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LOVE Tolerance? THY NEIGHBOR

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DEAN OF ARTS & SCIENCES

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Patrick Farley

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Jeremy Schwab

EDITOR

Jean Hennelly Keith

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Jeffrey S. Crickshank, Mark Doxarton (COM’98), Rachel Johnson (MET’01), Patrick S. Kennedy (COM’04), Annie Laurie Sánchez, Jeremy Schwab, Corrine Slavovner (COM’06), Andrew Thurston

ART DIRECTOR

Rachel York

Produced by Boston University Creative Services

Proofreading the President for Posterity

Virginia Sapiro

Dean of Arts & Sciences

Hard to believe, but this spring marks the completion of my fourth academic year as Dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. If I were an undergraduate, I would be a senior now, and like most seniors, I can’t help looking back to see how far I’ve come and what I’ve accomplished during my decanal odyssey.

Recollecting my first days on campus, I, like most first-year CAS students, faced the sometimes daunting vastness and complexity that is the College of Arts & Sciences—the single largest entity at Boston University: CAS alone is larger than any number of other colleges and universities. But because of the warm welcome BU’s faculty, staff, students, and alumni offer newcomers, my initial angst soon gave way to an appreciation of a wonderful new universe of people and programs, of outstanding educators and focused, committed students who create this marvelous academic community in Boston, one of America’s most dynamic and beautiful cities.

I’m thrilled to be a member of this distinguished university and honored that I have been able to serve it and contribute to its continued growth and development. Now, with our new strategic plan in place that charts our path for the next ten years, I look forward with great optimism and pride in our future in the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at Boston University.

Like our graduating seniors, after four years of challenging work, I’ve given much thought to what’s next. For many of our seniors, it’s graduate school or a first job. For me, it’s an opportunity to build on what I’ve learned about Arts & Sciences in my first four years and to work with the faculty, staff, alumni, and the next generations of students to continue our progress. To make this work, we’ll be striving harder than ever to reach out to all of our friends, which means creating more chances for me to meet with you, our alumni in all parts of the country, communicating better about our goals and accomplishments, and providing new opportunities for you to engage with our faculty members and students through a series of special events.

I look forward to meeting you at many of these events and to hearing your personal senior-year retrospectives as well as your ideas about how we should move ahead.

Virginia Sapiro
Dean of Arts & Sciences

*On page 8, Dean Sapiro talks with arts&sciences about her experiences as Dean of Arts & Sciences and her vision for its future.

WRITE TO US

We welcome your letters, which will be edited for clarity and length for this publication. Letters will appear in full online on the Arts & Sciences website at www.bu.edu/cas.magazine. We also welcome your story ideas. Please email the Editor at jkeith@bu.edu or write to the Editor, arts&sciences, Boston University, 197 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 145, Boston, MA 02215. Please include your name, address, and BU school(s) and class year(s).

Corrections: In the Fall 2010 issue (page 15), Proxima Centauri is incorrectly described as being 4.3 million light-years away from Earth. The correct distance is 4.3 light-years away.

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VISIT THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES WEBSITE AT www.bu.edu/cas.
Ideas to Write Home About

Art historian explores what makes a house a home.

Homestead, homecoming, homesick, homemade. These words may evoke familiar rooms, faces, fragrances, and much more. For Kim Sichel, such terms, and all they conjure, are part of an extended conversation about the meaning of domestic space in the United States. That conversation’s forum is a roundtable series called House & Home in American Culture. “We want to bring students and faculty together around the table and give them a chance to talk about ideas,” says Sichel, an associate professor of art history and director of BU’s American & New England Studies Program (AMNESP), which hosts the series throughout this academic year. Those ideas center on what defines the role of the house or home in American history, anthropology, literature, history, and architecture. “I really like the interdisciplinary aspect of it,” says Jessica Roscio (GRS’11), an art history doctoral student of Sichel’s who handles many of House & Home’s logistics. She adds that participating alleviates the sense that she’s “not doing enough outside of my area.”

While Sichel kicked off the series in September by leading a discussion of Gaston Bachelard’s The Poetics of Space, a 1958 philosophical treatise on the significance of architectural elements, subsequent sessions addressed contemporary issues or delved further into the past. In October, Morton, the second speaker, shared her poignant documentation of temporary dwellings built by the homeless of New York City. BU professors Hunt Howell (English) and Charles Capper (history) followed in November, drawing the discussion back in time—through the works of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry David Thoreau—to examine nineteenth-century understandings of domestic space. The 2010 sessions concluded in December with Trachtenberg, Neil Grey Professor Emeritus of English and American Studies at Yale, who presented on the domicile-centric work of photographer and poet Wight Morris (1910–98). Sichel’s thematic organization has successfully appealed to a broad group. Attendees have represented all of the disparate American studies fields, as well as the College of Fine Arts and beyond. “I’ve been really pleased with people coming from all over campus,” says Sichel. She adds that students are not the only ones intrigued: Faculty, she notes, “don’t get a chance to hear each other’s work very often, so it’s really been a treat.”

In the end, Sichel hopes to sow the seeds of further exploration. “The conversations are continuing outside of the events themselves. People have been saying, ‘We went home and we were still thinking about this, and it really had us thinking in different ways.’ So that’s been very satisfying—it’s what I hoped would happen.” The spring sessions promise nuances in the conversation, with visits from New York Architectural League Executive Director Rosalie Genevro and Assistant Professor of History Ella Howard of Armstrong Atlantic State University, who will discuss homelessness and tenement living, as well as a session led by two BU professors. Attendees are sure to wind up with an idea or two to take home.

—Annie Laurie Sánchez


With the help of a $1.5-million grant, CAS undergraduates have a new neuroscience lab space for hands-on research.

Jeffrey Wessell (CAS’13, SART’14) prefers labs over lectures, and his academic advisor, Paul Lipton, has given the chance many undergraduates never get—to engage in hands-on research. And he’s not alone. As part of the growing push to involve BU undergraduates in research as early as possible, the neuroscience program has renovated lab space and overhauled the program to focus increasingly on applied research at the undergraduate level.

In addition to the 270 students now majoring in neuroscience, Lipton anticipates that about 85 more will enroll in the program for the upcoming academic year. This number represents a dramatic increase for a program that was created less than three years ago with only 17 students. Wessell, who will graduate this May with a double major in neuroscience and health science, says that students at every level want to do hands-on research and labs, the neuroscience program’s associate director, agrees. “To appreciate the nature of science and the processes of discovery that are the heart of neuroscience,” he says, “it is essential that students do rather than see or read about or listen to. And the earlier they are exposed to this process, the better equipped they are.”

The new neuroscience courses and lab space are funded in part by a $1.5-million grant to Boston University from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute through the Precollege and Undergraduate Science Education Program, awarded in May 2010. The goal of the grant is to engage undergraduates in research early and often in their college careers, and to create the labs, courses, and faculty positions to support them. A large portion of the lab renovations include state-of-the-art lighting and technology upgrades that support the neuroscience program’s areas of focus, initiatives like Alzheimer’s research, studies on the brain and additions, and investigations into the mind and memory loss. Lipton, other faculty leaders, and new neuroscience postdoctoral faculty fellows who also are funded by the grant, spend the entire year designing and preparing the new lab courses.

The refurbished lab space and program will open to BU undergraduates in the fall of 2011. This spring, the lab hosted twenty science-minded local high school students in a program designed by Dana Gannon (CAS’11) and Matthew Cobb (CAS’11) for their Senior Independent Work for Distinction. The program aimed to expose tenth and eleventh graders to the neurosciences and the experience of a university campus, and Lipton expects that his undergraduates also gained invaluable experience. “Thinking about and comparing the value of hands-on experiences versus lectures, and how students learn best,” he says. “This summer, five of those high school students will be chosen to continue working in the lab.”

Wessell says he likes the direction the program is taking, allowing students to “further their undergraduate education in a nontraditional way.” Lipton is pleased with the program’s expansion because, he says, the changes get to the heart of what education should be. “Fitting through lectures is a largely passive process,” he explains. “We risk disengagement and nurturing expectations of ‘Just tell me what I need to know for the exam.’” Science is about discovery. My hope is that our students will learn not only how to ask questions about the brain, but that they will become good and responsible consumers of science in general, and active thinkers in all areas of their lives.”

—Rachel Johnson

Images by Adam Vary

original thinking

The Remarkable Wolfgang Amadé

Professor of Music Roye Water’s new book, Mozart on Introduction to the Music, the Man, and the Myths (Amadeus Press, 2010), takes a comprehensive look at the life, musical gifts, and historically tumultuous times of Wolfgang Amade— the usage Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart preferred. In addition to a lively biography, Waters offers guided study of 20 musical compositions representing every major genre of that era. The book includes numerous letters, newly translated by the author, providing an intimate glimpse into Mozart’s personal and professional life. For the non-musician reader, or those not so familiar with Mozart and his music, Waters offers clear definitions of musical terms, making Mozart most accessible.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria on January 27, 1756. By the age of six, he was composing, playing, and composing concertos. By his mid-teens, he had composed more than 900 works of every major genre. The young Mozart was both a prodigy and a successful entrepreneur, taking anything he could accept. His music was performed by the finest musicians of the day, and his letters— full of enthusiasm and chatty banter— give us a sense of the man behind the music. The first of all the music producers, Mozart was a perfectionist who always believed his music could be improved.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a man of tumultuous times. As a result of his early death at the age of 35, any information about his life is incomplete. “We know about the music and his letters,” says Waters, “but we know nothing about his emotions. What would the man who wrote Wanderer Fantasia be like in the life of a contemporary musician?”

The final section of Kriner’s book explores the impact of war casualties on the civic life of hard-hit communities. By comparing Vietnam casualty data with several years of National Election Survey data (and controlling for a host of factors), Kriner found that residents of communities who had high casualty rates later reported lower levels of trust in the federal government, of political interest, and of voting participation than did other Americans. It’s unclear if today’s wars will produce similarly depressing effects on political engagement, but the possibility, says Kriner, is “incredibly troubling.” Socioeconomically disadvantaged communities have less voice in politics to begin with, he says, so society should do more to ensure that war’s ultimate cost is fair and equal for all Americans.

—Corinne Steiner
A neuroscientist at CAS is figuring out how birds know which songs to sing.

By Mark Dworszan

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but a single image produced by neuroscientists Tim Gardner can capture as many as 1,500. In his case, though, the “words” in question are the distinct vocalizations of a songbird, represented in visual form.

Gardner, an assistant professor of biology, uses these images to understand how birds build and retain the songs they use to communicate with one another. His work could shed light on how the neural circuits of learning and memory are encoded and maintained not only in birds, but also in humans—potentially boosting our understanding of the normal and diseased states of the human brain.

Gardner has focused his investigations on birds—rather than laboratory mice, or even humans, because few organisms exhibit such a quantifiable behavior. “In the last two years we have succeeded in translating sound into a new kind of image to capture the structure and the variants of birdsong,” he says, “and we’re now at the point where we can detect subtle changes in specific birdsong.

Toward that end, Gardner subjects a colony of about 300 zebra finches and canaries—kept in soundproofed cages—to a variety of computer-controlled, quantitative behavioral experiments in BU’s Laboratory of Neural Circuit Formation.

In one experiment, Gardner studied canaries raised in isolation from birdsong. While tutoring the birds with computer-generated, synthetic songs that depart from species-specific songs, he and his lab recorded every sound the birds uttered through their development. Initially, the subjects imitated the synthetic songs with great accuracy, but as they matured, they reverted to species-specific songs, even in the absence of other canaries.

“There’s a complex program that ultimately builds each species-specific song,” Gardner says, noting that both genetic and environmental factors contribute to the process. “We’re interested in determining the local neuronal rules that govern this amazing process.”

To hone in on these rules, Gardner is now investigating regions of the brain that encode song patterns. These areas produce a dynamic pattern of song while the birds are singing—and also, surprisingly, when they are asleep. Gardner has produced time-lapsed images of neuron growth in vivo which show the development of new neuronal processes in sleep.

Gardner hopes to learn more about the growth of these processes by introducing small perturbations to the spontaneous activity that occurs during birds’ sleep, and then by observing the impact of those perturbations on their neural networks and songs. As the bird dreams of its own songs, or sings upon awakening, a computer detects the sleeping pattern and triggers a stimulating electrode or implanted optical fiber to induce slight changes in neuronal electrical activity at specific locations in the song pathways.

“If we can increase or decrease the neuronal activity of the bird during sleep, we can see if there’s a change in the sequential order—and creativity—of the songs it produces,” says Gardner, noting that such studies could help us understand how similar neuronal changes in humans might impact our performance during the day.

A Sparkling Résumé

CAS senior adds a pageant win to her already impressive list of accomplishments.

By Corinne Steinbrenner

Annie Rupani (CAS’11) is a former United Nations intern, an outreach officer for the Islamic Society of Boston, and a student ambassador at CAS senior adds a pageant win to her already impressive list of accomplishments.

Rupani has taken on five internships while at BU, most recently last summer working in the Washington, D.C., office of Texas congressman Ted Poe. Reflecting her commitment to public service, she participated in BU’s First-Year Student Outreach Project (a community service program for incoming students), helped run an after-school program for Boston-area Girl Scouts, and has logged hundreds of volunteer hours with the Rupani Foundation, which her father founded in 2006 to reduce poverty and promote social entrepreneurship within the mountain communities of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and surrounding countries.

“Her work with the foundation has included several trips to Pakistan. In 2006, she traveled to northern Pakistan to survey women’s development centers, orphanages, and cooperatives. On another visit, she assisted in inaugurating five gem-cutting and polishing centers the foundation helped create to provide jobs for Pakistani women.

As a sophomore, Rupani spent a semester studying in London, and on another visit kicked off her senior year with a study abroad program in Jordan, where she spent a semester soaking up the country’s religious history, exploring its “beautiful canyons,” and practicing speaking Arabic with her Jordanian host family. Rupani is also fluent in Urdu, an official language of Pakistan. She describes her overall experience in Jordan as “unbelievable.”

Rupani intends to land a job after graduation with the U.S. Foreign Service. “I’d like to work in the public diplomacy sector of the Foreign Service so I can help in building bridges between the U.S. and the Muslim world.”

“I’d like to work in the public diplomacy sector of the Foreign Service so I can help in building bridges between the U.S. and the Muslim world.”

Annie Rupani at the competition in Toronto, Canada, 2010. Photo courtesy of Miss Pakistan World.

“Entering a beauty contest wasn’t something Rupani had ever considered, until as an intern with the United Nations she met Natasha Faracha, Miss Pakistan World 2008. “I started exploring the pageant further online,” says Rupani, “and thought this could be a great platform to create more awareness about Pakistan—a country that’s often neglected.”

The pageant judges chose Rupani from a group of five finalists, and it’s easy to see why they were impressed. She’s not only a beautiful young woman, she’s also bright, poised, and articulate. The Dean’s List student is enrolled in a dual degree program in anthropology and religion, and she brings a range of life experiences to the classroom, says Assistant Professor of Religion Kezia Ali. Though Rupani is not the most outspoken student in the room, Ali says, “When she does enter the conversation, it’s invariably useful and thoughtful and interesting.”

Annie Rupani at the competition in Toronto, Canada, 2010. Photos courtesy of Miss Pakistan World.

This article first appeared in Boston University Research 2010.
**Reflections of a Dean**

By Jean Hennelly Keith

Just after Thanksgiving weekend—when she managed to fit in six faculty tenure reviews among the festivities at her farm in New Hampshire—Dean Virginia Sapiro sat down with arts & sciences to talk about her nearly four years as the Dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. Joining Boston University in July ‘07, she has made her BU journey alongside the students, faculty, and staff of the College, having always been involved in teaching, research, and high-level administrative positions, most recently as Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, prior to joining BU.

Photos by Verena Ducoste

Q. What are some of the things you most like about Arts & Sciences and how would you characterize its strengths?
A. I think the biggest strengths are its intellectual and academic diversity, and I don’t just mean the many different departments and fields but the diversity within those. We’re large and complex enough that it creates immense potential to bring people together with interests that converge. One of the things I can offer as a leader is a bird’s-eye view of everything and bring people together in, for example, the life sciences, the languages, geosciences, neuroscience—very different disciplines and centers—and create even better education and research.

Something else I like most about BU is that we now have a refreshed generation of deans across the University who are not particularly territorial and really enjoy working with one another. Lots of us run in and out of each other’s offices, metaphorically, seeing how our work can help one another.

Q. What are some of the skills/traits you draw on that have been most helpful in making you an effective dean?
A. Energy and curiosity. The ability and desire to be fair with and respect the people I work with, to listen to them and treat people well, even when I have to say no. And an ability to learn. In any given day, I have to be smart about arts history and physics and sociology and remote sensing. If you’re going to try to be smart in all those things in one day, you have to learn and learn quickly. I put in a new team of associate deans that gives me many, many more ears. I have three associates now where there was one before—one in the humanities, one in the social sciences, and one in the natural sciences.

Q. What did you set out most wanting to do, and what have you been able to accomplish? What would you say are some of the milestones of your tenure as Dean of Arts & Sciences so far?
A. I wanted to cultivate the excellence of undergrad and grad education and research and support a great faculty. We’ve been able to move forward in these areas. When I came here, there weren’t enough procedures and policies, so people dealt with problems as they came up. I spent the first couple of years on policies and procedures and built a new form of leadership here. Almost all of the chairs and directors are now appointed to a three-year term, which is renewable once. We are changing leadership practices to get more faculty involved. With the CAS First-Year Experience, we are really paying attention to the experience students are having within the first year here, how they get a strong footing in order to be more successful throughout their undergraduate career. Faculty and first-year undergraduates meet informally outside the context of the classroom—talk together, eat together—so they can get to know one another. We also pay more attention to the faculty’s first years here, and have put in a formal mentoring program.

Q. How has the economic downturn in recent years impacted the College?
A. The economic hardship affected us most through the worries of our students whose families were hurting and through our experiences worrying about our students. The University’s first effort was to ensure that no one left BU because their family didn’t have the money. Secondly, when the financial crunch came, even though gifts dropped off and it affected us, the University wasn’t living off the endowment. The endowment wasn’t running the core program, so I didn’t have to hustle to figure out how I was going to pay my faculty. Because it was healthy, the University has been able to continue to expand the size of the faculty every year. Because we were building better relationships with alumni, they have been stepping forward and increasing donations. If you want a strong return on your philanthropic dollars, boy, can we offer you a good investment!

Q. There seems to be a revival of the humanities among colleges. What is your view of this?
A. We don’t have to “revive” the humanities; we have fabulous humanities programs in both CAS and CFA—great literature, great arts. It is one of the strong specialties of BU, and CAS in particular. Some universities are cutting languages because they’re too expensive, but we are expanding them. I think we have a unique role to play in supporting the languages and global studies. BU students across the University are wonderfully interested in the world. When you see 40 percent of your students doing study abroad, you know you have an interest in global studies.

Q. How do students find guidance on how to choose?
A. We have advisors and a building our advisor force even further. A large number of our students haven’t chosen a major by the time they arrive—maybe 30 percent of them—but that is typical of an arts and sciences college. They’re really smart, with great backgrounds. They don’t come in lost; they come in curious. They’ve chosen a large, urban institution because when they looked around, their hearts told them that this is where they belong. Our students grow to the music of the T.

Q. How much time do you spend traveling and visiting with alumni around the country and the world? What are you learning from them?
A. I talk to a lot of alumni who just loved their experience here and understand the impact it had on their lives. And I talk to alumni who did not enjoy their experience here but knew the education had a great impact on their lives. And I talk to alumni who have a lot of issues they want to deal with and tell me about. But if they meet with me, they’re open to engaging and we’ve developed some very close relationships with those alumni. What I say to people is, “We’re great now. Get on this train because it’s going to great places.”

Q. What’s been the most gratifying about your time here at BU?
A. I get to be surrounded all the time by faculty and students who are doing amazing things. I feel that energy and want to see what we can do together. So even though this is my fourth year, my “graduation” year, I’ve still got more work to do and I think it will take me more than four years!
An estimated 12,000 listeners across North Dakota and environs tune in for every monthly episode, while more have downloaded the podcast from whyradioshow.org. “We’ve gotten emailed questions from Iran, Canada, Scotland, Pakistan, Israel, and all over Europe,” Weinstein says. Closerto home, fans have turned out in force for lively town hall-style broadcasts. “I never expected this level of success and involvement,” says the New York City native, who spent time after college busking in Vienna. “Not only has the general public embraced [the program], but so have professional philosophers.”

Weinstein is a professional. He directs the Institute for Philosophy in Public Life at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, where he is a professor of philosophy. Through the radio show, fellowships, a popular film series, and other efforts, Weinstein explains, “The IPFL’s explicit purpose is to bridge the gap between academic and amateur philosophers—people who dabble, who do it without credentials—and to bring both approaches into a common conversation.”

That conversation may be the cure for today’s rampant anti-intellectualism, says Weinstein. “Philosophy is the study of the human place in the world. It’s our way to relate to reality.” You don’t have to buy into the idea of a “What kind of father do I want to be? What kind of person do I want to be?”

“Obviously, there are questions about government,” adds Weinstein, who as an undergraduate at SUNY-Plattsburgh was an activist for public education access. “Who do you want to vote for? Who best represents you? To what extent do you have a responsibility to care for someone you’re not connected to? That’s one of the fundamental questions of the human experience.”

Weinstein invites people to explore such questions in a thoughtful, informed manner by exposing them to the research of career thinkers, in a format suited to dialogue. “Philosophy is a conversational discipline,” says Weinstein. A skilful debater, he adds, “And radio does dialogue much better than television. If we were doing a television show, we’d have to dumb down complex ideas to people who wouldn’t otherwise understand them, to defend an idea, to take a bunch of different ideas and put them into one coherent thought, to use imagination intellectually, to be able to write well—those are skills that busi-nesses are looking for.”

“At the same time,” he adds, “I’m not everything about education ought to be based on getting a job. You work for eight hours a day. What do you do with the other 16 hours? Don’t you want to be able to understand beautiful art, delve into interesting literature, think deep thoughts, and ask questions about your place in the universe? Philosophy is a tremendously important discipline, because it makes your life better, more fulfilling. It brightens the colors.”

Weinstein, who was promoted to full professor last year at the age of 40, has a book forthcoming from Yale University Press called Adam Smith’s Paradox: Rationality, Education, and the Moral Sentiments. “It’s investigating notions of justice,” he says, “and an alternative interpretation of Smith rather than the libertarian, conservative understanding.”

In the meantime, the devoted father and husband (his wife is an English profes- sor “on the same campus, in the same building”) continues to teach, bring philosophy fellows to UND for public lectures, and host packed screenings and discussions of mov- ies ranging from Casablanca to Slap Shot. And of course, he continues to broadcast Why? on North Dakota’s Prairie Public Radio.

Why? is backwards!”

PHILOSOPHICALLY SPEAKING

It should come as no surprise that a graduate of Boston University’s philosophy doctoral program is spear-heading an exciting effort to boost the public profile of philosophy. The department is one of several at BU to earn high marks recently from the National Research Council for faculty research productivity and other criteria. “Charles Griswold’s book Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration, published three years ago, continues to be the centerpiece of conferences across the globe,” philosophy chair Daniel Dahlstrom told BU Today. He added that in 2009, Tian Yu Cao, CAS associ- ate professor of philosophy, delivered the opening keynote address at the First International Symposium on Structural Realism and the Philosophy of Quantum Physics.

Philosophy, physics, psychology, and many other CAS/GRS programs have received high ratings from the National Research Council.

Read more at www.bu.edu/today/node/11554.
For thousands of years, we’ve engaged in religious strife. It’s time to stop believing we can all live in harmony and try something different.

By Andrew Thurston

Forget the pretense of religious harmony. Since we all have to live together, tolerating one another is the best we’ve got.

Professor of Religion Adam Seligman thinks pluralism has had its day, so he’s aiming for something more realistic. He’s trying to see if we all can just get along, despite our religious differences.

Seligman is the founder of the annual International Summer School on Religion and Public Life. Since 2003, it’s brought together people of different countries and faiths (and those with none) for two weeks to explore issues of religion and tolerance in modern societies.

A Contentious World

Nestled in the rolling green hills of southern Bosnia-Herzegovina, the quiet town of Stolac was once a tourist hot spot. Then, in the early 1990s, it became a battleground. With the former Yugoslavia tearing itself apart along ethnic and religious lines, the town’s Croats herded their Bosnian-Muslim neighbors into concentration camps—the lucky ones fled or were driven out of their homes. Stolac’s famed Ottoman-era mosques were razed to the ground.

The mosques have since slowly been rebuilt, but neighborly relations haven’t. In 2008, the Institute for War & Peace Reporting told of profound divisions between Bosniaks and Croats, with the town splintered by separate medical centers and school lessons. Decades on, religious harmony and ethnic acceptance are still elusive.

Stolac is the kind of predicament that Seligman hopes to help solve—or prevent from recurring elsewhere. In 2003, he chose the town for his summer school. It’s not the only contentious spot he’s selected. Each year, the school is held in a new location—Israel, Cyprus, and England have all featured—while classrooms have included abandoned Palestinian homes and gay-friendly churches. “It’s experimental,” says Seligman. “It’s lived, not just read, not just discussed.”

This is more of a two-week laboratory than a conventional school, mixing site visits, lectures, and small group discussions. Attendees—Seligman calls them fellows—are not necessarily scholars (community activist, priest, and police officer are the more likely professions)—are not necessarily scholars (community activist, priest, and police officer are the more likely professions), and they journey from across the globe, hailing from everywhere: Belarus, Indonesia, Uganda. If this disparate bunch, with its sometimes warring religious differences, can learn to get along for two weeks, maybe the people of Stolac or the Middle East can too.

We’re Not All the Same

The problem with most attempts at promoting interfaith and interethnic unity, says Seligman, is that they start from the wrong point. The first step shouldn’t be that “At the bottom, we’re the same,” but that “Where we want to be recognized is in our specialness.” Seligman’s idea is to begin with our differences—the sticky, difficult bits we tend to avoid.

“What I’ve learned is that when I say, ‘We’re the same,’ I mean, ‘You’re like me,’ not, ‘I’m like you,’” he says.

“For thousands of years, we’ve engaged in religious strife. It’s time to stop believing we can all live in harmony and try something different.”

By Andrew Thurston
“One of the things we’re trying to explore with this school is, can you bring your differences to the public realm and can everybody deal with that, instead of gently walking around them—all the time celebrating difference, but really privatizing it, shunting it off?”

A sociologist by training, Seligman claims the West has pushed religion to the sidelines, pluralizing or secularizing society in an attempt to hold diverse peoples together. If we have religious beliefs or other views and lifestyles that differ from the norm, we’re encouraged to keep those private—our faith should have nothing to do with our work on a school board or in running a youth group, for instance. Seligman, who is Jewish, thinks that’s just asking for trouble. He contends that our religious identities aren’t going anywhere and that it’s time to leverage the resources they offer for conflict resolution.

According to Chair of Anthropology Rob Weller, putting communal identities on the table is an unusual stance. “The enlightenment thing, it sounds nice, but it’s not working on the ground,” adds Weller as he sums it up Seligman’s approach. “We continue to have all these initiatives, communal loyalties, that we have, say as Serbs or Jews, most effective.”

Resentment and fear stalk the city, sharpening religious and ethnic divides. A national newspaper recently exposed a project to monitor majority-Muslim neighborhoods with more than 200 surveillance cameras. When youth fear arrest because of their faith or politicians question the building of a new mosque, it’s hard to keep religious identity locked up indoors.

“Some people who recognize the tension, recognize the potential for deep disturbance, and are trying to preempt it,” says Seligman. “That’s where I think we can be most effective.”

One of those seeing Birmingham’s uneasiness up close is Toby Horwath. The newly appointed Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs for the Church of England and a local vicar has twice helped organize the summer school. As Birmingham becomes “a kind of bipolar city, ethnically,” he says it causes real “concern in terms of community cohesion, in terms of getting communities to engage with each other.”

He signed up for the school after becoming tired of the school of “very different outlooks on life,” he says. And if you don’t agree on everything, don’t worry. Just deal with it.

“But the world outside academia, with its mixed-up towns like Stolac and Birmingham, is a messier place. Surely encouraging us all to live together peacefully can seem like a fruitless mission?”

“If you want to play your part, Seligman suggests you have a meal with somebody outside your community: “It’s a start,” he says. And if you don’t agree on everything, don’t worry. Just deal with it.

“A Bipolar City

With an influx of immigrants from the south and east, communal identities are a hot topic in much of Europe. Seligman has twice taken the school to England’s second city, the cultural melting pot—caddotron might be better—of Birmingham. By 2024, it’s expected to become a “plural” city, with no majority ethnic group, as of the 2001 census, around 15 percent of the population identified itself as Muslim. “There are huge tensions between the communities,” says Seligman. “Everybody is afraid of the next bomb threat.”

“Seligman encourages people to look at the “edgy areas” of difference. “I wouldn’t say it’s about emphasizing the differences, it’s about starting with them,” says Horwath, who hopes to establish a permanent sister summer school in Birmingham. With all the potential pitfalls out in the open, he thinks interfaith partnerships have a more solid foundation. “Then it’s about saying, ‘How do we build little steps toward a shared understanding?’”

In Birmingham, that could mean religious groups coming together for common secular goals, such as lobbying politicians for improved housing, supporting fundraising drives for disaster relief, and cleaning up local parks.

“Suffering Your Own Discomfort

Seligman says the summer school has inspired lots of little steps. Jewish and Arab educators have launched joint programs; monthly community dinners have sprung up in Texas; and Evangelical Christians have expressed more tolerance toward homosexuals. He adds that those Evangelicals may not have “changed their idea about homosexuality,” but, in a way, that’s not the point. This, remember, isn’t about harmony, but tolerance—bearing the unbearable—while preserving the school’s other mission to maintain a “commitment to tradition and religious identity.”

“The fact that something makes me uncomfortable is not a reason to reject it or vilify it,” says Seligman. So, while tolerance originally referred to groups of people “whom you’d want to get rid of, but you have to suffer their presence”—in Canon Law, Seligman adds, that meant Jews and prostitutes—he wants to “turn it into suffering, being able to live with your own discomfort.”

“I couldn’t say it’s a thankless task,” says Seligman. “Is it at the boundaries of a really deep, overwhelming problem? Yes. Are we working at something we will find a solution to? No. This is the work of generations.”

If you want to play your part, Seligman suggests you have a meal with somebody outside your community: “It’s a start,” he says. And if you don’t agree on everything, don’t worry. Just deal with it.
Humans are tactile beings. Our fingers seem to be drawn to materials, be they smooth as silk or rough as bark. Jodi Colella’s fingers have a restless curiosity, not content to let the transformative potential of materials they touch lie dormant. A Somerville-based fiber artist who’s as fascinated by her process as she is by its outcome, Colella (CAS’81) sees the bizarre and enticing capabilities of the substances she works with. “I’m very curious about materials,” she says. “Just playing with them to find their qualities. Usually they do unexpected things.”

Her inquisitiveness comes in part from a love of nature’s building blocks. “Aesthetically, I have always loved cellular forms. In fact, if you look at my notebooks from back then,” she laughs, referring to her days studying biology at BU, “I didn’t write too much information, but I had all the images.” Seeds is a recent work of Colella’s that evokes biological forms but is rooted in textile traditions too. She experimented with needle felting (a method of transforming wool fleece into felt), creating dysmorphic orbs of burred fuzziness and vivid layers of color. The process signified concentrated potential, each needle prick a compacting of Colella’s own energy into the “seed.”

Colella first encountered traditional textile methods like felting and knitting during summers at her grandparents’ home on Cape Cod. “I was brought up always working with my hands,” notes the former graphic designer, “and I’ve always loved doing that. So I think that’s where I start, and then hopefully it goes somewhere else.” While fleece is a conventional material, Colella’s fingers often reach for things that stretch the definition of fiber, such as window screen that she’s used to make Undercurrent, a work about barriers and duplicity. In One Day, an ongoing project that won awards in 2010 from the Fiber Arts Network at Eastern Michigan University, she enacts her transformative play with plastic newspaper delivery sleeves. In cutting them, pulling them apart, shredding them, and spinning them into plastic yarn—“plarn”—she discovered their capacity to take on new properties, different densities, a metallic sheen. “I also became intrigued by the idea that I was collecting daily,” she reflects. “It was a comment on the passage of time. And as time went on, it grew into something else.”

She needed such a quantity of bags that she asked friends, neighbors, and students to pitch in. They did, with gusto. “Every time I would see people, before they even said hi, they’d stuff a bunch of bags in my hand,” Colella recounts. Her collectors were amazed to notice the bags’ various colors and qualities when compressed or stretched. “That’s the surprise of this project, that level of depth, that all of a sudden I was opening other people’s eyes to material.”

Not that Colella is a stranger to opening eyes. As a teacher at the deCordova School in Lincoln, Massachusetts, she helps students develop their art, from fiber to sculptural jewelry. Patience, she says, is the key. “It’s very difficult to be in the position of trying to figure something out but you can’t. And to have somebody show you, or indicate a way that you can figure it out yourself that makes you feel good is really important. There’s just a level of fulfillment there in people sharing with you, you sharing with people.” It’s easy to imagine a student of Colella’s catching her fervor for experimenting with materials. “Very often,” she says, twinkling, “you get these surprises that are nothing you would ever dream of. That’s what I love about it.”

Explore more of Jodi Colella’s work and find out where it’s on view at www.jodicolella.com.
The ambition of an immigrant’s son and the vote of confidence of a BU president lead to an American success story—and an endowed scholarship.

Early every morning throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Eleftherios Parasco boarded the trolley in Saugus and headed off to his job at the Lenox Hotel in Boston. Always, he was dressed immaculately: three-piece suit, watch on a gold chain, stickpin in his tie, spats, and—depending on the season and the fashion—a bowler or boater.

Eleftherios took pride in his work. He shined shoes and dispensed towels at the Lenox, back in the day when that hotel was favored by traveling salesmen, who descended on the hotel in large numbers from the Back Bay train station. Savvy salesmen knew that Eleftherios could put his hands on a pint in those Prohibition days, and he was a popular figure in the parched Back Bay.

Also in the Back Bay at that time were Boston University’s central administrative offices and the College of Liberal Arts (today’s College of Arts & Sciences), located in a formidable building at 688 Boylston Street, where the Boston Public Library’s annex now stands. And one of Eleftherios’s regular shoe shine customers was BU President Daniel Marsh (STH’08, Hon. 30).

Eleftherios and his wife, Anastasia, were Greek immigrants: he from Smyrna, and she from Sparta. They arrived in the United States separately during the teens and were married almost immediately—a hint that the marriage had been arranged in the Old Country. Eleftherios found work, and the couple bought a modest house in Saugus and began a family. The eldest of their three children, Chester, was born in 1918.

Chester (CAS’47, LAW’47) was a smart and handsome boy who, like his father, had ambitions. Aiming to attend a prestigious Ivy League school, he enrolled for a year of postsecondary study at Kents Hill preparatory School in Maine. He paid for that extra year of high school himself, with money he had saved doing odd jobs. His plan worked: while at Kents Hill, he was accepted to Princeton.

Then Eleftherios stepped in. He had never heard of this place “Princeton,” and he certainly wasn’t going to pay to have Chester go to school there. Eleftherios insisted that Chester enroll at the local alternative—Boston University—and his reluctant son agreed. Then Eleftherios dropped the other shoe: He wasn’t much inclined to pay for BU, either.

Despite waiting tables and working other part-time jobs, Chester could not pay his tuition bill and couldn’t enroll for his next semester. Eleftherios shrugged off his son’s request for financial help. “You have troubles?” he asked. “Go see the president—a friend to me.”

Which is how Chester Parasco arrived at Daniel Marsh’s office, sometime in the late 1930s. A secretary told him that Chester should write a letter to the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. The only problem, according to the dean, was that the selected students demonstrate both financial need and academic merit—conditions that Chester himself surely met, on that long-ago day in the office of President Marsh.

Chester walked past her, pushed open Marsh’s door, and introduced himself to the startled president. “My name is Chester Parasco,” he said in his booming voice. “My father shines your shoes.” Marsh heard him out, and then reached for a notepad. “Let this man move ahead,” he wrote. “No one could work a room like my father,” recalls Chester Jr. with a smile. “Nobody.”

In 1963, Chester Sr. became assistant legal counsel to Massachusetts Governor Endicott Peabody. Increasingly, he turned his attention to politics and public service on the local level. He also stayed in touch with BU, attending the occasional reunion and—with his wife—making a series of small gifts to the University.

Loretta died in 1993, and Chester followed in August 2009. In his will, he included a bequest of $150,000 to establish and endow the Chester and Loretta Parasco Scholarship Fund, to support students selected by the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. The only provision, according to the terms of the will, is that the selected students demonstrate both financial need and academic merit—conditions that Chester himself surely met, on that long-ago day in the office of President Marsh.
During the first week of April 2009, the commander of Navy Medicine West, based in San Diego, California, received a troubling message from the local Navy Research Laboratory. The lab had analyzed a mucus sample from a 9-year-old girl with flu symptoms and discovered a strain of the virus that was previously unknown. Two weeks later, the country learned to fear the “swine flu,” or H1N1 influenza virus. Fortunately, the commander had previously led the development of Navy Medicine’s pandemic flu response plan, and so her team was able to quickly recognize the severity of the threat and notify the Centers for Disease Control. The commander’s name was Christine Hunter (CAS’80, MED’80).

Nearly five years earlier, on the day after Christmas, 2004, a magnitude 9.3 earthquake struck off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. Soon afterward, the chief of staff at the Navy’s Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D.C., received a call from the Naval Operations Center informing her that the resulting tsunami had killed tens—and perhaps hundreds—of thousands of people in coastal areas across the Indian Ocean (the death toll would eventually exceed 230,000). The Navy would need to devise a response immediately. The chief of staff’s name was Christine Hunter.

So how did Hunter, a graduate of BU’s accelerated six-year BA/MD program, wind up playing a key role in responding to two of the biggest international medical crises of the past decade?

Back on campus to receive a Distinguished Alumni Award during Alumni Weekend last October, Hunter, now a rear admiral, has a knack for channeling all of her sizeable talents into the work at hand—a trait that has steadily earned her promotions to positions of greater and greater responsibility within the Navy. Everywhere she goes, it seems, she improves the way that things are done.

Hunter’s Navy résumé reveals the many ways she has transformed medical care and increased access to it for military personnel—youth and old, families and retirees, and those wounded in battle. During the mid-1990s, while medical services director at the Naval Medical Center San Diego, she revamped primary care services and created a plan to enable seniors to supplement their Medicare with TRICARE, the health insurance plan for service members. In the early 2000s, at the Naval Hospital Bremerton in Washington State, Dr. Hunter turned her attention to improving patient access for families by overseeing the addition of a new Family Care Center. Her next chapter was at sea, caring for wounded military personnel. As Pacific Fleet Surgeon, in 2003-2004 she pioneered new surgical techniques aboard small combatant ships—these were adopted as the prototype for the Expeditionary Resuscitative Surgical System used today. When she returned to the Naval Medical Center San Diego in 2007, she continued her focus on the wounded, developing highly acclaimed medical programs for amputee care, combat stress control, and traumatic brain injury. Today, Rear Admiral Hunter coordinates health care for 9.6 million beneficiaries around the globe as director of the TRICARE Management Activity.

In pursuit of her field, and letting these inputs spark new ideas. In the morning, she participated in meetings on post-traumatic stress and chronic traumatic encephalopathy research, where she gained some new insight into how the Military Health System could tackle the problem of suicide by looking more closely at service members with a history of concussions.

“When I got to BU, I think the most important thing that I learned was critical thinking,” she says. “As I look back on it, that’s often what I bring to the situation. I don’t bring the deepest subject-matter expertise in pandemic flu or in tsunamis or in running a hospital or running a health care plan, but I bring a way to integrate the skills of the organization so that we can all move forward together.”

Probably the biggest crisis she ever faced was the tsunami aftermath. During that tragic 2004 holiday season, Hunter and her colleagues quickly put together a novel plan to augment the staffing of Navy hospital ships with onboard nongovernmental aid agencies. Normally, such collaboration between the Navy and NGOs would have taken a year of planning, but, given the dire circumstances, they cut through the red tape and launched a ship within days. The collaboration was so successful that it became a model for future disaster responses, including the one following last year’s devastating earthquake in Haiti.

Hunter’s brief visit to BU in the fall mirrored typical days in her professional life. She spent her time taking in new data, holding deep discussions with others in her field, and letting those inputs spark new ideas. In the morning, she participated in meetings on post-traumatic stress and chronic traumatic encephalopathy research, where she gained some new insight into how the Military Health System could tackle the problem of suicide by looking more closely at service members with a history of concussions.

“I got very excited in the conversations we were having,” she said during an interview following a symposium. “Maybe we need to look at autopsy data in service members who committed suicide to try to see if we can identify neuroanatomical brain changes similar to those seen in athletes with repeated concussions. Somewhere in there is going to be an overlap group where maybe there was a subclinical concussion or more than one, and that helped that threshold to be breached for suicide.”

Characteristically, there was no丝毫 sureness ending to her day’s activities, no sense that now, with this latest award, Hunter could rest on her laurels. There was just her excitement about how she could apply what she had learned during the day to what she would do the next day.
Good Times and High Honors

Arts & Sciences Alumni Reunite and Pay Tribute to Award Winners

Alumni from all over the world gathered for Boston University’s Reunion and Alumni Weekend, October 29–31. It was a chance for CAS and GRS alumni to reconnect with classmates and faculty members, have fun, and engage with new ideas. The events ranged from the festive (a Halloween-themed Oktoberfest Terrier Tailgate before the men’s winning hockey game against UMMS Lowell) to the thought-provoking (a talk on the role of religion in U.S. public policy by CAS professors Andrew Bacovoch and Stephen Prothero). Christine Hunter (CAS’80, MED’80) received a Boston University Distinguished Alumni Award (see story on page 20). On Friday, a dinner was held in honor of this year’s CAS Distinguished Alumni Award Winners, whose outstanding contributions to their professions, communities, and alma mater reflect the strength of Boston University Arts & Sciences.

Katherine French, GRS’81
Katherine French has been director of the Danforth Museum of Art and Museum School since 2005. Under her leadership, the museum was named Outstanding Cultural Organization for 2008 by the Massachusetts Arts Education Collaborative. She was named Best Curator of Locally Made Art at the 2010 Boston Art Awards. Prior to her tenure at the Danforth Museum of Art, she was gallery director at the Minneapolis College of Art from 2002 to 2005 and gallery director for Boston University’s BOB and Sherman Galleras from 1996 to 2002, organizing numerous alumni exhibitions.

Noreen Grice, CAS’85
Noreen Grice is founder and president of You Can Do Astronomy LLC, an accessibility design and consulting company with a focus on making astronomy and space science accessible to people with disabilities. She has taught astronomy at Bentley College, Northeastern University, and San Diego State University. The author of numerous books, several in collaboration with NASA, the National Braille Press, and the Museum of Science, Grice has written Touch the Stars in Braille, which enables blind children to visualize the constellations. She has received numerous awards for her groundbreaking work.

Carole A. Heilman, CAS’72
Carole Heilman is director of the Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (DMID) of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a component of the National Institutes of Health. She has led DMID in improving responses to public health challenges like 2009’s outbreak of H1N1, for which she spearheaded the U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services.

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The internal medical director for administrative services in Hartford, Conn., Brian Ettinger (CAS’94) graduated with a master’s degree in marine biology from Nova Southeastern University. His studies concentrated on the reef fish and reef associated fish off Broward County, Florida. He worked as a research associate and scientific diver for the National Coral Reef Institute for several years. Currently he is working as a cancer fish/fry繁育/studier/field instructor with the City of Hollywood Fire Rescue and Beach Safety Department. He also works as a scientific diver and field research technician for the Physical Oceanography Lab and Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center in Dania Beach, Fla. Contact him at ettinger@nova.edu.

Christy (Cullen) Williams (CAS’95, SEP’96) and her husband, Mark Williams, announce the birth of their first child, Kylee Elizabeth, on October 7, 2010. Contact Christy at duchulaid.com.

Michelle (Daglio) O’Connell (CAS’96) married John O’Connell on March 24, 2006 in Las Vegas, Nev. On February 1, 2010, their daughter Sarah Marie O’Connell was born. She joined big brother Jackson, two years old. Her husband and big sisters Amanda and Elizabeth are all surrounded by family. Contact Michelle at jmconnell8@aol.com.

Elizabeth. The couple lives in Mooresville, Peter, and big sisters Amanda and Elizabeth. The couple was also elected co-president of the Office Fair Labor Division as its com-

 router. Contact her at natarajan.dp@gmail.com.

Desiree Garcia (GRS’07, ’08) is a film professor in American Studies at Emerson College. She also serves as the program director for the Arizona Hispanic Cultural Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Her research focuses on the intersection of film and race and gender. She recently published a book on the cinematic representation of African American women in Hollywood films. Contact her at dengarcia@emerson.edu.

Deepa Natarajan (CAS’06) was married to Gautam Goshen on June 20, 2010, in Berkeley, Calif. In attendance at the ceremony were Deepa’s father and mother-in-law. They have two children: Dhruv, born in New Orleans, La. and Bennett Rhys Wojtovich, on August 3, 2010. They are happy to announce the birth of their second son, Bennett Rhys Wojtovich, on August 3, 2010. They plan to move to Boston.

Rachel (Petra) Wojtovich (CAS’05, GRD’05) and Andrew Wojtovich (CAS’05, GRD’05) are happy to announce the birth of their second son, Bennett Rhys Wojtovich, on August 3, 2010. They plan to move to Boston.

Benjamin E. Cruz (CAS’03, LAW’03) married John O’Connell on March 24, 2006, in Las Vegas, Nev. On February 1, 2010, their daughter Sarah Marie O’Connell was born. She joined big brother Jackson, two years old. Her husband and big sisters Amanda and Elizabeth are all surrounded by family. Contact Michelle at jmconnell8@aol.com.

April 19, 2010.

The office: Wade’s department preserves the papers produced by the President and his staff—not only filing them for the White House’s use, but also preserving the material in compliance with the Federal Records Act, eventually transferring the records to the National Archives.

The job: “My primary role is to review outgoing correspondence from White House offices, including those of the President, First Lady, and Vice President.” Wade is part of a three-person team that serves as the “last set of eyes” on mis-

views to foreign leaders, replies to private citizens, and everything in between. “I review material for all potential errors, from grammatical issues to relevancy and accuracy of content. On a typical day it is not uncommon for me to see a hundred letters.” Challenges: “Wade has to tell the most powerful people in the world when they’ve committed a typo or grammatical error. It doesn’t happen often, she says, but “writers know that when I send them an email or pop my head into an office it usually means that they will need to revise a letter.”

“Soon after his inauguration, President Obama asked to see 10 letters a day from ordinary Americans’ says Wade, and she reviews his responses. Those are “the most important letters I read,” she says. “I have both witnessed and read about the overwhelmingly positive reactions people have when they receive a response to a letter they wrote to the President. It has been pretty amazing to be part of a process that allows people to be heard in a way they never thought possible.”

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Her background: Primarily on the dean’s list, Wade was a two-time recipient of the Henry and Mary Grigg Scholarship in American History. Through University programs and connections, Wade interned at the Old State House Museum and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, and at the Naval Archives in D.C.

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Friances Wade (CAS’07)

Analysis, Correspondence Review Section, Office of Records Management, White House, Washington, D.C.

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What helped: “Having focused on contemporary American history at BU has been incredibly helpful in my office. Most of my colleagues have been here for decades—our most senior employee started in the Administration department and only recently retired. So having an awareness of history has been helpful in relating to them and proving myself around the office, showing that I understand the legacy of the presidency at large and am not just there for the fame associated with the White House.”

The future: Wade also attends law school, part-time, at George Washington University, and she hopes to pursue a career in historic preservation. “My dream job would be working with UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, doing consultations on world heritage sites, protecting locations, buildings, and statues that should be preserved in the years to come.”