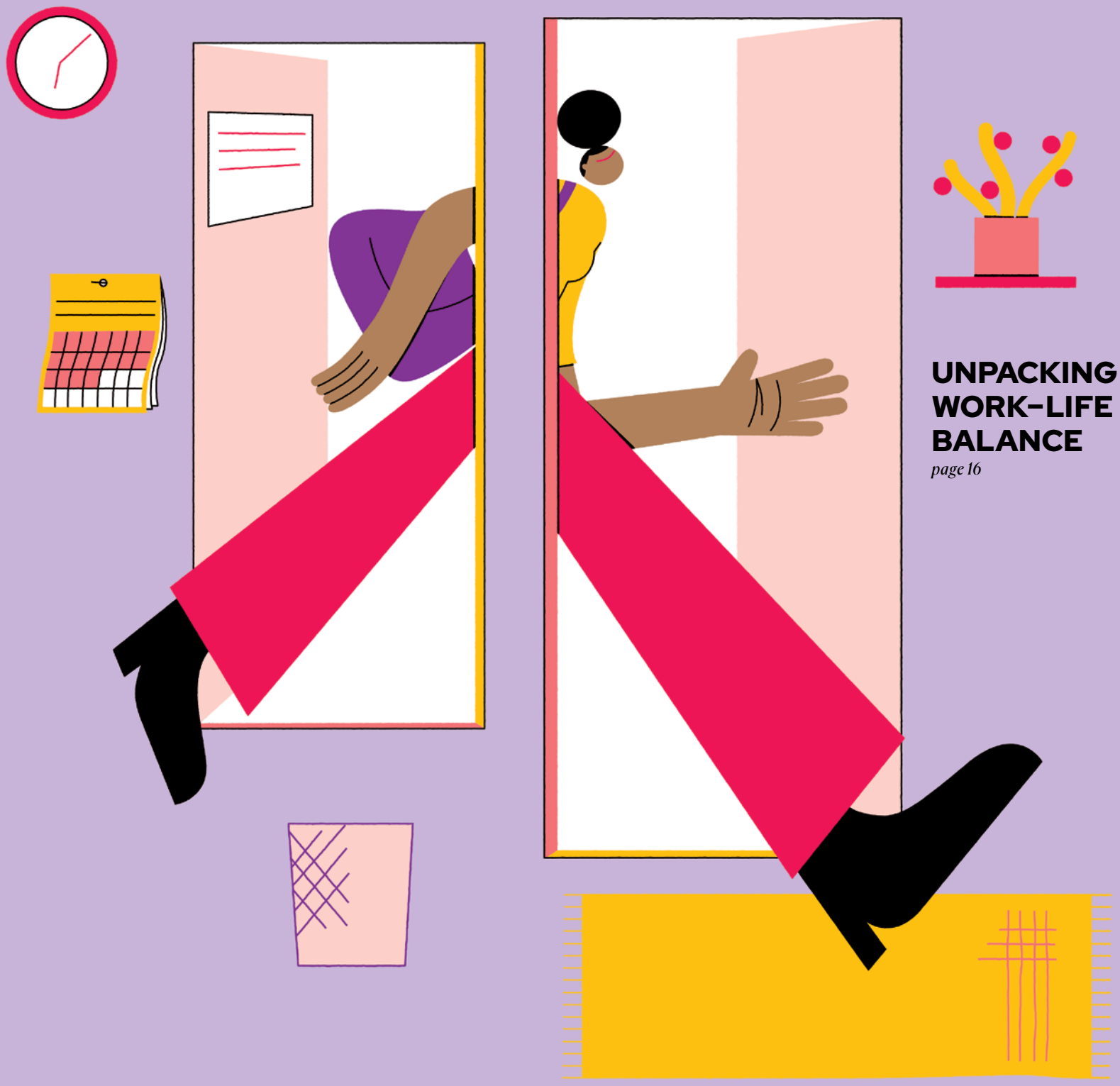
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON COLLEGE OF LETTERS & SCIENCE

FALL 2024

Letters&Science



UNPACKING WORK–LIFE BALANCE

page 16

The Center for Limnology's Trout Lake Station is celebrating a major milestone: 100 years of research on Vilas County's lake-rich landscape. The station has played a crucial role in the history of aquatic study and training future limnologists on how to conduct research in the field.
PHOTO: BRYCE RICHTER

Contents

Sherree Burruss ('12) works as a news reporter for the NFL Network's "Good Morning Football."

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHERREE BURRUSS

COVER ILLUSTRATION: ANNE ALBERT

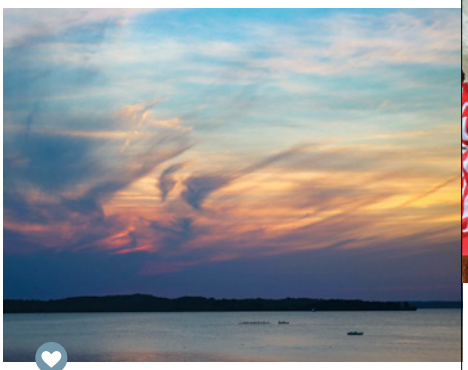
#WeAreLS

Scenes from the @UWMadisonLS convocation address on the Memorial Union Terrace. Love to see that sea of red L&S shirts. #WeAreLS

@UWMadisonLS September 4, 2024

This week, students in Landscape Architecture 106 had class in the colorful confines of Allen Centennial Garden.

@UWMadisonLS September 13, 2024



Golden hour on campus captured by our L&S photography intern @paulaflyself. #SunsetVibes

@UWMadisonLS September 15, 2024

#SummerPhotoDump featuring our BEAUTIFUL campus and snapshots of our Employee Ice Cream Social this summer!

@UWMadisonLS July 26, 2024

PHOTOS: ISABELLE DELFOSSE (CONVOCATION), SHANHONG YU (OUTDOOR CLASS, SUNSET) AND ALTHEA DOTZOUR (ICE CREAM SOCIAL)

Letters&Science

FALL 2024

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FROM THE DEAN

Finding the Balance

Work–life balance isn't a topic I'd say I'm an expert in. I'm passionate about my job and the work I do every day to make the College of Letters & Science a world-class learning environment for students and an inspiring workplace that fuels groundbreaking research. That passion often bleeds into long hours, so I definitely have a thing or two to learn about work–life balance.

Thankfully, the L&S community is full of experts on the topic, and we get to hear from them in this magazine's cover feature, "Balancing Act," on page 16. Alumni, researchers and advisors weigh in on topical conversations such as burnout, artificial intelligence in the workplace and strategies for better well-being. This collection of stories reminded me that finding the balance is something that ebbs and flows throughout life and that time away from work is essential. For me, life outside of office hours looks like cycling while weather allows, curling once it cools down and time with family always.

Something else I have in common with a lot of Badgers is that I'm a big-time sports fan. So many of our alumni have turned their love for athletics into a career in communications, even before the School of Journalism and Mass Communication launched a certificate in sports communication in 2019. You'll meet six such alumni with exciting careers in the "Good Sports" feature on page 22.

Fall feels like prime time to tell the story of two L&S researchers who we call "Phantom Finders" on page 26. They're hunting down cartographic phantoms, which are communities still listed on maps even though they aren't around anymore. Wisconsin has hundreds of them, and this is a one-of-a-kind research effort that is only happening in our state to make maps more accurate. That's the Wisconsin Idea in action.

As you flip through the pages, you'll find a lot more stories that celebrate all things L&S. Hear from Corey Pompey as he reflects on five years as the director of the University of Wisconsin Marching Band, from students who are doing research on lakes in Wisconsin's north-woods, and from Alan Rubel, a professor and the director of the Information School, as he explains the human side of technology. You'll also read about the L&S impact across Wisconsin's 72 counties.

These stories of outstanding alumni, remarkable research and enterprising students remind us of the wonderful things happening in our community. And all of this is made possible by you and your ongoing support of our mission to provide each new generation of Badgers with a world-class liberal arts education. Thank you for championing the College of Letters & Science.

On, Wisconsin!

Eric M. Wilcots
Dean and Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy, College of Letters & Science

PHOTO: PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS

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2

A Hub for the Humanities

The future home of the humanities at UW–Madison took a massive step forward in May with the official ground-breaking for Irving & Dorothy Levy Hall. The College of Letters & Science's new 136,000-square-foot academic building is set to open in the summer of 2026.

Supported by a generous $20 million gift by brothers and L&S alums Marv ('68, JD'71) and Jeff ('72) Levy in honor of their parents, the new space will house eight L&S departments, including African American Studies, American Indian & Indigenous Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano/a & Latina/o Studies, Gender & Women's Studies, History, Jewish Studies and Religious Studies. It will feature five floors, 13 classrooms, seating for 1,100 students and public spaces. The building's design also includes a rooftop garden, a self-sufficient irrigation system that reuses rainfall and plenty of space for parking bicycles.

"In a time when many campuses are devaluing the liberal arts, our university is standing tall and renewing our commitment to telling the human story," says Eric M. Wilcots, dean of the College of Letters & Science and Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy. "If we are to tackle the great challenges facing us, we need to understand who we are as humans, our stories and how we engage with each other."

Even though Levy Hall lives within L&S, it's estimated that every UW–Madison student will take a class there at some point during their academic journey. Levy Hall replaces the '60s-era Humanities Building, which is expected to be torn down sometime in the future.

Learn more: ls.wisc.edu/irving-and-dorothy-levy-hall

MEDIA MENTION

"We as humans are very social creatures. So, when bad things happen to us, we want to be together and connected to others."

KATHRYN HOWELL
associate professor of psychology, speaking to *The New York Times* about the importance of friends and community in developing an increased resilience to adversity

3

From Fire to Flowers

For eight-plus decades, managers of the UW Arboretum and the Lakeshore Nature Preserve have conducted prescribed burns to help restore the native prairie landscape on campus. Each year, students who are part of Biocore — the Honors Program in Biology — learn to safely use the equipment for controlled burns and help seed native plants and prairie grasses to ensure proper biodiversity. Jeb Barzen, an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, has been teaching prescribed burning techniques to students.

See him in action: news.wisc.edu/burning-and-learning

After a burn, new growth can start to pop up in a matter of weeks.

PHOTO: BRYCE RICHTER

PHOTO: JEFF MILLER

4

Certifiable

More and more UW–Madison students are pursuing certificates to augment their majors, giving themselves additional real-world career skills. In the 2022–23 academic year, 4,210 undergraduate certificates were conferred — nearly three times as many as a decade earlier. The College of Letters & Science has two of the fastest-growing certificates on campus, including the certificate in data science (which added 522 students in the past four years) and the certificate in sports communication (which added 251 students in the past four years). You can learn more about the latter on page 22.

5

3,900

The number of red L&S T-shirts that were distributed to new students in September as part of this year's convocation exercises. Game idea: Next time you're on campus, see how quickly you can spot one.

What have you done for us lately

A look at how the College of Letters & Science impacts each of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

The Wisconsin Idea. It's the time-tested notion that the boundaries of the University stretch beyond campus and directly impact the lives of others. But what does it look like in practice? For the College of Letters & Science, it means that research and outreach from faculty, students, alumni and staff make a real difference to the citizens of Wisconsin and beyond. Those impacts can be environmental, economic and cultural, forming important connections between our own academic community and members of countless communities across the state.

Below, we zoom in on five projects that have impacted individual counties in Wisconsin. To get a look at how the College is impacting the other 67, follow along as we update the *Letters & Science Magazine* microsite (**lsmagazine.wisc.edu**).

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

As executive director for the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), economics alumnus Brian Doudna ('90) has helped to make a sizable impression on the county's biggest city. He's been at the helm for four years, working with generational Wisconsin businesses like Kohler, Sargento and Johnsonville. Like a lot of communities, Sheboygan has been struggling with a housing crisis. Working in partnership with local businesses, EDC's nonprofit is building subdivisions of entry-level homes with the goal of completing and selling four homes per month. So far, 21 homes have been sold, including 16 to first-time homeowners. These starter homes are affordable and enticing to potential employees of local businesses, making it easier for them to relocate and work in the Sheboygan area.

MARATHON COUNTY

UW-Madison's UniverCity Alliance has helped transform Wausau, Marathon County's largest city, in multiple ways. The group connects UW-Madison with local government units across the state on research and education projects—many of which involve L&S students and departments. Between 2020 and 2023, 152 students contributed to 35 different projects in the county, including conducting a study on road salt use, de-icing techniques and helping Wausau plan an environmentally sound reconstruction of one of its busiest intersections.

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

Like a lot of waterways in Wisconsin, the Eau Claire River was clogged with sediment, impacting water quality, recreational opportunities and aquatic habitats in Lake Altoona and Lake Eau Claire. Last year, Elisabeth Bykowski ('20, MS'23), a Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture alumna, undertook an independent study that used scientific data, historical records and citizen interviews to examine the financial and environmental costs and benefits of addressing the issue. Bykowski's study found that the most cost-effective method for dealing with excess sediment was to manage it further upstream while continuing the current levels of annual dredging. Her findings also raised the possibility of removing one or both of the main dams on the Eau Claire River, an option that carries higher short-term costs but significant long-term benefits.

ONEIDA COUNTY

Ankur Desai, professor and chair for the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, uses Wisconsin's northwoods as a research hub for his Ecometeorology Lab. The lab investigates the relationship between Earth and its atmosphere, exploring the impact of different types of land cover on carbon cycling. In several northern Wisconsin counties (including Oneida) the Chequamegon Ecosystem-Atmosphere Study (ChEAS) is using flux towers to chart emissions and sequestration of carbon and water in forested and wetland ecosystems. Being able to quantify emissions and carbon-water relationships—and their reaction to the impacts of climate change—gives state land managers a clear guide on how to adapt the level of forests and wetlands to best manage carbon emissions.

POLK COUNTY

Polk County is a largely agricultural area of the state experiencing increased suburbanization and the economic and demographic challenges that often accompany it. The county received a boost from students in a journalism class on creative campaign messages, taught by Douglas McLeod, the Evjue Centennial Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication. As part of a three-year collaboration with UniverCity Alliance, the students immersed themselves in the county's culture, collecting information to develop campaigns that might help attract young workers and their families to growing cities like Amery, Wisconsin. The students' work expanded on projects and tools developed in two other L&S classes, including another journalism class and a course in planning and landscape architecture.

TEACHING

Catching the Baton

Corey Pompey reflects on his five years of heading the University of Wisconsin Marching Band.

BY ALLI WATTERS

When a band director job was listed at UW–Madison for the first time in 50 years, everybody in the profession knew about the opening. And yet the man who would eventually get the job wasn't planning to apply.

"It's not that I didn't know the job was open — I absolutely knew it was open," says Corey Pompey, the associate director of bands and an associate teaching professor in the Mead Witter School of Music. "I also knew that UW–Madison is a good place with a good band and a good program. I knew all of these things; I was just very wary of taking a job when such an admired person was in it for 50 years."

Plus, he was happy. At the time, he had a band director gig at the University of Nevada, Reno, and he was planning to stay there for a good long time.

Then, he received a phone call. It was a recruitment call that probably went out to dozens of band directors around the country, but paired with UW–Madison's tremendous reputation, it was enough to get him to throw his hat in the ring.

"There's a big difference between the Mountain West and the Big Ten," Pompey says with a smile. "But if I had not gotten that phone call, I guarantee you I would not have applied."

And the rest is history. Quickly embraced as the beloved face of the nearly 300-member marching band, Pompey

PHOTO: BRYCE RICHTER

Find dates for upcoming band performances at badgerband.wisc.edu.

"The energy and the passion that the students exude when they perform, I think it's really something."

COREY POMPEY

has now been in the role for five years. He's the man behind the baton at concerts, sporting events and in the classroom.

Already, his tenure has been dotted with once-in-a-lifetime memories. When thinking about highlights, he listed his first football game, going to the Rose Bowl, finally getting to put on the Varsity Band Spring Concert in 2022 after two years of COVID cancellations and even meeting the late music-making legend Allee Willis ('69) — co-writer for Earth, Wind & Fire songs "September" and "Boogie Wonderland" as well as the theme song for "Friends."

"Not in my wildest dreams would I have thought I would be sitting across from someone whose music is iconic," Pompey says. "Every once in a while, I get to meet a really cool person that I only get to meet because I happen to be the director of the UW band, and I don't take that for granted."

But for a lot of musicians in Wisconsin, Pompey has become that cool person they're excited to meet. Caleb Monge is a junior at UW-Madison and the drum major for the band. He remembers how excited he was to meet Pompey at a band clinic the summer before his freshman year. Before that day, he had only seen him in YouTube videos.

"When he walks into the room, the first thing you'll notice is charisma," Monge says. "Recently, we had a high school band day. We played some songs for them and described what it was like to be in the band, but then Dr. Pompey walked in, and the room went silent. Right away, everyone was super engaged."

As a student majoring in music education and educational policy studies, Monge sees Pompey as both a mentor and a remarkable example of a leader in the field.

"We have about 300 members, but somehow he makes it feel very personal," Monge says. "He's a saxophone player himself, he studied music, is big into marching band, and he was also the drum major during his undergrad experience. So, all those things are great and yes, I can relate to them, but it's more than that. Day in and day out, it's how he carries himself, how he addresses the ensemble and how he sees himself as a teacher first, even at the college level, even at this scale."

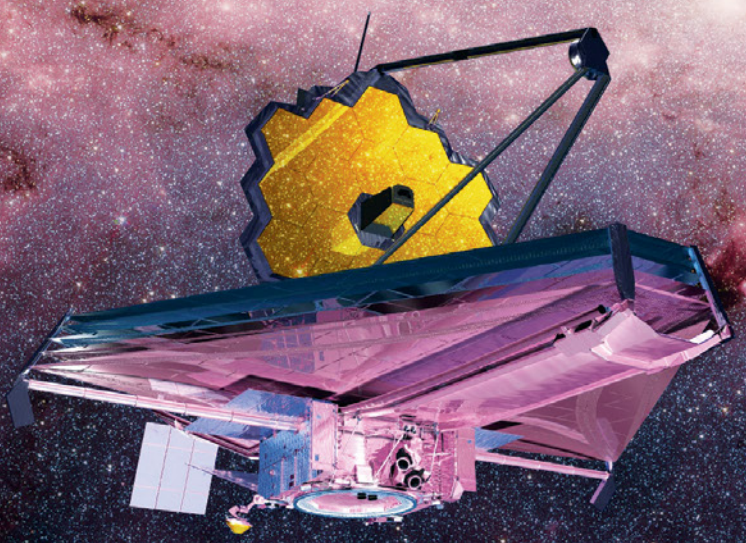
Despite the fact that a large part of Pompey's job is show business — the average Camp Randall crowd was nearly 58,000 last football season — a lot of the hard work he puts in happens behind the scenes. His desk in the Humanities Building is covered with sticky notes listing helpful dates, random thoughts, ideas for shows and important reminders. If you join him on the commute home, you'd likely find the radio flipped to top 40, because he's trying to keep tabs on the latest music trends. Lately, he's been enjoying Beyoncé's entry to country, *Cowboy Carter.*

"First and foremost, I'm looking for music the crowd might enjoy," Pompey says. Past performance themes have been around everything from a pop punk medley to Veterans Day music to Taylor Swift. "My hope is that over the course of the season, we will have provided enough variety in the musical selections that people in the audience will be able to hang their hats on something they heard."

To do this job, Pompey has to wear a lot of hats. Not literally — he skips the traditional marching band headwear — but he's juggling the teaching, artistic and administrative sides of the role. Picking out the shows tickles the artistic side of his brain, but the planning starts in the spring when he polls band members to get their suggestions.

Once the football season starts, it's full throttle. Sometimes the band has only a week to learn the music and formations for a show. But when it all comes together on the field, it's always a special moment for Pompey.

"The energy and the passion that the students exude when they perform, I think it's really something," Pompey says. "And if someone has never seen or heard the band before, I'd say, you just have to come to one of our performances and see it for yourself." ■



RESEARCH

Out of This World

Six things we've learned from the James Webb Space Telescope

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

It's been almost four years since the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) launched, ushering in a new era of advanced astronomical research. "This is a telescope that everyone wants to use – it's so versatile, so powerful," says Michael Maseda, an assistant professor of astronomy who was part of the organization that developed the JWST's initial science program. Maseda, who studies galaxies, and his departmental colleague Thomas Beatty, an assistant professor of astronomy who studies exoplanets, are excited about how the JWST has advanced research. ■

Astronomer models of the early universe were largely correct. "The JWST is able to see further away – able to see further back in time," explains Maseda. The early universe – the one that appeared immediately after the Big Bang – was composed of only hydrogen and helium. As stars in those galaxies died, additional elements (think oxygen, carbon and nitrogen) were introduced. To astronomers, those elements act like a clock, giving clues to origin stories.

The calibrations researchers have used to measure the amount of oxygen in our galaxy don't work in distant galaxies. Maseda and other researchers established that younger galaxies are marked by the presence of elements beyond hydrogen and helium – the twin building blocks of the oldest galaxies. But a few of the observations they're receiving aren't matching up with the calibrations and models they've developed to predict how quickly a distant galaxy is evolving, requiring some fine tuning. "We need to revise it," says Maseda.

Black holes in distant galaxies are bigger than astronomers expected. Most galaxies have a massive black hole at their centers, including the ones that are farthest away from us. Those black holes don't emit light, but the stars and gasses that circle around them emit plenty. "In some cases, there can be more light coming from that than there is from the rest of the galaxy," says Maseda. And astronomers still don't know how these large black holes formed and became so sizable – sometimes millions of times the mass of our sun.

The composition of an exoplanet's atmospheres is actually pretty complicated. Beatty measures the atmospheric composition of exoplanets, which are planets that orbit stars outside our solar system. "It's been surprising how rich that chemistry is in their atmospheres," he says. Beatty worked as an instrument scientist on the JWST before joining the UW–Madison faculty. He recently presented research on a sub-Neptune exoplanet some 96 light years away from our solar system that could offer important clues as to how it formed.

Is there life out there? It's the proverbial million-dollar question. "There's an idea that you can have 'gas dwarf' planets that are still conducive to life," says Beatty. Interdisciplinary collaboration has been critical in finding an answer. Beatty collaborates with colleagues through the new Wisconsin Center for Origins Research (WiCOR), a group that connects seven different scientific departments in the College of Letters & Science, to find answers.

Finally, a legit explanation for radius inflation. This is the idea that many exoplanets are much bigger than researchers would expect them to be. For example, an exoplanet with a mass equal to Jupiter should theoretically be the size of Jupiter, but in several instances, researchers have discovered exoplanets that are twice that size, with their mass somehow inflated to fill the vacuum. "With the JWST observations, we were able to make a very convincing argument that this was driven by tides," says Beatty.

RENDERING: COURTESY OF NASA

After reading *Lost Children Archive*, Bay Port High School student Maleah Kohn was inspired to create this painting of author Valeria Luiselli using fingerprints.

CULTURE

Booking It

The Center for the Humanities is bringing world literature to high school students around the state.

BY MELISSA ULBRICHT

The southwest border is more than 1,000 miles from Green Bay, and yet Bay Port High School teacher Vicki Quinn had students in her class discussing complex issues like migration and family separation. This is because they read *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli, which was the Center for the Humanities 2023–24 academic year's Great World World Texts in Wisconsin selection. An educator for two decades at Bay Port, Quinn has taught previous Great World Texts novels. But this year, accompanied by fellow educator Amy Heusterberg-Richards and their International Baccalaureate English students, was Quinn's first visit to Madison for the Great World Texts student conference.

Now in its 20th year, Great World Texts connects high school educators and students with scholars at UW–Madison through the shared project of reading a classic or contemporary piece of world literature. The highlight is a student conference when the author — including such past participants as Margaret Atwood and Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk — comes to Madison to discuss their work with students. Luiselli was the latest addition to this all-star lineup. She visited Madison in April to talk with students from 20 schools across Wisconsin about the projects they created in response to her novel.

This school year, Great World Texts will partner with the UW–Madison Center for East Asian Studies. High school educators and students from 27 schools will read *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, which follows one woman's mental deterioration in the face of misogyny. The author, Cho Nam-joo, will visit UW–Madison on April 15 for the student conference.

"A major highlight for me was hearing from an author who explained their purpose and intention but also opened it up for the reader to find value in what they bring to the novel," Quinn says. "It was a solidifying moment for the students."

At the conference, students get creative as sculptors, performers, game designers, archivists and more. One of Quinn's students created a painting from fingerprints — a means of identification — to show how important a single identity can be in forming an entire picture, which reflects a theme from the novel.

Like Quinn, Bohdan Nedilsky, an educator from New Horizons for Learning Charter High School, is a longtime participant in the program. At New Horizons, Nedilsky partners with community organizations to expand meaningful scholarship into the public sphere.

"We provide students a dynamic setting to not just view the world from the confines of a classroom but to experience the world around them," he says. "Bringing higher education and secondary education together, similar to Great World Texts, is a recipe that is so impactful."

Two of Nedilsky's students created a mural with a painting of the Rio Grande River surrounded by a collage of news headlines to depict the many real lost children of the immigration crisis.

For Nedilsky, one of the highlights of the program is the curricular guide provided by UW–Madison faculty and graduate students. The guide is designed to be accessible for a range of learners. Educators like Nedilsky and Quinn attend a fall colloquium with lectures by faculty and community-building exercises with their peers from across Wisconsin.

"The power of Great World Texts is that it's extremely adaptive for educators. It allows us to customize the fit for our students and equip them for this experience," Nedilsky says. "That's exactly how we learn through Great World Texts — by integrating rather than separating and by engaging rather than being passive recipients of information." ■

Great World Texts is supported by the UW–Madison Libraries, the Cleary-Kumm Foundation, the Evjue Foundation, the Wisconsin Book Festival, the Anonymous Fund of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the Friends of the Center for the Humanities and the Brittingham Wisconsin Trust.

PHOTO: SHARON VANORNY

FACULTY

Bottled Up

Manny Teodoro digs into U.S. consumers' deep-seated distrust of public water.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

As a professor with the La Follette School of Public Affairs, Manny Teodoro is researching the culture of distrust around public tap water.

It all started with water kiosks.

In 2013, Manny Teodoro, a public-policy researcher who had just joined the faculty at Texas A&M University in College Station, had never seen a freestanding, blue-roofed water vending station before. He was surprised by how many of them there were — littered in parking lots across Texas — and genuinely puzzled as to why people were lining up to purchase water from them, when they could be getting their drinking water much more inexpensively from the taps in their homes.

About a week or so later, as the question continued to eat at his mind, a presentation from a geographer colleague gave him part of the answer.

"These are used by communities where water systems either don't exist or there's poor-quality, unreliable service," says Teodoro, now a professor with the La Follette School of Public Affairs. "And it made sense to me that this was a commercial alternative when there are public service failures. But what didn't make sense to me is why these things were all over Houston, Dallas, Denver and Los Angeles. These are cities that have excellent, world-class drinking water utilities."

Teodoro asked his graduate student at the time, Samantha Zuhlke, to map water kiosks across the country, and they discovered that most of them were located in poor, non-white neighborhoods. A few months later, the two attended a presentation by David Switzer, a former Teodoro graduate student, who was researching public trust in government and drinking water behavior.

"He found that people who trusted government were more likely to drink tap water," says Teodoro. "People who don't trust government were more likely to drink bottled water. Trust in government is linked to the quality and reliability of basic services."

PHOTO: PAULIUS MUSTEIKIS

Those connections spurred Teodoro, Zuhlke and Switzer to write *The Profits of Distrust: Citizen-Consumers, Drinking Water, and the Crisis of Confidence in American Government*, a book that examines the impact of the public's growing skepticism of public water — and how the bottled water industry is making millions of dollars from it.

While most Americans have safe tap water — public water utilities are a highly regulated service — the rare instances of extreme failure distort people's perceptions of public water and foment even deeper distrust. Recall the 2014 water crisis in Flint, Michigan, that exposed thousands of residents to lead or the Jackson, Mississippi, crisis in 2022 that saw flooding shut down the city's water treatment system.

What interests Teodoro is the vector of that distrust. It's not geography — it's social identity. For example, communities in poor and non-white areas across the country began using bottled water in the wake of the Flint water crisis.

"Somebody in another part of the country, if they can relate at a social and socioeconomic level with the people who are victims of that crisis, they're going to say, 'Look, those institutions failed people like me somewhere else, so they're likely going to fail me here,'" Teodoro says. "Failure anywhere drives distrust everywhere."

In the United States, a gallon of public tap water costs about a penny — maybe two if the community includes sewerage fees. A gallon of kiosk water costs about 35 cents, and an inexpensive bottle of water costs the equivalent of around $2 per gallon. And yet, as Teodoro saw in Houston, the poorest communities are routinely paying the higher cost.

"People who don't trust government were more likely to drink bottled water. Trust in government is linked to the quality and reliability of basic services."

MANNY TEODORO

The commercial water industry is clearly profiting from the distrust and has plenty of incentive to stoke it. In 2023, U.S. sales of bottled water surpassed $40 billion, equal to almost half of the revenue generated by public water utilities nationwide. Commercial water companies have often targeted their advertising campaigns at communities of color.

"It's just such a cynical appeal to fear," says Teodoro.

Losing the public's trust in tap water took decades; restoring it is likely to take just as long. Placing the bottled water industry on the same regulatory level as tap water could be a good place to start, says Teodoro. A few years ago, California introduced legislation requiring public water utilities to track and report microplastic levels in water. There is no such requirement for the bottled water industry, where the water is literally delivered in a container made of microplastics.

There's also an environmental impact at play. The carbon footprints of the two types of water are, unsurprisingly, very different.

"Tap water is very efficient in its delivery. Think about everything that's involved in delivering a bottle of water to a consumer," he says. "There's so much energy expended in the creation of the bottle, the transmitting and filling of the bottle, and transporting the bottle to and from different retailers. It's horrific."

Ongoing distrust in public water also factors into political elections and voting habits. Teodoro and his co-authors found that bottled water consumers are less likely to participate in politics than tap water consumers.

"Bottled water consumers have decided that they just don't trust government generally," says Teodoro. "If I believe the government is incompetent and/or evil, there's no reason for me to participate. It's a fundamental distrust of democracy."

Teodoro recently paired with a company called Sequential Potential Comics to transfer the research in *The Profits of Distrust* into a comic book — a move Teodoro is hoping will bring the questions he and his colleagues are raising into focus and to an even broader audience.

"Ultimately, water has to be excellent, equitable and open," he says. "It's got to be good for everyone everywhere." ■

PHOTOS: BRYCE RICHTER

STUDENTS

Taking the Plunge

One century later, undergraduates still find paths to a freshwater future at Trout Lake Station.

BY ADAM HINTERTHUER

This summer, UW–Madison senior Eliana Cook spent her time paddling around lakes in northern Wisconsin in a canoe loaded with research equipment. Each trip was just another day at the office as Cook, along with two fellow students, collected data at 21 sites as part of a collaborative research project on wild rice or, as it's known to the Ojibwe people, *manoomin*. The crew spent long hours collecting water samples and identifying, measuring and counting plants. For Cook, that time on the quiet water with towering rice plants wasn't work — it was magical.

Cook, a double major in conservation biology and anthropology, was one of 19 undergraduate students working as field technicians at the Center for Limnology's (CFL) Trout Lake Station over the summer. The research station runs under the leadership of Director Gretchen Gerrish and is located north of Minocqua in the heart of Vilas County, which boasts more than 1,300 lakes in its 1,000 square miles. Each summer, students like Cook get hands-on experience developing research questions, collecting data and analyzing results in the lab as they work on topics ranging from fisheries to water quality and, in Cook's case, research on a culturally and ecologically significant aquatic plant.

"Growing up with Indigenous family members, I was always learning from them, and I became really interested in Indigenous culture," Cook says. "The wild rice project seemed like the perfect intersection between traditional ecological knowledge and aquatic science."

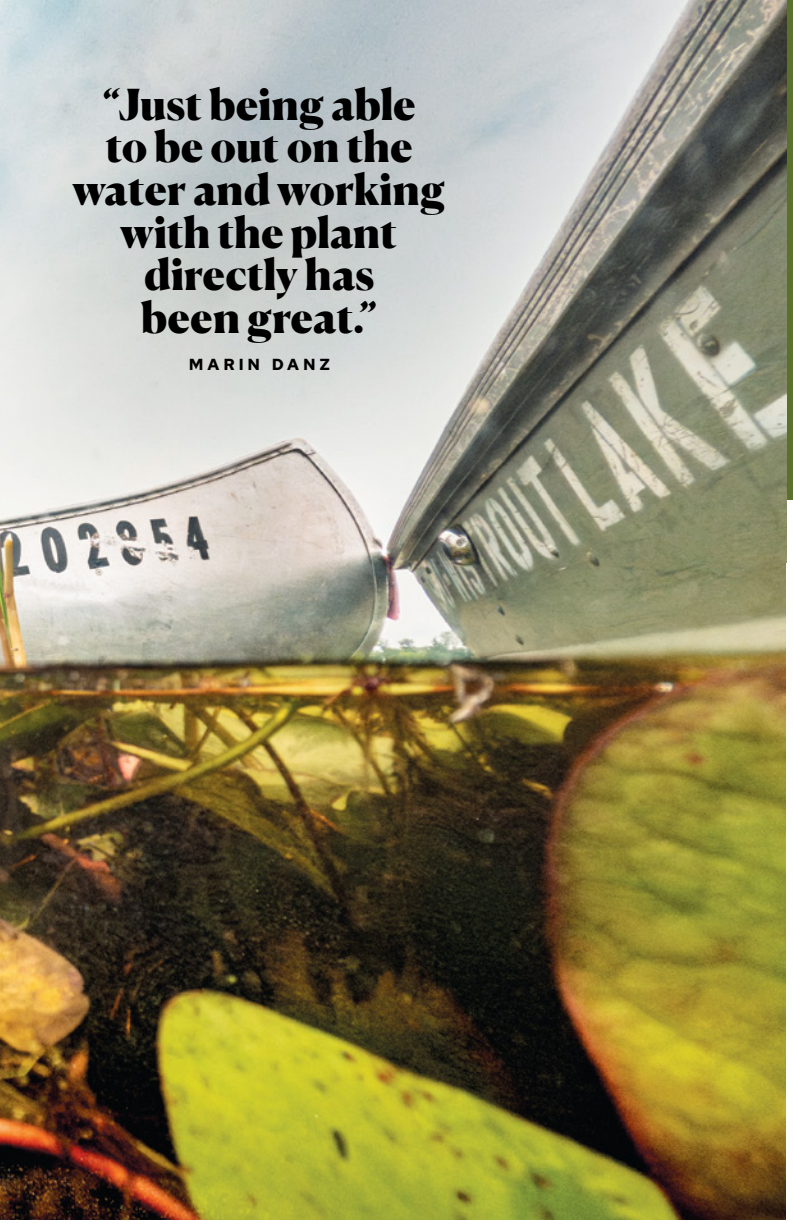
Traditional ecological knowledge refers to the deep ways of knowing that Indigenous communities have cultivated after hundreds or even thousands of years of observations and relationships with the environments around them. The wild rice project is a collaboration among several organizations, including the Lac du Flambeau Tribal Natural Resource Department and CFL. Cook's summer was spent on six different study lakes, all with populations of wild rice in different conditions — some thriving, others struggling. Her crew would go to one of those lakes each day and conduct basic water-quality tests, count each individual rice plant and identify invasive plant species.

Cook also developed her own independent research project, something most undergraduates at Trout Lake Station get to do. With the guidance of graduate student mentors, she formed and tested a hypothesis about why some lakes are seeing mudflats suddenly rise to the surface and upend habitat for wild rice.

Cook came to UW–Madison intending to study marine sciences. But she says this summer changed her perspective. "I don't have to go all the way to the coast to do aquatic science — I can stay here in Wisconsin," she says.

Marin Danz, a senior at UW–Madison studying botany, environmental science and conservation biology, shares similar sentiments. Danz is interested in agriculture and sustainable food systems, and spending her summer on a project with direct ties to food sovereignty and ecology confirmed her passion for this research.

"Just being able to be out on the water and working with the plant directly has been great," Danz says. "I feel like I've gotten a lot closer to manoomin, and my respect for it has grown."



“Just being able to be out on the water and working with the plant directly has been great.”

MARIN DANZ

Marin Danz collects data on Allequash Lake near Trout Lake Station.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Trout Lake Station is a proud part of the College of Letters & Science, and this year it celebrated 100 years on its lake-rich landscape. Originally built so that the founders of limnology could have access to hundreds of lakes, Trout Lake Station has played a crucial role in the history of the aquatic sciences and continues to support world-class research today.

A weekly underwater excursion in Escanaba Lake to clean quick-growing algae from the surface of the data-collection sensors

Similarly, it was the promise of hands-on experiences that drew Zoe Stansbury to Trout Lake Station. An environmental engineering major, Stansbury is a senior who spent her summer working for CFL graduate student Danny Szydlowski on his research project exploring algal blooms deeper in the water column of lakes.

“This was my first time doing research,” Stansbury says. “I’d done some fieldwork in the private sector for engineering firms but nothing like this. This was just amazing.”

Stansbury’s project explored the drivers behind deep-water algae blooms in two lakes. While most people encounter algae as a green scum on the surface of a lake, it turns out that a lot of it is growing much deeper — down where sunlight starts to fade out.

“When we think about algae, we think about surface blooms and nutrients coming in from from fertilizer, and wastewater turning these lakes we love bright green so we can’t swim in them in the summer,” Stansbury says. “What we don’t think about is how this impacts the lower regions of the water column.”

To get to the bottom of those blooms, Stansbury helped Szydlowski change conditions in one lake to see how its response differed from another lake, which was left unchanged. The duo added dye to the water to block sunlight from going deeper and, in another experiment, added nutrients to the lake to see if they would encourage surface blooms that would shade the algae growing deeper. In both cases, Stansbury says, the deep-water algae blooms virtually disappeared.

Getting to do research to help scientists better understand how lakes could respond to things like climate change and agricultural practices helped Stansbury home in on her career goals.

“I always knew I wanted to do something with water but just didn’t know what,” she says. “Now I know I want people to have clean, available water. That’s what my passion is.”

Mason Polencheck, a senior double-majoring in zoology and microbiology, first came to Trout Lake Station as a sophomore. Now in his third summer “on station,” he’s running his own research project on aquatic salamanders called mudpuppies.

His first encounter with this elusive amphibian was on a fishing trip with his family as a kid. Then, during his first summer orientation at Trout Lake Station, he learned that mudpuppies are part of the local ecosystem and started snorkeling in his free time to find them in Trout Lake.

After that summer, he reached out to nearly a dozen professors to see if any would be interested in starting a research project on mudpuppies. Eventually, he connected with Trina McMahon, a professor of microbiology and civil and environmental engineering. After a few brainstorming sessions, the Mudpuppy Project was born, and Polencheck was headed back to Trout Lake for another summer.

“The [Trout Lake Station] community allows you to collaborate with people from many different backgrounds and ideas, expanding your science beyond anything you would have dreamed of,” Polencheck says. “It’s the perfect place to explore different scientific careers.” ■

BALANCING Act

What's your relationship with your job? Maybe it's your passion or maybe it's just a way to pay the bills. Questions around work–life balance are personal, and there's no one-size-fits-all strategy.

BY ALLI WATTERS

Juggling is the name of the game these days. One big ball might be your job, another could be parenthood, and maybe the third is a passion project like writing a novel or volunteering. There are probably other balls in the air too, such as the needs of your friends, plants or pets. And perhaps everything gets a whole lot more challenging – like hopping on a unicycle mid-juggle – when something unexpected happens, such as financial burdens, caring for your elderly parents or a global pandemic. For members of our L&S community, this balancing act is a topic of both personal and professional interest. To get some insight around this buzzy conversation, we asked alumni, researchers and advisors how they've overcome burnout, counseled students as they start their careers, challenged societal norms and researched strategies for better well-being.

1 The Job Hunt

FOR MEGAN ALEY ('12) career conversations are a part of her day-to-day work. As the associate director of Career Advising & Communities and as the career and internship specialist for Communications, Entertainment & the Arts for SuccessWorks, she works directly with L&S students and recent graduates to help them navigate the early stages of their career. We sat down with Aley to get tips on how to think about work-life balance when searching for a new job.

How does work-life balance come up in your career advising conversations?

I often find myself trying to help students negotiate that balance of understanding what they want to do in a job, in their career and in the next big phase of their life, and also figuring out how to articulate and balance what they want that job to facilitate for them outside of work.

This is a hot topic. What trends have you noticed lately?

In these creative industries where there's a lot more bleed between the passionate life pursuit and work – it's all kind of stitched together – what I'm seeing is students expressing a desire to figure out how to set up those guardrails. I've also seen students be quite pragmatic and say, "No, I want to keep my work and my passions separate."

What's the best advice you would give to someone career hunting with work-life balance in mind?

There's no one solution that you're going to figure out right now. This is an ongoing, changing set of values that you're constantly balancing and figuring out. What you want right now or in five years might be completely different. And what work-life balance looks like as a 44-year-old is probably going to be different from what it looks like as a 24-year-old.

Learn more about the L&S career center at successworks.wisc.edu.

2 Changing Minds

ALL THE WORK in the Center for Healthy Minds revolves around one idea: well-being. Two of the Center's researchers – Associate Professor Simon Goldberg (PhD'17) and Research Assistant Professor Matthew Hirshberg (MS'14, PhD'17) – are constantly trying to build a better scientific understanding of the mind and create practices that help people achieve well-being. Here are three lessons on work-life balance they've learned through research.

You can change your mind.

One of their most exciting findings is that it is possible to shift people's perceptions of their work environments without their circumstances changing. This discovery came from three studies conducted over the last four years in which researchers looked at different work environments and compared a control group of workers to a group that had been assigned treatment through the Healthy Minds Program app. The treatment included lessons in mindfulness and other styles of meditation. The workers who received the treatment began to perceive their contexts in ways that caused less distress and more well-being. "To some extent, well-being is a skill," Goldberg says. "There are things that we can do to train our minds that can have a direct impact on how we experience the world, including how we experience our work life."

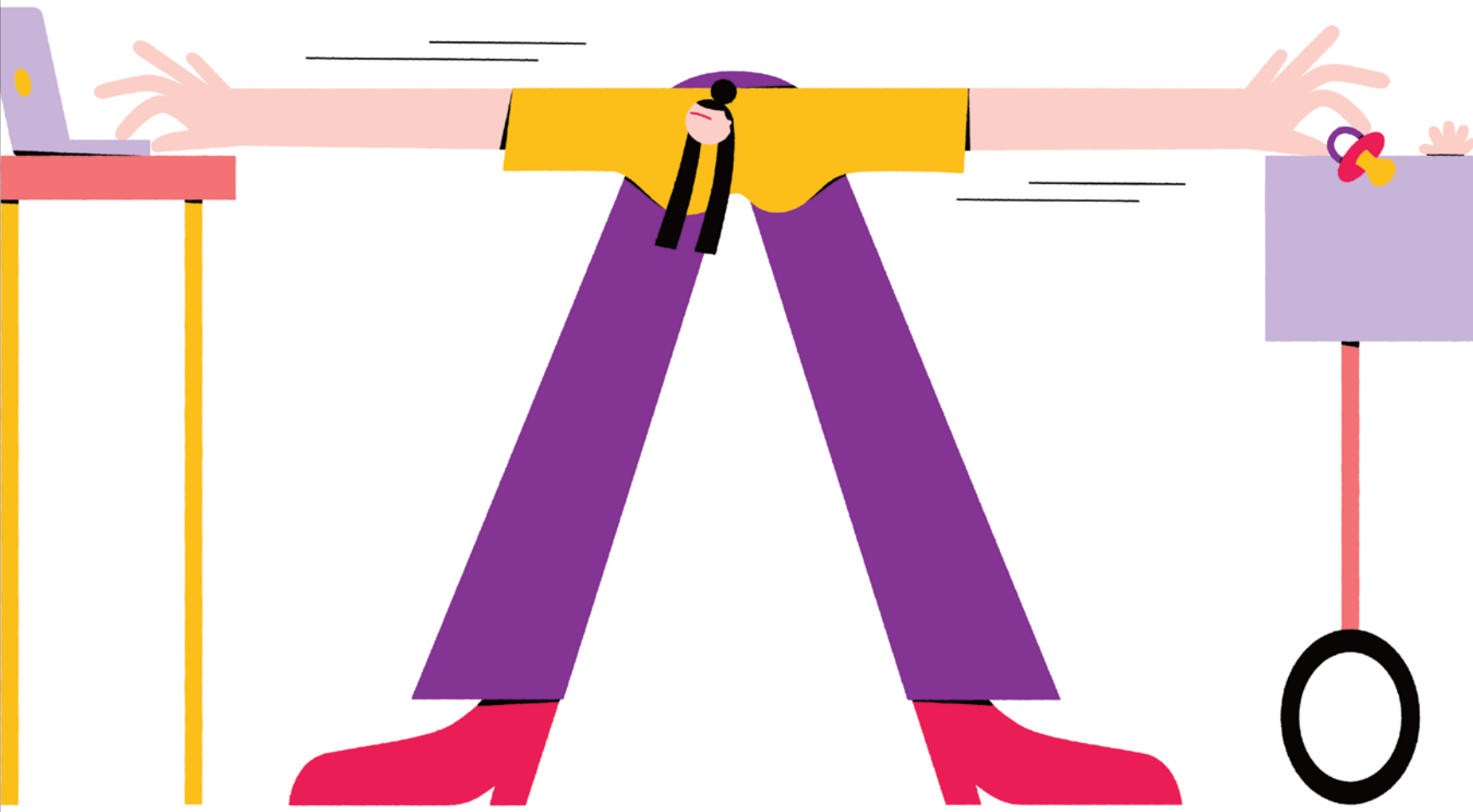
Improved work-life balance could potentially lead to better outcomes.

Preliminary data from the Center's studies in school districts have suggested that improving teacher well-being and reducing teacher distress can improve teacher outcomes. In one study, Hirshberg and colleagues found that well-being training significantly reduced early career attrition from teaching.

There are limitations to this strategy.

Hirshberg says the main critique – and a valid one – of this research is that while well-being training helps people to work better in difficult circumstances, it doesn't address the broken systems creating the circumstances. "We're working in a world where many systems are not working well," he says. "And it wouldn't be long-term effective to just give workers something that makes them more resilient. You also need to address the larger problems."

Get the free Healthy Minds Program app at hminnovations.org/meditation-app.



3

Home Work

WHEN DISCUSSING work–life balance, a lot of people focus on the "work" part. But for Jessica Calarco, a professor of sociology, "life" is at the heart of her research — specifically the unpaid labor and responsibilities that statistically fall most often on women. She calls this concept America's do-it-yourself (DIY) society.

"We tell people that they should be able to manage risks on their own," she says. "If they just make the right choices — the good choices — they should be able to get ahead in society without needing support from the government."

For Calarco, there's an obvious problem with this setup, which she outlines in her book *Holding It Together: How Women Became America's Safety Net*. There's too much risk to go around and plenty of people who cannot care for themselves. Children are a prime example of people who need care, but she also points to people who are sick, are elderly or have severe disabilities.

"We can only maintain this DIY illusion if someone is doing that work of caring for the people who can't care for themselves," Calarco says. "And that work disproportionately gets put on women, who are pushed into filling the gaps that are caused by the holes in our social safety net."

For her book, she drew on a longitudinal study that followed 250 mothers from pregnancy through three years postpartum, as well as two larger national surveys each with approximately 2,000 parents. Statistically speaking, women spend about twice as much time on unpaid care than men, which is a number that has been consistent for years. Men spend slightly more time on paid work than women, but those numbers have been creeping closer together over time, as women continue to increase their participation in the workforce.

This worries Calarco, especially in the face of the country's childcare crisis, which makes childcare unaffordable for most families and altogether unavailable for others. She fears that women — especially women who are mothers — are set up to fail and are made to feel like it's their fault. According to Calarco, mothers in America feel significantly more guilt than those in countries with substantially stronger safety nets. She hopes that when women read her book, it will help lessen that burden.

"The system is stacked against us in ways that are going to make this hard in the absence of large-scale social change," Calarco says. "And that means we shouldn't blame ourselves entirely if we are struggling."

4 Building Boundaries

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN AMBITIOUS and a hard worker. This was an asset when I was a student at UW–Madison, working multiple jobs, involved in a handful of student organizations and double-majoring in African American Studies and Journalism and Mass Communication. But in the early years after graduation, it translated to working long hours in the office and not having much of a life.

This all changed in 2016—it had to. I was back in school pursuing my MBA, and at the same time I was supporting my father as his health started to decline. There wasn't enough time to also work 60 hours a week without burning out. And when #BlackWomenAtWork started trending on Twitter that year too, it opened my eyes to what had been happening my whole career. I was the only Black woman in a lot of the corporations where I worked, and for a long time when I was struggling to move up the ladder while facing microaggressions, I thought I was the one doing something wrong. As the first person in my family to graduate college and have a corporate job, I didn't have anyone to prepare me for this workplace environment. The stories of other Black women struggling with overworking to prove that they belonged resonated with me and empowered me to make a change.

At first, I just started by pulling back. I didn't talk to my leaders until they noticed the difference in my hours, and when they did, it was a pretty blunt conversation. The work was still getting done, so all I had to say was "this is the job you hired me for, and these are the hours I was told I am expected to work." Building this boundary created space for me to pursue my passions outside of the office. I started writing for *Your Corporate Black Girl* and eventually became a podcast host for *Blackness and the Workplace*.

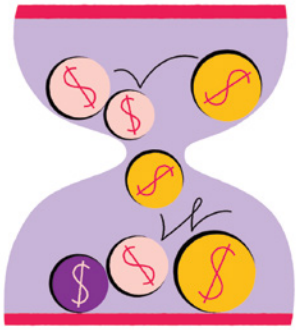
I've had other jobs since that one, and now I handle setting these boundaries differently. I talk directly to my bosses and communicate my expectations because, at the end of the day, I believe that adults should be able to talk to other adults without feeling afraid. It's helped me to move up in my career and to facilitate time for me to do other things outside of work, like volunteering for the L&S career center, SuccessWorks, as an alumni manager to support students who are entering the corporate world for the first time. Today, I am a learning and development program manager for Alaska Airlines. I have a hybrid schedule that works for me and a fulfilling life outside of my job.

JESSICA PHARM ('10)
AS TOLD TO ALLI WATTERS

5 AI, the Assistant?

IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME, artificial intelligence has wormed its way into the workplace. But how much can AI help manage your workload? And what ethics should you consider when using it? Annette Zimmermann, an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy, researches the ethics

6 Now Open 24 Hours



AMERICA RUNS 24-7. Luxuries, like the ability to go to the grocery store at 10 p.m., exist because of an increasing number of jobs with nontraditional hours. These jobs, typically in the service and hospitality industry with lower wages, are of particular interest to Alejandra Ros Pilarz. She's an associate professor in the Sandra Rosenbaum School of Social Work whose research looks at how work schedules impact a parent's ability to provide for their family and support their children's development.

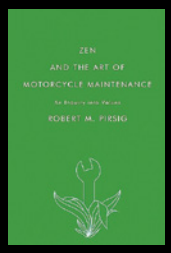
Factors that weigh into her research on jobs with nontraditional hours are predictability of schedules, flexibility to take time off and dependability of having enough hours. Many jobs in this category don't offer any of these qualities, and research shows how the impact of the stress from this instability can trickle down to children in the household. With the growth of jobs like these and people often juggling multiple gigs, Pilarz thinks it's important to remind people — and policymakers who are considering workplace scheduling laws — that work-life balance is different for those who have jobs beyond the nine-to-five grind.

"When people talk about work-life balance, they often talk about it from the perspective of people like me who work salary jobs and have a lot of work to do but have adequate pay and benefits," Pilarz says. "But for some people who work in low-wage jobs or low-quality jobs, it means something very different. It's not about working too many hours but working enough hours to make ends meet."

of AI and discusses these questions with students in her classes. When ChatGPT was released, she remembers hearing how the lives of people who had never put much thought toward AI before were suddenly transformed. Her hairstylist used the tool to respond to appointment requests, a person at her gym used it to come up with workout routines, and her friend at a marketing agency automated 90% of her job, calling the tool "magic." She thinks the best examples of AI being used well are when the tool is applied to automate menial tasks and create more time for meaningful and exciting work. How much it can help depends on the job and the person. She does not use the tool to aid her in her research work, although generative AI has proven helpful for parts of her pedagogical practice: Her students use AI to complete a "creative project," such as training GPT models on different philosophical texts and simulating an ethical debate with their help. But she cautions against using the tools in ways that are uncritical and superficial. "We all have role-specific ethical responsibilities that are a function of our particular job," Zimmermann says. "Outsourcing part of our job, either to another human or to an AI tool, doesn't diminish those ethical responsibilities."

7 Life-Changing Reads

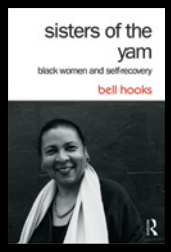
WE ASKED TWO PROFESSORS to share the books that impacted their outlook on work-life balance.



ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

BY ROBERT M. PIRSIG

When Ankur Desai, professor and the chair for the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, is looking for wisdom on time and how to manage it, he looks for examples of lives lived well by others. That insight might be found in works of fiction, memoirs, even obituaries in the local paper. He says, "Obits are all about time. The time you spent living. Where did you go, what did you do, who were you with, whose lives did you touch?" Another unexpected source of inspiration is this work of fiction about a summer motorcycle trip across America's Northwest. Desai says that this classic book, while not entirely factual about Buddhism or motorcycle repair, weaves in insights about the importance of dedication to the task at hand, finding "gumption" to accomplish it and sharing that journey with others.



SISTERS OF THE YAM: BLACK WOMEN AND SELF-RECOVERY

BY BELL HOOKS (MA'76)

When Cindy I-Fen Cheng, the Robinson Edwards Professor of American History, arrived in Madison nearly 20 years ago, she remembers feeling uprooted and alienated. She had immigrated from Taipei, Taiwan, to the United States when she was 7 years old but had only lived in the Los Angeles area. "I left a place where my ties ran deep to go to the Midwest, where I knew no one and where very few people looked like me," she says. She was passionate about growing the Asian American Studies Program and emboldened by the fact that her job existed thanks to activists who fought for it. But all this left her feeling like she wasn't doing enough while simultaneously doing too much. *Sisters of the Yam* helped her get through those feelings. The book showed her that she wasn't alone and that this journey was a common experience for women of color. It also outlined how to turn feelings of alienation into a passion to get things done. ■

GOOD SPORTS

The College of Letters & Science has helped place a tremendous number of alumni in the sports communication and media industry. A new certificate is helping to accelerate that trend.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

PHOTO: COURTESY OF KELSEY TEHAN

Kelsey Tehan ('22) runs social media for the Kansas City Chiefs.

Kelsey Tehan's big moment came with just seconds to go in overtime. The Kansas City Chiefs were in the red zone, and while quarterback Patrick Mahomes' fingers were poised to receive the snap, Tehan's were poised over her keyboard in the press box, ready to hit "post" on a raft of social media content she had created. Seconds later, wide receiver Mecole Hardman caught the touchdown pass that ended the game.

"I remember I looked at my coworker next to me and shouted, 'Oh my God, we just won the Super Bowl,'" recalls Tehan ('22), who has served as social media coordinator for the NFL's reigning champions for more than a year now. "And then I'm just hitting send on everything. We got as much stuff out as we possibly could, and I'm seeing all the numbers, millions of likes, millions of views, and I'm thinking it's insane—I'm part of this."

PHOTO: STEPH CHAMBERS / GETTY

Like an increasing number of recent students, Tehan graduated from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication with a sports communication certificate added on. Douglas McLeod ('83), the Evjue Centennial Professor for the J-School, came up with the idea five years ago to meet an overwhelming student demand for training in sports communication, and teaching faculty member Matt Hermann came aboard to implement the summer program starting in 2019. Five years in, between 300–400 students are pursuing the certificate, and the program has experienced an annual growth of 50–75% since it launched. It's currently the third-fastest growing certificate among students at UW.

"There's so much enthusiasm around sports," says Hermann. "And there's a big interest in carrying all those skills toward sports and a sort of entrepreneurial spirit about how to communicate around sports."

Even before the advent of the certificate, UW–Madison enjoyed massive representation in the sports and

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHERREE BURRUSS

Today, Sherree Burruss ('12) works for the NFL Network, but she got her start at a local news station in Chicago. Before that, she learned the ropes at UW–Madison.

sports media industry. Graduates from the College of Letters & Science occupy important communication-related roles on Wisconsin's professional teams (such as the Milwaukee Bucks and Brewers), major sports media companies (think ESPN and the NFL Network) and top-tier journalism outlets (including *The Wall Street Journal*). There's something about the opportunities available in the J-School and around campus that set students up for success in the field.

Sherree Burruss ('12) certainly felt it when she was an undergrad in the J-School. Burruss, who works as a news reporter for NFL Network's "Good Morning Football," made her way onto the national sports journalism scene by gaining experience at a local news station in Chicago. Her first experience behind a news desk was as a kid on a school field trip at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago, but she really learned the ropes at UW–Madison.

"Doing the practice newscasts in my classes, literally sitting and reading a prompter, that's actually what I do in my day job," says Burruss. "I think that exact experience definitely translated. But networking also is great. Wisconsin fans are such smart, engaged, invested sports fans, and I try to take that enthusiasm with me when I'm reporting on the sideline."

Like Burruss, Evan Cohen ('02) started early and never stopped: He was 9 years old when he decided he wanted a career in radio broadcasting.

That early determination is one of many things that has helped Cohen, a communication arts graduate, make it to where he is today. He's the anchor leg of the triad of co-hosts on "Unsportsmanlike," ESPN Radio's national morning radio program, and the vice president of content for the national broadcast group Good Karma Brands. Growing up in New York, a teenaged Cohen locked into radio titans like Chris "Mad Dog" Russo, Dan Patrick and Howard Stern. He also frequently shouts out his love for UW–Madison and the Badgers on "Unsportsmanlike."

"I think a lot of people see what a lot of us do in sports media and say, 'I love sports. I'd love to do what you do,'" says Cohen. "And my follow-up is always, 'That's great, but do you love radio?' Because that's the answer. It's not about loving sports — it's about loving radio."

Cohen loved it so much he took every opportunity to hone his craft during his four years in Madison, spending countless hours prepping and broadcasting for WSUM,

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ESPN

Evan Cohen ('02) still frequently shouts out his love for the Badgers on ESPN Radio's "Unsportsmanlike."

which was then located above Urban Outfitters on State Street.

"We knew nobody was listening," he recalls. "But it was serious for us because I knew this was what I wanted to do. In my head, I only had one shot, and UW–Madison gave me a million opportunities to have that one shot because I would show up every day."

Jason Gay ('92), the sports columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* since 2009, graduated from UW–Madison with a degree in history. He returns to campus frequently, including twice in 2019, serving as the speaker for that year's winter commencement ceremony and for the annual gridiron tilt between the Badgers and the Michigan Wolverines. This gave him the perfect opportunity to do one of his favorite things as a sports journalist — clown then–Wolverines coach Jim Harbaugh.

Even though he's plying his craft in a print medium that's faced major headwinds in recent decades, Gay, whose byline has appeared in everything from *GQ* to *Rolling Stone*, still encourages students to pursue his journalistic path.

"If I can be anything, I'd like to be a rigorous optimist," he says. "There will always be a substantial audience for quality storytelling — especially around a lively topic like sports." ■

> "In my head, I only had one shot, and UW-Madison gave me a million opportunities to have that one shot because I would show up every day."
>
> EVAN COHEN

Jason Gay ('92) is a sports columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*, but he has also had bylines in *GQ*, *Rolling Stone* and more.

PHOTO: ERIN HALL

J-School alumni Arvind Gopalratnam (left) and Barry Baum are on the executive leadership team for the Milwaukee Bucks.

PHOTO: ANDY MANIS

BUCKING, A TREND

The Milwaukee Bucks are in good hands. Good, Badger-trained hands.

Two members of the Bucks' executive leadership team are graduates of the J-School: Arvind Gopalratnam ('04), the team's vice president of corporate responsibility and executive director of the Milwaukee Bucks Foundation, and Barry Baum ('92), the chief communications officer for the Bucks and Fiserv Forum, the arena where the team plays.

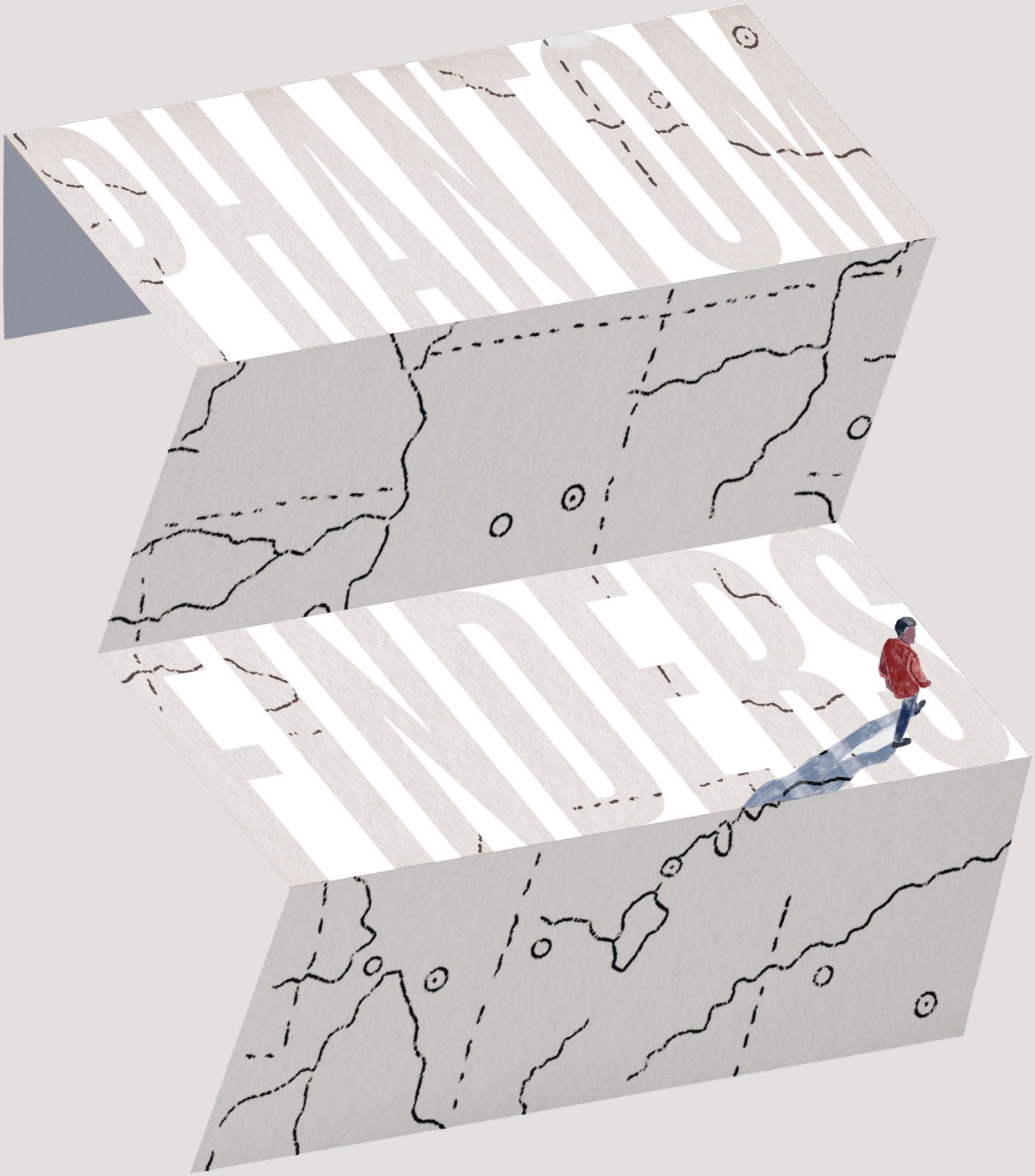
As an undergrad, Gopalratnam covered sports for *The Daily Cardinal* before developing a career in corporate and sports communication. Today, he commutes to Madison regularly to teach a school-year course on sports marketing communication and has also taught several courses in the sports certificate program.

"I am living and breathing in real life what this experience and kind of background do, but now I get to teach too," he says. "One of my favorite things is to expose students to the breadth of opportunities in the world of sports that a skill set in communications can set you up for. It's not necessarily that if you get this degree, it equals this job."

Baum can certainly relate. The Brooklyn native — also a *Daily Cardinal* alum — hustled to parlay his journalism degree into a nearly seven-year stint as a sportswriter for the *New York Post*. After covering the National Hockey League's New York Islanders for a couple of years, he jumped to the other side, eventually doing public relations and business communications for the New Jersey/Brooklyn Nets and Barclays Center before being lured to the Midwest by an old friend who grew up with him in Brooklyn, Bucks President Peter Feigin.

"Communications turned out to be a great opportunity to use the skills I learned at Wisconsin, from telling a story to learning how to write succinctly and creatively," says Baum. "It led to where I am today. I am so appreciative of that."

PHANTOM FINDERS



ILLUSTRATIONS: PIPER OLSEN

The Wisconsin state map is full of phantoms — but not the supernatural kind. These L&S researchers are determined to track them down.

BY ALLI WATTERS

STUFF OF LEGENDS

CARTOGRAPHIC PHANTOM
A community listed on a map that no longer exists on the ground.

GHOST TOWN
An abandoned town that still has the structures of the former community, but no one lives there. (Cue the tumbleweeds.)

UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES (UNINCS)
Recognized, named communities that are not officially incorporated. These places can become phantoms if the population shrinks. While most phantoms were once unincs, not all unincs become phantoms.

IT'S A WEDNESDAY IN JUNE,

and Howard Veregin is exploring Walker in Wood County. This location in central Wisconsin is one of seven suspected "phantoms" that the Wisconsin state cartographer would vet that day, but this one stood out. Pulling over to the side of the road, Veregin could see a handful of large buildings that looked like warehouses. Many of them were on the older side, but they appeared to be in operation. A cranberry company sign offered a big clue about what he had stumbled onto, but it was still unlike any other phantom he had visited.

"This one building was really amazing — it looked like it was from the 1920s," says Veregin. "But while I was looking at it, a couple of pickup trucks pulled up next to me."

Thankfully, the drivers were friendly cranberry growers. One of them leaned out the window and chatted with Veregin.

Truck driver: *Good morning. Looking for something in particular?*
Veregin: *Well, I'm looking for cartographic phantoms.*
Truck driver: *What's a cartographic phantom?*
Veregin: *It's a community that is listed on a map, but it doesn't exist on the ground.*
Truck driver: *This place exists.*
Veregin: *Sure, but it doesn't really look like a community. What is it?*
Truck driver: *Well, this is our family cranberry farm. We've been farming cranberries here for 125 years. I'm a fifth-generation cranberry grower. Most of this area is private property.*

As it turns out, the property is located on a former railway stop called Walker Junction, which historically had been used to ship out cranberries. But that was years ago. The station and the name Walker haven't been used in at least a generation, and now the land was almost entirely privately owned by this family of cranberry growers.

So, Veregin's suspicions were confirmed. This wasn't an unincorporated community like so many versions of the Wisconsin state map suggest — he had found yet another cartographic phantom.

THE WISCONSIN STATE MAP IS WRONG

Maps of Wisconsin are littered with towns, villages and cities of all sizes. Most, of course, are listed correctly, but many of those little dots are nothing but phantoms, signifying forgotten patches of land where there once was a town. Hunting down these phantoms — and correcting the maps that list them — has become a bit of an obsession for Veregin. He's been studying maps since he declared geography as his major in 1978 — that's 27 years before the launch of Google Maps.

"If you're a map user and you see Walker with a small circle and text suggesting it's a town that you can visit, you might stop in and get circled by pickup trucks," Veregin says. "It's a misrepresentation and misinformation to the map user if these places are displayed using the same symbology that you would use for a community."

Most cartographic phantoms aren't dotted with buildings as Walker is. Typically, there's a whole lot of nothing. Phantoms are the remnants of abandoned unincorporated communities (unincs). These small communities are recognized places but, as the name suggests, are not officially incorporated. Unincs often share their name with local landmarks, like a railway stop or the town tavern. But these already slight communities, usually located in rural areas, are known to shrink or disappear altogether thanks to the societal migration toward more urban environments. That's when they become ghost towns (when the bones of buildings are still visible) or cartographic phantoms (when there's nothing left).

Wisconsin has a lot of the latter. In fact, the State Cartographer's Office, which is Wisconsin's resource for all things maps, has identified more than 600 potential cartographic phantoms in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) database. That means there could be hundreds of places mislabeled in the data systems that inform map providers like Google Maps, Apple Maps and even printed atlases.

Take Clyde, for example. If you look at a map, you might think it's another town located near one of Wisconsin's most bustling tourist areas, Door County. But drive there and you won't find much of anything.

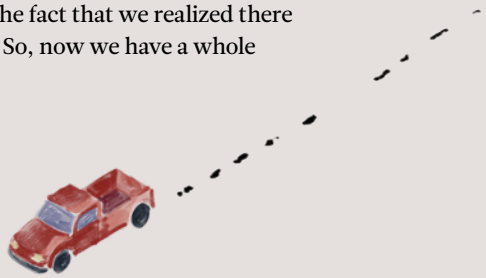
"We're not trying to eliminate phantoms," Veregin says. "We're just trying to get them properly identified as phantoms — not as communities where you could stop and get a coffee and a sandwich or something."

When Veregin started as the state cartographer in 2009, he realized no one was collecting data about unincs or phantoms — not even the Census Bureau, the state or individual counties. So, what started as Veregin's passion project has since become a one-of-a-kind effort for the Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office, which is housed within the College of Letters & Science as part of the Department of Geography.

"I thought this sounded like it could be kind of a fun project," Veregin says. "It's important for improving maps and nobody else is doing it, so let's give it a try."

Thus began Veregin's phantom-finding quest. He started by identifying hundreds of potential phantoms on different types of maps and putting them into a geographic information system (GIS). Then he hit the road, literally. For the last 15 years, he's been driving to hundreds of potential phantoms to collect photos and data as evidence of whether the communities listed still exist. He hopes to use these findings to get the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to correct the GNIS, and thus fix the many Wisconsin maps that are informed by it. The problem is, the State Cartographer's Office keeps finding more and more phantoms.

"When I started out all those years ago, it seemed like an impossible idea that I would ever get to the end of visiting places and taking pictures," Veregin says. "But somehow over the course of time that happened, and it was a momentous event. But it was immediately kicked to the ground by the fact that we realized there are a lot more phantoms. So, now we have a whole lot more work to do."



FINDING PHANTOMS FASTER

Enter Mike Hasinoff ('22). He's a GIS research analyst for the State Cartographer's Office, and the phantoms project has become one of his main assignments. He's looking to find ways to streamline the process and find phantoms without sending Veregin to every uninc in the state. This is an especially big time saver, because there are more than 1,000 unincs in Wisconsin, and not all of them are phantoms. Minocqua — a popular vacation town in northern Wisconsin — is just one example of an uninc that has a vibrant community.

So, Hasinoff created a software program that he calls the Fast Phantom Finder. Here's how it works: The Fast Phantom Finder looks at places that are suspected phantoms and creates a quarter-mile buffer around the location. It then cross-references that area with the Wisconsin Statewide Parcel Map to see if there are any significant residential, commercial or agricultural properties nearby. If there are zero, then it's a strong phantom contender.

"The methods are geared toward finding nothing," Hasinoff says. "That's what helps us narrow things down."

But identifying the phantoms isn't enough. Hasinoff still needs evidence to prove that these communities are gone — evidence like the photos Veregin's been collecting for years.

"In order to get USGS to change these maps, they need us to be 99.99% sure," Hasinoff says.

While Veregin still hits the road regularly to scope out these locations, Hasinoff is also looking for ways to crowdsource some of the research. When he gives talks about the project, people will look at the map and see possible phantoms in their neck of the woods. He asks them to check out the area and snap pictures. He's also looking at geotags on photos that are publicly available and even considering setting some of the phantoms as geocaching destinations as a way to find out what's out there.

"When I present, people will say 'that's near where I live,'" Hasinoff says. "This project is something people can see themselves as part of and identify with it."

ALL OVER THE MAP

Cartographic phantoms aren't unique to Wisconsin — they're all over the country. But this groundbreaking research about them is only happening here in the Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office. And the work is starting to get attention. Recently, Veregin heard from a map provider who's interested in implementing their research to correct their maps.

"They want their map to be better than Google's," Veregin says.

The creation of the Fast Phantom Finder could help make this work more widespread, though not every state has as good of a parcel map as Wisconsin's, and most states don't even have a cartographer's office.

"Wisconsin has one of the best parcel maps in the U.S.," Hasinoff says. "And Wisconsin has the only state cartographer's office that is attached to an academic department, allowing opportunities for cross-pollination with research staff, faculty and students," Veregin adds.

Veregin and Hasinoff are aiming to build a better map for Wisconsinites to use in the future, but they're also building a record of the state's past. Many of the stories they've uncovered during the phantoms project have informed another effort by the State Cartographer's Office, *Vanishing Wisconsin*. The goal of their new project is to create a historical digital atlas for the state. It's still in an early phase, but the collection of forgotten communities could eventually become a digital documentation of Wisconsin's past.

"We strive to be the Wisconsin Idea in action," Hasinoff says. ■

Douglass Endrizzi (right) and Jesse Viola check a component at the Wisconsin HTS Axisymmetric Mirror project.

PHOTO: JEFF MILLER

WHAM!

No, not the '80s band. We're talking about the Wisconsin HTS Axisymmetric Mirror (WHAM). It's the fusion energy device a team led by Cary Forest ('86), the Prager Professor of Experimental Physics, used earlier this year to prove that plasma can be successfully generated as a potential source of carbon-free energy.

Supported by funding from the Department of Energy and the College of Letters & Science, UW-Madison partnered with Realta Fusion to operate WHAM and advance fusion research.

Unlike fission, which creates carbonless byproducts but also radioactive waste that must be safely stored, fusion is an entirely clean process. For decades, researchers have tried to replicate the fusion-using devices known as mirror machines.

Mirror machines increase fusion efficiency by physically containing the plasma, using inward-facing magnets to keep charged particles from escaping the main fusion reactor. Until recently, those magnets weren't strong enough to effectively handle the task.

Over the last decade, researchers around the world have developed high-temperature superconductor magnets that are significantly stronger than the magnets previously used for fusion research. And with these powerful magnets, the UW-Madison team is revisiting mirror machines as plasma energy reactors.

"The outlook for decarbonizing our energy sector is much higher with fusion than anything else," says Forest. "First plasma is a crucial first step for us in that direction."

Origin Stories

In late September, a newly renovated research and collaboration space for the Wisconsin Center for Origins Research (WiCOR) opened on the sixth floor of Sterling Hall. WiCOR, a collection of seven UW-Madison departments (astronomy, integrative biology, bacteriology, chemistry, atmospheric and oceanic sciences, botany, and geoscience) united in tackling research questions related to the origins of life in the universe.

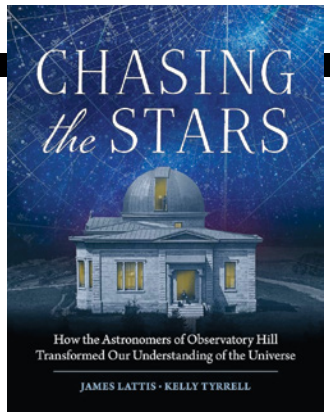
Dean Eric M. Wilcots, who first conceived the idea several years ago, was there to inaugurate the space and put the concept into context.

"WiCOR is a place where true interdisciplinary research that is curiosity-driven can thrive," says Wilcots, the Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy. "This marks the beginning of establishing Wisconsin as the place of research on the origins of life — not only here, but across the galaxy."

WiCOR researchers have already begun their first multidisciplinary research project, a study of potentially habitable exoplanets in nearby galaxies that feature a liquid ocean and a hydrogen atmosphere.

To the Stars

Tucked away on the quiet side of Observatory Hill, in a classic historic building with a domed roof, lies an important piece of astronomical



history. James Lattis (MA'87, PhD'89), faculty associate of astronomy and co-founder and director of UW Space Place, and Kelly Tyrrell (MS'11), UW–Madison's assistant vice chancellor for content strategy, bring the history of the Washburn Observatory to life in *Chasing the Stars: How the Astronomers of Observatory Hill Transformed Our Understanding of the Universe*. Lattis and Tyrrell take us back to 1881, the year the observatory was first founded, tracing some of the major scientific discoveries involving the observatory's telescope and creating a fascinating mix of scientific discovery and surprising anecdotes. For instance, the observatory's first director, James C. Watson, is credited with discovering 22 asteroids in his lifetime — but he died unexpectedly before the observatory even opened. At one point in the observatory's history, it used "computers" — not Dell PCs, but staff members who used handwritten spreadsheets to compile catalogs of stars.

A Fine Art

A pair of art history alumni — Drew Sawyer ('04) and Marcela Guerrero (MA'05, PhD'15) — have been selected to curate the 2026 biennial exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Curating the Whitney Biennial is considered one of the highest honors an art historian can achieve. Guerrero is the Whitney's first curator of Latin American art, and Sawyer is a photography curator.

The timing of their appointment is fortuitous, as the Department of Art History is preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary next spring. Both Sawyer and Guerrero plan to return to campus early next year to take part in a series of workshops related to the departmental milestone.

PHOTO: BRYAN DERBALLA

Drew Sawyer and Marcela Guerrero will be the 2026 Whitney Biennial curators at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Works of Genius

A pair of College of Letters & Science alumni were recently named recipients of a prestigious 2024 MacArthur Fellowship.

Loka Ashwood (PhD'15) and Keivan Stassun (MS'99, PhD'00), were selected to receive MacArthur "Genius Grants," a designation that includes an $800,000 stipend.

Ashwood, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Kentucky, is being honored by the MacArthur Foundation for "shedding light on rural identity and culture and on the ecological, economic and social challenges facing many rural communities." In her latest book, *Empty Fields, Empty Promises: A State-by-State Guide to Understanding and Transforming the Right to Farm*, Ashwood and her co-author look at the impact of right-to-farm laws on rural residents across the United States.

Stassun, a professor of physics and astronomy at Vanderbilt University, was selected for "expanding opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education and careers for underrepresented populations." Stassun founded the Frist Center for Autism and Innovation, an initiative that helps autistic and other neurodiverse individuals find and maintain meaningful employment in STEM careers.

Fellows are selected by the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to acknowledge talented individuals in a variety of fields who have shown exceptional originality and demonstrated the ability to impact society in significant and beneficial ways through their pioneering work or the rigor of their contributions.

MORE L&S NEWS AT **LS.WISC.EDU/NEWS**

HONOR ROLL

John Orrock, professor and the Wayland E. Noland Distinguished Chair in Integrative Biology, was elected to the Ecological Society of America and honored for his work on intersectional biology.

Assistant Professor of Computer Sciences **Rahul Chatterjee** (MS'15) received a CAREER award from the National Science Foundation for his work on improving system and account security for survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence.

Francis Halzen, a Vilas Research Professor and Gregory Breit Professor of Physics, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, honoring his work in particle physics, astrophysics and cosmology.

Professor of Chemistry **Kyoung-Shin Choi** has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences for her work developing and understanding electrodes and catalysts for use in electrochemical and photoelectrochemical applications critical to creating a sustainable future.

Swinging for the Fences

Rick Schlesinger is the hand that guides one of Major League Baseball's most clever and efficient teams.

BY AARON R. CONKLIN

PHOTO: SARA STATHAS

Even if you're not a rabid baseball fan, you'd be hard-pressed not to envy Rick Schlesinger's ('83) office. A panel of windowpanes offers a breathtaking vista of the right-field grass in American Family Field, the home stadium of the Milwaukee Brewers.

It's a view Schlesinger, who graduated from UW–Madison with degrees in history and political science, has savored for the last 21 years since he was hired to oversee the Brewers' business operations in 2003.

Schlesinger's list of responsibilities is almost as long as a Major League Baseball season — ticket sales, sponsorships, broadcasting, media relations, stadium operations, community relations, legal, business analytics, IT, finance and human resources.

He's faced with an equally long list of challenges, such as evolving to meet the changing needs of Brewers fans, incorporating new technology, generating new sources of revenue and finding ways to keep fan engagement high in a crowded and unstable media landscape.

"I like to say that we compete with sleep," says Schlesinger, grinning. "We're trying to be all things all the time — not just during games and not just during the baseball season. We want to engage with our audience all the time with as many different touch points as they want to allow."

It isn't always easy. The Brewers have had a remarkable run of on-field success in the last several years. They've made the playoffs in six of the last seven years, including a 2018 run to the National League Championship Series. But player payroll is routinely dwarfed by big-city rivals like the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Atlanta Braves. Major League Baseball is assuming the production and distribution of Brewers games starting next season, creating uncertainty in the Brewers' local and regional media landscape.

"Baseball's economic structure is so different from the other leagues," Schlesinger says. "You have to deal with the realities of the economics of the sport you're in. I don't think we obsess about it or worry too much about it. We just try to make the best decisions."

Schlesinger started his career on a common path for history and political science majors — he went to law school. He says that his first years as a lawyer in Los Angeles were brutal and uninspiring. Then, like the star athletes who win the World Series, he announced he was going to Disney World.

Or, rather, to Walt Disney Pictures and Television, where he handled production, development and finance. The House of Mouse already owned one professional sports team (the National Hockey League's Mighty Ducks) when Schlesinger arrived, and then they added Major League Baseball's then-Anaheim Angels to the fold. They asked Schlesinger to become general counsel for both teams. Schlesinger, who has always loved baseball — his father was offered a contract to play for the Chicago Cubs before enlisting and fighting in World War II — pounced on the opportunity. He handled both teams for five years before being recruited to Milwaukee.

Like most MLB squads, the Brewers have invested heavily in data and analytics. On the player side, that informs decisions on when to pull the starting pitcher. On the business side, it's about figuring out who the fans are and how best to reach and engage them. For Schlesinger, data's critical, but it can never fully trump baseball's 12 decades of tradition.

"We're trying to deliver the experience the individual fans want," says Schlesinger. "There are 40,000 potential fans at every game, and there are 40,000 potential ways to reach them."

Schlesinger likes to cite former MLB Commissioner Allan "Bud" Selig ('56) — an L&S alum who teaches an annual course about baseball and history — for describing baseball as a "social institution." As a Wisconsinite, the sentiment resonates with Schlesinger, who takes the community relations piece of his gig very seriously.

"We're a regional team," he says. "It's not just Milwaukee — it's the entire state of Wisconsin."

Schlesinger has a World Series ring from his time with the Angels — game seven of that series was played on Schlesinger's birthday — but he'd love to win another with the Brewers. The Brewers' win over the Chicago Cubs, their heated rival, in game 163 at Wrigley Field in 2018 to win the division and advance to the playoffs stands as his career high point — as both an executive and a baseball fan.

"Wrigley Field was 70% Brewers fans," he chuckles. "And that made it even more special."

When he's not immersed in baseball biz, Schlesinger spends most of his time reading history books, usually on his iPhone. He's partial to 19th-century U.S. history and 1930s-era European history, with particular interest in the Civil War and Winston Churchill, respectively.

"I'm never away from history, because I've got my iPhone in my hand all the time," he says. "If I'm looking at box scores or our game broadcasts on the road, I'm also looking at history books."

Schlesinger acknowledges that making decisions about the Brewers' broadcast options is a far cry from making decisions about world events, but the lessons history has taught him about the value of leadership resonate sharply in his day-to-day.

"To be a good leader, a good role model, you have to be a good listener and juggle different viewpoints," he says.

Schlesinger plans to end his career with the Brewers and remain in the Milwaukee area once he leaves his spectacular office view behind. He thinks often about following his friend Selig into teaching — combining his love of history and baseball.

"If I could reinvent myself, I'd go back and take history courses for the rest of my days," Schlesinger says. ■

"We're a regional team. It's not just Milwaukee — it's the entire state of Wisconsin."

RICK SCHLESINGER

PHOTO: MICHAEL REAVES / GETTY

Stronger Together

For Julie and Peter Weil, making an impact means connecting knowledge, perspectives and people.

BY KATIE VAUGHN

When Peter M. Weil ('70, JD'74) was a student at UW–Madison in the late 1960s, he studied the past while history was being made around him.

Peter, a St. Louis native and a son of German-Jewish refugees who came to the United States in the 1930s, was drawn to the University due to the reputation of its history department and such renowned faculty as George Mosse, Stanley Kutler, Merle Curti, William Appleman Williams (MS'48, PhD'50) and James Willard Hurst.

PHOTO: JOHN DAVIS

"I came to UW in the fall of 1966, but it could have been 1956, the way it felt. And then the world changed," Peter says, referring to the anti-Vietnam War protests and cultural revolution that transformed the country and campus. "It was a wild time. And it was a stimulating time, intellectually, emotionally and culturally. So many of my professors — whether it was Mosse or Kutler — brought what was happening outside into the classroom."

After earning a master's degree in history from the University of California at Berkeley, Peter returned to UW-Madison for law school. He then moved to Los Angeles, where he built his career in real estate law and met his wife, Julie, a lawyer originally from Evanston, Illinois. Their two oldest children are lawyers, and their two youngest are a software programmer and an artist. While only two are UW alumni, all four support the Badgers — almost as passionately as Peter.

"You have to understand, Wisconsin is everywhere in our house," says Julie, holding up her husband's wrist to reveal his red watch and picking up his red-cased phone. His car interior is red, and their home gym has a Badgers theme, she adds.

For years, Julie and Peter have worked with the UW Foundation & Alumni Association to host more than 60 events, from lectures to alumni meetups to parties for Los Angeles students who have been admitted to UW-Madison, to share the Wisconsin experience with them and their families.

And the Weils have supported a variety of projects across nearly 20 different areas of the University, including the history and political science departments, the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies, the UW Hillel Foundation, the Los Angeles branch of the Posse Program, the Law School and the UW Children's Hospital. Additionally, Peter served on the UW Foundation Board of Directors for 12 years, and in 2009 he received a Distinguished Alumni Award.

Julie and Peter especially like finding opportunities where they can make connections and a tangible difference.

"We try to do things where we have real impact," Julie says.

A striking example is a trip the couple helped support and coordinate that sent groups of professors to Israel.

"Reading books is one thing, but exposing them to the diversity of points of view is quite another," says Peter. "These professors were teaching courses to large numbers of students, and the trip gave them a better understanding of Israel, its politics and its people."

Fostering connections is also at the heart of the Weils' latest endeavor: the Julie & Peter Weil Study & Event Space in Irving & Dorothy Levy Hall, a new building set to become a hub for the humanities on campus. It will be a safe and welcoming lounge where students can study and collaborate.

"The reason we picked that particular space is because that is a place where faculty and students can congregate," Julie says. "It's a unifying space."

Julie and Peter foresee an exciting future of ideas being sparked and opportunities being created as students, faculty and visitors meet and learn from one another.

"We need to be talking with each other, mixing with each other and seeing each other," she says.

"That's a way you can have impact," adds Peter. ■

Building Connections

The Julie & Peter Weil Study & Event Space is part of Irving & Dorothy Levy Hall, for which the College of Letters & Science broke ground in May as the home for the humanities at UW-Madison.

The five-level, 136,000-square-foot building, located on the corner of Park and West Johnson streets, will house eight L&S academic departments, programs and centers — including African American Studies, American Indian & Indigenous Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano/a & Latina/o Studies, Gender & Women's Studies, History, Jewish Studies and Religious Studies — that are currently spread across five facilities on campus.

With 13 classrooms with a range of 25 to 400 seats, plus departmental offices and support areas, the facility will partially replace the aging Humanities Building's classrooms as well as provide spaces where students and instructors can gather.

Nearly two-thirds of all undergraduate credit hours are taught by L&S faculty, and more than 5,000 students earn an L&S degree each year. Living L&S alumni number more than 240,000 and include brothers Marv ('68, JD'71) and Jeff ('72) Levy, who made a $20 million gift in honor of their late parents, Irving and Dorothy Levy. The $115 million Levy Hall is also funded by the State of Wisconsin with $60 million in the 2021–23 biennial budget and many other donors.

L&S Dean and Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy Eric M. Wilcots says the building makes a powerful statement.

"We're making a significant investment in the humanities and renewing our commitment to telling the human story," Wilcots says.

READ MORE ABOUT IRVING & DOROTHY LEVY HALL AT
ls.wisc.edu/irving-and-dorothy-levy-hall

The Human Side of Technology

BY ALAN RUBEL

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREA D'AQUINO

Information schools sit at the intersection of computing technology, data and people. Here at UW–Madison, we are diligent to ensure that humans are at the heart of our classes and research. This is especially important when grappling with the many controversies involving social media, AI and big data, including issues surrounding privacy, cybersecurity, intellectual property and disinformation.

Alan Rubel is a professor and the director of the Information School in the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences. His research fields include information ethics, policy and law.

Take, for example, this question: Are social media companies responsible for protecting their users from targeted disinformation? That's at the core of a recent U.S. Supreme Court case I've been following for my research. In *Murthy v. Missouri*, two states and several individuals sued the Biden administration claiming that a number of federal agencies — including the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency — communicated with social media companies to remove or demote content based on concerns about its legality, public health effects, terrorist threats and election interference. The plaintiffs alleged that these communications created unreasonable, coercive pressure on the companies and thus violated the First Amendment.

Yes, this is a case about people and their rights, but to understand it you also have to have a fundamental knowledge about the computational technologies, large troves of data and artificial agents at play. This includes how malicious actors are able to deploy AI-controlled bots to spread misinformation and exploit social media algorithms to target audiences as well as how federal agencies are able to collect information about those activities.

With that foundation, it is then possible to discuss the bigger questions of the case: How to discern disinformation, whether social media companies are responsible for stopping it, and what the proper scope of government action is in addressing malicious information. Ultimately, the Supreme Court didn't address the merits of *Murthy v. Missouri* and concluded that the plaintiffs did not have standing to bring the lawsuit. But in the iSchool, these are the questions we are preparing students to grapple with every day.

Versions of this case are likely to return, and so are other issues at that same intersection of computing technology, data and people. Just as the fall semester began, the U.S. Department of Justice indicted two employees of Russia Today for a covert, $10 million effort to create and distribute Russian-government content to U.S. audiences. In a separate case, the DOJ seized a raft of internet domain names that had been used as part of foreign malign influence campaigns. Plus, the CEO of the Telegram was indicted in France for allowing criminal activity on the app. In some sense, these cases are about technology, but as in *Murthy v. Missouri*, the fundamental issues are social and human.

In the College of Letters & Science, we extol the value of a broad liberal arts education. As faculty and instructors, we prepare students to analyze and evaluate complicated, real-world problems like these by teaching critical thinking, contextual understanding and problem solving. The humanities and social sciences are absolutely crucial in addressing key issues that arise in the context of computation, data and people. Our aspiration is that students across L&S, like my colleagues in the iSchool, will use their broad and deep understandings from across disciplines to engage with these kinds of questions. ■

THE L&S EXPERIENCE IS MEANT TO BE SHARED

College of Letters & Science
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

PHOTOS: ISABELLE DELFOSSE

When **Anthony Imbert** arrived on campus, he dreamed of one day helping stroke patients recover their language abilities. Now, as a sophomore in the Letters & Science Summer of Excellence in Research (LASER) program, Anthony is pursuing research that could unlock incredible new advances for our understanding of memory and brain function.

Anthony Imbert

L&S is home to thousands of students just like Anthony, whose passion will uncover future discoveries and drive innovation for years to come.

But Anthony can't do it alone. **Your support fuels research opportunities, academic coaching and resources** that help students like him thrive. Together, we can create a brighter future.

Anthony dreams that his research will change the world. You can make that dream a reality with a gift to the **College of Letters & Science Annual Fund today.**

Make your gift today by visiting **supportuw.org/giveto/ls24fall**

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Last Word

The strongest solar storm in decades lit up the Madison sky on May 10 and 11 after a wind of charged particles from the sun crashed into Earth's magnetic field. Collisions between the particles and molecules of oxygen and nitrogen produced the characteristic colors of the aurora borealis, seen here in a panorama of four combined images taken in rural Columbia County. This photo was taken by astronomy and physics undergraduate student Samuel L. Warfel, and it was picked as a winner of UW–Madison's annual Cool Science Image Contest. You can see all of the winners at the McPherson Eye Research Institute's Mandelbaum & Albert Family Vision Gallery on the ninth floor of the Wisconsin Institutes for Medical Research through the end of the year.

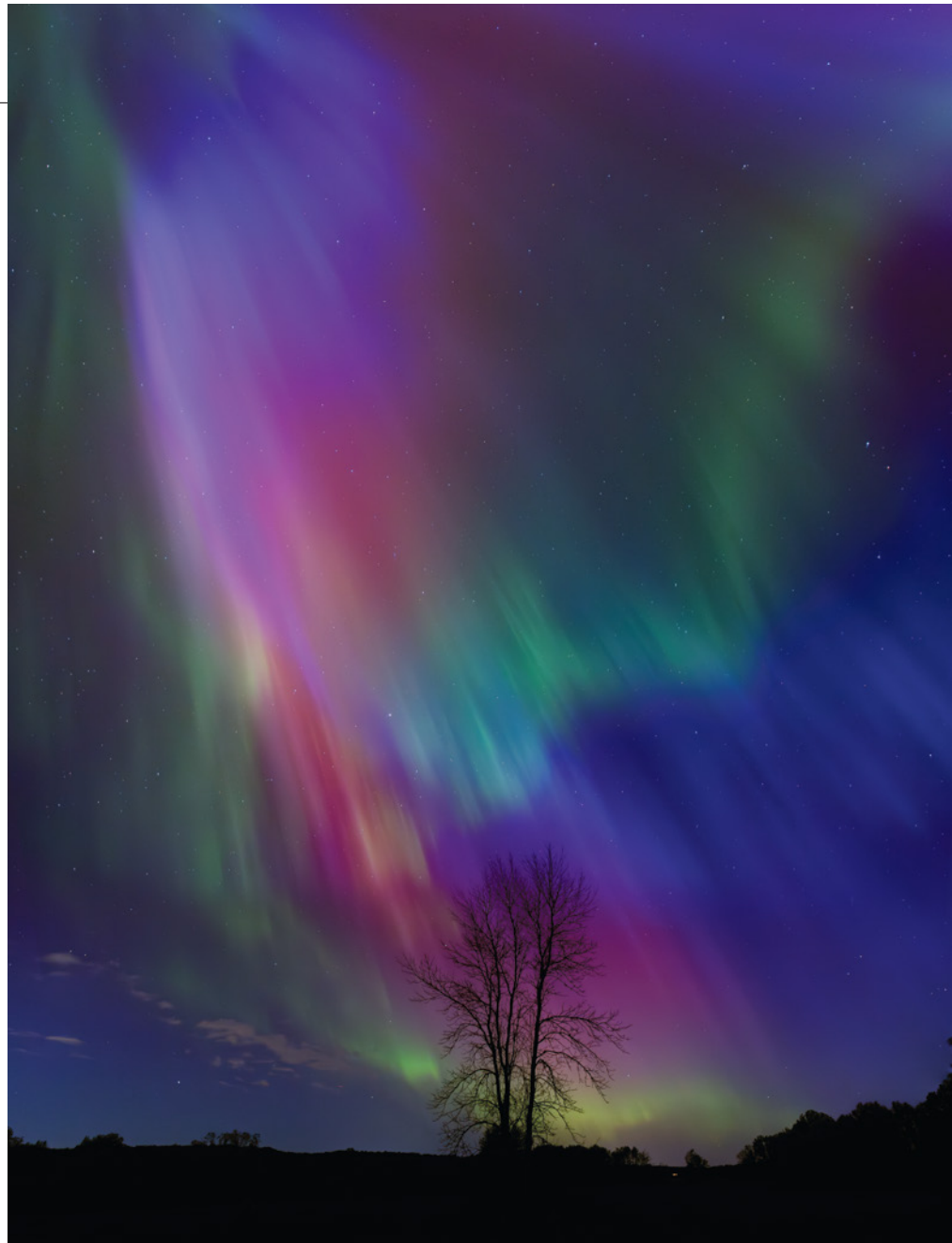

PHOTO: SAMUEL L. WARFEL