Honoring BU’s Brightest Stars

Four alums receive University’s top award at Alumni Weekend

By Cynthia K. Buccini

Boston University celebrated the thousands of alums returning to campus for Alumni Weekend, but singled out four for its highest honor.

Three alums received Alumni Awards: Roger Dorf (ENG’70), retired vice president of Cisco Systems; Christine Hunter (CAS’80, MED’80), a U.S. Navy rear admiral and deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity, which coordinates health care for military beneficiaries around the world; and Howard Koh (SPH’95), assistant secretary for health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition, Parul Vadehra (COM’03) received a Young Alumni Award, and Ed Westerman (CGS’66, COM’68) received a Boston University Alumni Association Lifetime Volunteer Service Award. Westerman serves on several nonprofit boards as well as the College of General Studies Alumni Board and the Boston University Alumni Council Executive Board. He also is cochair of the University’s Global Day of Service.

“The work you do in your professions, your accomplishments, and your contributions to your communities and society all reflect back on your school,” said President Robert A. Brown at the 64th annual Alumni Awards ceremony. “We take pride in the accomplishments of our alumni, and it’s a special pleasure each year to place a focus on some outstanding individuals.”

Schools and colleges also presented alumni awards at receptions and dinners throughout the weekend. (See page 70.)

Dorf, a member of the College of Engineering Dean’s Advisory Council, retired from Cisco Systems in 2009. He was appointed vice president in December 2007, when the company acquired Navini Networks, where he had been president and CEO.

Dorf said he had been working in manufacturing engineering at IBM in Rochester, Minn., 41 years ago when he had the opportunity to enter the Master of Engineering program at ENG.

“Probably the most important thing that I got during that period was an inspiration and a feeling for entrepreneurship for small companies, for start-ups,” Dorf said. “At that point there were two great start-ups in this area, Data General and Digital Equipment. Those names have disappeared, but they did wonderful things for high-tech innovation and for the whole start-up environment.”

Hunter has been TRICARE deputy director since 2009. Previously, she was executive assistant to the U.S. Surgeon General, assumed command of Naval Hospital Bremerton in Washington state, and was chief of staff of the Navy’s Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.
said, “you also start thinking more broadly about all the dimensions that impact on a person’s health.” While a BU professor, he earned a master’s degree at SPH.

“There’s a wonderful saying from Kierkegaard that you can only understand your life backwards, but you have to live it forwards,” said Koh. “This is one of those moments for me, when I can look backwards and understand the tremendous impact of Boston University on my life.”

Vadehra worked in public relations in Boston and in her native New Delhi before joining her husband’s family business, Vadehra Art Gallery, which promotes modern and contemporary Indian art. She also is a trustee of the family’s charity, Love & Care, which offers programs in health care, education, community development, and youth and female empowerment in more than 80 New Delhi slums. The charity, founded by Vadehra’s father-in-law, has touched some 30 million people over the past 25 years, according to Vadehra.

Vadehra recalled that when she arrived at BU at 17, she was excited and nervous. The University, she said, “urged me to twist, wrench, and expand my mind,” and she learned the importance of cooperation and education.

“I believe it is education that will be the most powerful tool to foster real change and betterment,” Vadehra said.