

COM/365

DEAN'S REPORT 2020

Mariette DiChristina,
COM's new dean,
returns to her
alma mater

HBO's Jay Roewe
is at the center of
TV's golden age

ACE, Murrow,
Pulitzer, One Show
awards highlight
a big year for COM



TALKING ON AIR

EFRAIN HERNANDEZ
PURSUES HIS LOVE FOR AUDIO
STORYTELLING AT WTBU



Students in the photojournalism classes of Greg Marinovich, master lecturer in journalism, capture a wide range of humanity. Seven Wu ('21) took this image of Coney Island, N.Y., (top) while working on a story about a Chinese immigrant. Lauren Moghavem (CGS'18, COM'20) went behind the scenes to capture these models preparing for a fashion shoot in Los Angeles (bottom). See page 40 for more photographs.



Welcome to *COM/365*, the dean's annual report. It's my first such report since joining Boston University in August 2019—or, I should say, rejoining. I am a COM alum ('86) and a parent of a recent BU grad (CFA'18). So: hello, again!

Not long after I arrived last summer, our team launched a process to chart the next strategic steps for COM.

We started with our vision. I believe deeply in the power of communication, in all of its creative forms, to change the world in a positive way. Think about it: anything anybody wants to accomplish requires successful communication. At COM, we not only teach and practice communication in multiple disciplines, but we also conduct research, improving our understanding of today's rapidly shifting landscape.

The rise of digital platforms has meant sweeping and ongoing transformations in all communication-related fields. With business models evolving in response, today's media professionals are more likely to jump from one type of role during their careers to another. To be able to adapt over time to tomorrow's disruptions, we need to support students in becoming good critical thinkers and in developing a rich understanding in a variety of topics.

COM finds itself in a position of strength. And that's exactly the right time to think about the future. Last fall, we began work on an updated strategy with a series of thoughtful conversations with staff and faculty, as well as student leaders. I asked people what makes them excited about being part of COM, about some of the challenges they face, about their big ideas for the future—and about their worries. To further guide our thinking, I used the feedback to draw up a list of COM's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Erik Jacobs

In December, right after classes ended, we held an all-day series of workshops we called "COM 2030" for faculty and staff to begin the next stage in our strategic-planning process. First and foremost, we enjoyed spending some time together, breaking apart some of the silos that naturally arise during a busy semester. We ran breakout sessions on COM's vision and mission, discussed key questions over lunch and spent the afternoon cooking up some big ideas.

The outputs became part of an initial three-year plan to take the college to the next level on multiple fronts. Among them, COM will:

- Lean in to the things we do well, such as balancing our unique mix of research and practice.
- Emphasize the opportunities that come from cross-college collaborations and our diversity of communication disciplines to better prepare students who will need to adapt to fast-changing technologies and career demands.
- Continue to embrace and integrate the latest in digital media in new and emerging platforms, and look for ways to use them to create positive actions to benefit society.

"I BELIEVE DEEPLY IN THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION, IN ALL OF ITS CREATIVE FORMS, TO CHANGE THE WORLD IN A POSITIVE WAY... AT COM, WE NOT ONLY TEACH AND PRACTICE COMMUNICATION IN MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES, BUT WE ALSO CONDUCT RESEARCH, IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF TODAY'S RAPIDLY SHIFTING LANDSCAPE."

These, and many more findings, are bound together by a belief in the power of communication for good in the world. That belief was roundly underscored by our experiences during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, COVID-19, in spring 2020, when we all leapt onto digital platforms for remote delivery of classes and to maintain our supportive social connections.

And it's that belief that is propelling us all forward to the next 365 days at COM.

Best,

Mariette DiChristina

MARIETTE DICHRISTINA ('86)

Dean

Dean
Mariette DiChristina ('86)

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COVER STORY: FINDING HIS CALLING

When Hurricane Maria cut him off from his family in Puerto Rico, Efrain Hernandez ('20) saw the power of radio journalism. Now he's pursuing that passion at COM.

A BRIDGE TO HOLLYWOOD

As one of the HBO executives behind hit shows like *Game of Thrones* and *Succession*, Jay Roewe ('79) is helping drive television's golden age.



SHIFTING FOCUS

22 Artist representative Heather Elder ('91) is navigating a changing photography industry and helping COM students do the same.



THE EVOLUTION OF PR

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COM THIS YEAR

4 COM's first PhD; a local news revival; an overturned murder conviction; plus new hires, news, books and major awards.



TERRIER HEADLINES

32 Alexandra Wimley ('17) becomes COM's latest Pulitzer Prize-winning alum, highlighting a big year for Terriers across communications fields.



THANKS TO ALL OF YOU

36 Nearly 2,700 of you contributed to COM last year. Meet some of the individuals and families who joined you.



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

How the pandemic forced closures—and sparked improvisation

In spring 2020, movie lots went dark and radio studios quiet, newspapers closed and ad revenue tumbled. The COVID-19 pandemic tore through the communications industry—as it did just about every other. Those still working, from reporters and producers to copywriters and editors, were scattered to their homes by lockdowns. Away from colleagues and shorn of crucial equipment, they were forced to improvise to cover one of the biggest stories of a generation.

It's been no different at COM. When the pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus landed in Boston, COM's studios and newsrooms were locked shut—along with the rest of the college. With BU's switch to remote learning and working, faculty and students have discovered new ways to create and share their work.

In the early days of Boston's lockdown, WBUR, BU's National Public Radio station, highlighted the work of Anne Donohue's radio newsroom class. Despite having its reporters, producers and hosts dispersed across continents and time zones, the class still broadcast a regular live news show on WTBU, with help from a video conferencing app. "They pulled it off seamlessly," Donohue, an associate professor of journalism, told WBUR. "It was amazing."

While many in the college continue to cover the pandemic's impact, others have adapted to keep the everyday work of COM thriving—the kind of work celebrated in this publication, a review of the college's 2019. Live events have gone virtual: lectures on crafting great narrative, media manipulation and sports journalism (in a world without sports) are being broadcast online; the Redstone Film Festival, COM's signature student film showcase, went online.

In some cases, the crisis has become a chance to push fast-forward on learning



experiments. The Department of Film & Television, which had been planning an expansion of its VFX and animation opportunities, is piloting previsualization software, allowing students to produce storyboards and film with virtual actors.

As Dean Mariette DiChristina ('86) wrote in a letter to the COM community in April, "Life, while altered, goes on." —Andrew Thurston

NEW PEOPLE, NEW STORIES

Alumna introduced as dean

Mariette DiChristina ('86) has returned to her alma mater, replacing the retiring Tom Fiedler ('71) as dean in August 2019. She spent the prior 18 years at *Scientific American*—10 of those as editor-in-chief—where she won a National Magazine Award for General Excellence in 2011. DiChristina was also an executive vice president for Springer Nature, the magazine's parent company. Past roles included teaching at New York University and being president of the National Association of Science Writers.

Other new faces at COM include: **John Baynard**, master lecturer of journalism. A documentary filmmaker and photojournalist, he received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Informational or Cultural Programming in 1997 for his work on the PBS series *Frontline*.

Tina Martin, associate professor of the practice of journalism. Martin works as a reporter, anchor and host at WGBH. She received a regional Edward R. Murrow Award for her coverage of a 10-alarm

fire in Cambridge, Mass., in 2016.

Jenifer B. McKim, clinical instructor of investigative journalism. A senior investigative reporter at the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, McKim received a national Edward R. Murrow Award for her reporting on illicit massage parlors.

Maura Smith ('13), master lecturer of film and television. Smith has worked in casting for television shows, including *Criminal Minds*, and Boston-based films *Black Mass* and *Spotlight*.

Todd Van Hoosear, visiting instructor in the Department of Mass Communication, Advertising and Public Relations. Van Hoosear is a former senior vice president of marketing and communications for the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Karen Weintraub, visiting assistant professor of journalism. A freelance journalist specializing in the biological sciences, she's a coauthor of *The Autism Revolution* and *Fast Minds: How to Thrive If You Have ADHD (Or Think You Might)*.

Marni Zelnick, visiting assistant professor of film and television. Zelnick wrote and directed the 2014 film *Druid Peak* and has produced several features, including the James Franco/Winona Ryder film *The Letter*.

The Communication Research Center, COM's research hub, named four new fellows: **Dana Janbek**, master lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Advertising and Public Relations; **Margaret McLaughlin**, distinguished visiting research scholar; **Kelsey Prena**, assistant professor of emerging media; and **Rui Wang**, visiting assistant professor of emerging media. —Marc Chalufour

Abby Parsons (CGS'18, COM'20) interviewed Newton voters for the Boston Globe's 2019 election coverage.



FILLING A LOCAL NEWS VOID

COM and the *Boston Globe* form a community journalism partnership in Newton, Mass.

BY MARC CHALUFOUR

On a cold, damp November evening, Abby Parsons (CGS'18, COM'20) stood outside the Hyde Community Center in Newton, Mass., interviewing voters. She asked what had brought them out for the local election, in which city council and school committee seats would be decided and housing and development were leading issues. The next day, Parsons shared a byline in the *Boston Globe*.

Parsons was one of several students who contributed to the Newton election coverage as part of a new partnership between COM and the *Boston Globe* aimed at finding a solution to dwindling local news coverage. According to the Pew Research Center, newspaper newsrooms shrank from 71,000 employees in 2008 to 38,000 in 2018. A University of North Caro-

lina report found close to 1,800 US papers were closed between 2004 and 2018. "Nobody is holding politicians accountable for how they're spending tax dollars," says Gail Spector, a Newton resident and adjunct journalism professor.

Spector, a former editor of the *Newton TAB*, was part of a small group of concerned citizens who spent the better part of a year brainstorming ideas to improve news coverage in Newton. When they took their concerns to the *Boston Globe*, editor Brian McGrory made a suggestion: Why not collaborate with a university journalism program?

From that idea, things moved quickly. In 2019, the *Globe* and COM agreed on a partnership, with journalism students from COM JO 210 Reporting in Depth—a course that already involved covering local news—contributing to expanded coverage of Newton. The *Globe* would include student stories in a weekly print section and launch a web page dedicated to Newton news. COM, in turn, hired Spector to teach one

of the two sections that would cover the town.

The classroom functions as a newsroom, with students pitching story ideas, professors serving as editors and, often, completed stories making their way to local media outlets. In fall 2019, students from six sections of JO 210 published work with the *Cambridge Chronicle*—which was the first local news outlet to partner with the class in 2017—the *Brookline TAB*, BU News Service and WGBH, as well as the *Globe*.

"Whenever I'm covering something, at least one community member tells me how excited they are for the story," Parsons says. On election night, one voter, already familiar with the COM-*Globe* program, was thrilled to learn that Parsons was from BU. Another recognized her from a community meeting she'd covered a few weeks earlier, where Parsons was the only print journalist present.

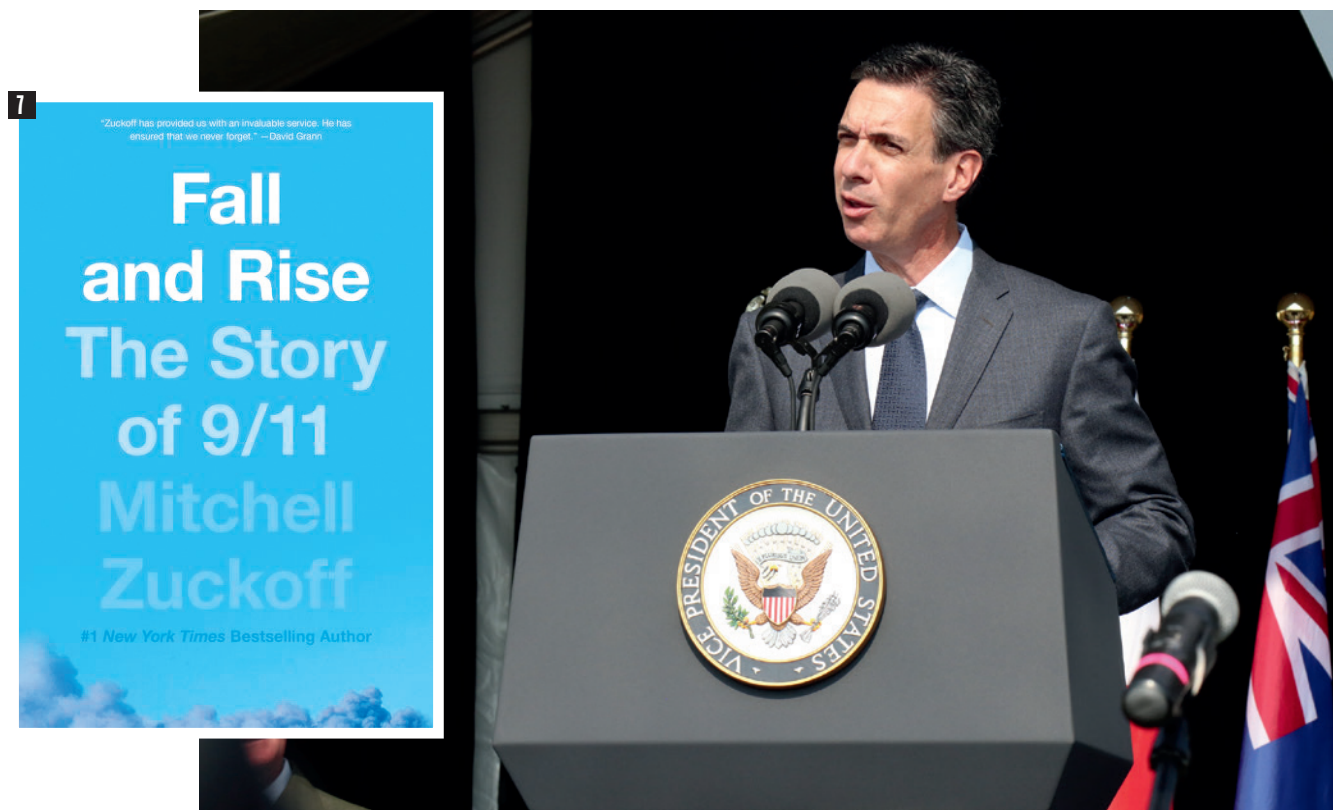
"I didn't realize the impact what you publish could have on people," Parsons says. /

BETWEEN THE COVERS

New faculty books examine history, politics and the media



(1) James Katz and Kate Mays, eds., *Journalism & Truth in an Age of Social Media* (Oxford University Press, 2019). (2) Dick Lehr, *Nothing But the Truth: A Father Behind Bars, A Daughter Determined to Free Him* (Walker, 2019). (3) Greg Marinovich, *Shots from the Edge: A Photojournalist's Encounters with Conflict and Resilience* (Penguin Random House, 2019). (4) Patrice Oppliger, *Tweencom Girls: Gender and Adolescence in Disney and Nickelodeon Sitcoms* (Lexington Books, 2019). (5) Tammy Vigil, *Moms in Chief: The Rhetoric of Republican Motherhood and the Spouses of Presidential Nominees, 1992-2016* (University of Kansas Press, 2019) and (6) *Melania & Michelle: First Ladies in a New Era* (Red Lightning Books, 2019). (7) Mitchell Zuckoff, *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2019).



Following the publication of *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11*, Mitchell Zuckoff, Sumner M. Redstone Professor of Narrative Studies, delivered the keynote address at the September 11, 2019, ceremony at the Flight 93 Memorial near Shanksville, Pa.

A jury found Darrell Jones not guilty of a crime for which he had already served 30 years in jail. Reporting by the New England Center for Investigative Reporting was cited by the judge who granted the retrial.



"IT'S SUCH A GREAT BENEFIT FOR STUDENTS TO SEE WORKING JOURNALISM HAPPEN AND TO SEE HOW IT CAN EFFECT CHANGE."
JENIFER B. MCKIM

OVERTURNING A WRONGFUL CONVICTION

Student reporting helped free a man sentenced to life for murder

BY ANDREW THURSTON

In October 1986, Darrell Jones was sentenced to life without parole for the murder of Guillermo Rodriguez, shot to death in a sandwich shop parking lot in Brockton, Mass. Jones was 19. And, he maintained, innocent.

At a June 2019 retrial, a jury finally believed him. After more than 30 years behind bars, Jones was found not guilty.

Jones' path to liberty began in a COM classroom with a group of journalism students from BU and Emerson College and their professor. They'd spent a semester delving into the evidence presented at his original trial—and had found it wanting.

Jenifer B. McKim, a senior investigative reporter at the New England Center for Investigative Reporting (NECIR), had met Jones in 2014. He'd wanted to talk about issues in the criminal justice sys-

tem, particularly gangs. Despite long protesting his innocence, Jones hadn't mentioned his own case when he'd reached out to McKim; it was only when she questioned him about his story did Jones say he'd been wrongfully imprisoned. She asked if the students in a class she taught at BU could examine his conviction as an investigative journalism exercise.

Back at COM, McKim split her students into groups to dig into different parts of Jones' case, then report back with their findings.

What they uncovered was damning: allegations of police misconduct, flimsy eyewitness accounts, a scarcity of physical evidence, an incompetent defense attorney and racist jurors. "After four months, we didn't know if he was innocent or not," says McKim, a clinical instructor of investigative journalism. "But we felt confident that he did not get a fair trial."

After the class finished, McKim and some of her students, joined by Bruce Gellerman, a senior reporter at Boston University's NPR station WBUR,

decided to stick with the story. In January 2016, WBUR published "Reasonable Doubts: Reopening the Case of Darrell 'Diamond' Jones," an online article and a five-part radio series. The reporting laid bare the shortcomings in Jones' conviction. In late 2017, a Massachusetts judge—citing reporting by NECIR and WBUR—granted Jones a retrial; two days later, he was freed on bail.

McKim's students have since studied a new compassionate release program for aging and sick inmates and a rise in youth suicides on high school and college campuses.

"It's such a great benefit for students to see working journalism happen and to see how it can effect change," says McKim, who also advises high schoolers at the BU Summer Journalism Institute. "To see how something that starts in the classroom can end up on the radio and in the *Boston Globe* and affecting people so much that you see a man get out of prison and thank you for your work, the students really felt the value of that."/>

WINNING WAYS

Film and television major wins prestigious ACE editing competition

Marco Gonzalez ('19) knew he wanted to pursue a film editing career once he graduated, but as his senior year began he wasn't sure what his next steps would be. When a professor suggested he enter the American Cinema Editors (ACE) Student Editing Competition, Gonzalez balked at the \$125 fee. Only after his parents urged him on—"You never know what's going to happen," they said—did he decide to enter.

Each entrant received about 40 minutes of footage from the ABC drama *Nashville* and was tasked with turning it into a polished 90-second scene. Gonzalez cut and recut the scene for hours before submitting it. He was at home in California for winter break, watching a football

game, when he got the call saying he was a finalist. "I started yelling," he says. "My dad thought someone had scored a touchdown."

The ACE Eddie Awards are among the most prestigious editing awards in Hollywood. For the three student finalists, the February 2019 event put them on the red carpet alongside some of the biggest names in the industry. The student award itself is named for Anne V. Coates, the Academy Award-winning editor of *Lawrence of Arabia*. Gonzalez sat at a table with his family listening as Coates' daughter introduced the winner: him.

"That night opened more doors than I could have ever imagined," Gonzalez says. Several BU alums were among

those he met that night. He also spoke to a pair of ACE interns, who encouraged him to apply for a 2019 internship, which he got. A whirlwind experience followed, with time spent shadowing editors on a feature film and a television series.

By the time the internship had wrapped up, Gonzalez had made more contacts—and landed his first credited position on a feature film, *Antebellum*. When he thinks back over the events of the past two years, Gonzalez recalls his initial reluctance to pay the ACE entry fee. "My life could've been totally different," he says. "It's mind-blowing."

—Marc Chalufour

Regional Emmys, a national Murrow, Hatch Awards dominance and more

Jenifer B. McKim, senior investigative reporter at the New England Center for Investigative Reporting and clinical instructor of investigative journalism, was one of three representatives from WGBH to receive a national Edward R. Murrow Award for Investigative Reporting for their five-part radio series about illicit massage parlors.

COM dominated the student category at two creative award shows. **Thirteen advertising students** on seven creative teams received gold, silver, bronze or merit pencils at the national 2019 One Show. And at the regional Hatch Awards, **30 students** contributed to 19 winning entries (out of 26 total student awards), including one gold, six silvers and five bronzes.



Winning the prestigious ACE Student Editing Competition jump-started Marco Gonzalez's career.



BUTV10 received a regional Emmy for its Midterm Mandate broadcast, coproduced by Naba Khan ('20), seated, left, and directed by Marissa Dianas ('19), seated, right.

The New England Society of News Editors named BU's student-run newspaper, the *Daily Free Press*—which turns 50 in May 2020—as its College Newspaper of the Year.

Tales of undocumented immigrants, the #MeToo movement and a child affected by the opioid drug crisis took the top three awards at BU's 39th Redstone Film Festival. First place and best screenplay went to *The Day Off*, directed by **Carter Zhao ('18)**, a film about two undocumented Chinese immigrants who take a vacation day to enjoy life. Taking second place was *The Bartender*, a drama examining bystanders' responsibility in sexual assault cases that was directed by **Travis Newsad ('18)**. That film also won best cinematography, editing and sound design. Snagging third place: *The Badge*, the story of a young boy dragged on a late-night drug run with his mom, directed by **Derek Matar (CGS'16, COM'18)**.

BUTV10 received 3 regional Emmy awards and an honorable mention. The station won best College/University Newscast for its *Midterm Mandate* broadcast (produced by **Naba Khan ('20)**, **Madison Arreola ('19)** and **Thomas Nitti ('20)**, and directed by **Marissa Dianas ('19)**); best College/University Sports—Live Event for its coverage of BU Basketball (Dianas, director, and associate producers **Matt Doherty ('19)**, **Liam O'Brien ('19)**, **Greg Levinsky ('20)** and **Jacob Lintner ('21, CAS'21)**); and best College/University Sports Program for *Offsides* (produced by Dianas, **Nick Bornstein (CAS'21)** and **Laura Guerriero ('19)**, and directed by **Will Hembree ('21)**). *Amber* (produced by **Jinghan Zhang ('19)**, **Sylvia Yang ('19)**, **Weihang Feng ('19)** and **Shuqi Zong ('19, CAS'19, Pardee'19)**) also received an honorable mention award for College/University Arts and Entertainment/Cultural Affairs.

Sarah Dasher ('19) and **Olivia Zed ('19)**, along with advisor **Don Wright**, Harold Burson Professor and Chair in Public Relations, won the Page Society's Jack Koten Case



Jenifer B. McKim (center) received a national Edward R. Murrow Award, along with WGBH colleagues Aaron Schachter (left) and Phillip Martin (right), for a radio series about illicit massage parlors.

Study Award for their study "Dove: A purpose-driven brand in a crisis of sincerity."

Christopher Burrell, a reporter for COM's New England Center for Investigative Reporting, received a Sigma Delta Chi Award for Public Service in Radio Journalism from the Society of Professional Journalists for the four-part radio series "Wrongfully Jailed for 38 Years, Fred Clay Rebuilds His Life in Lowell."

COM presented two annual awards named in honor of Hugo Shong ('87, GRS'90), executive vice president of IDG and chairman of IDG Greater China. The Hugo Shong Reporting on Asia Award was given to Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist **Lynsey Addario**. Filmmaker **Alex Gibney**,

winner of the Academy Award for Best Documentary for his film *Taxi to the Dark Side*, received the Hugo Shong Lifetime Achievement Award. Both recipients visited campus to receive their awards and teach master classes.

PRLab, COM's student-operated public relations agency, won *PRNews'* Pro Bono Campaign Platinum PR Award. For their campaign, PRLab organized an overnight marathon to assist six local nonprofits with advertising, marketing and public relations. In all, 128 students volunteered 1,251 hours of work during the 18-hour event. /

Reporting by Marc Chalufour, Emma Guillén and Amy Laskowski

Facing page: Sydney Scott (left); Peter Zakharov/Tilt Photo (top); This page: David Nicholas Photography



COM AWARDS FIRST DOCTORATE

Sarah Krongard ('20) studied the effects of binge-watching

BY MARA SASSOON

Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video—and the list goes on. These days, we're inundated with video streaming services. The impact of all that content on society fascinates Sarah Krongard.

In January 2020, Krongard ('20) became COM's first-ever doctoral recipient when she completed and defended her dissertation, "The Civic and Social Implications of Over-the-Top Television."

"I aimed to better understand our relationships with emerging media," says Krongard, who completed her studies in COM's emerging media studies division (EMS). "How do our interactions with media connect with and inform our perspectives, relationships and worldviews?"

For her dissertation, Krongard expanded on a study she conducted with Jacob Groshek, associate director of the Center for Mobile Communication Studies. They had found that people who streamed more television

were more civically involved than those who watched less.

In her dissertation, Krongard looked at the extent to which binge-watching behavior and media use serve as predictors of political participation and empathy. She also researched the role of genre—whether the type of content consumed influenced their level of civic engagement. One of her most interesting findings? People who talk about their favorite shows are more likely to be politically active and empathetic.

"Talking about television today seems to stimulate discourse about social norms, behaviors and consequences, relationships, politics, power and justice," she says.

Krongard plans to teach and continue her research, and she's building a media education organization that will help students from kindergarten through college—and their parents and educators—interpret, use and create media and new technologies. /



A FAMILY DRAMA

Film professor makes award-winning documentary

BY JOEL BROWN

It's a true-life story that sounds like a Hollywood blockbuster: A World War II disaster at sea. Nazis. Stolen art. A daughter's love. And a happy ending.

In fact, Garland Waller ('80) has already made the movie. Her documentary, *The Silent Soldier and the Portrait*, stars her 94-year-old father, John Waller, and tells the story of his guilty conscience and his return to Normandy, France, to set things right after nearly 75 years.

On Christmas Eve 1944, over 2,000 troops were aboard the SS *Leopoldville*, crossing the English Channel to join the Battle of the Bulge, when the ship was torpedoed. Private John Waller of the Army's 264th Battalion was saved, but more than 800 on board died.

When Waller, an assistant professor of television, was helping her father move in 2016, they came across a photo album of his time in France. For the

first time, John Waller told her of his near-death experience and how he and his buddies later found an abandoned chateau ransacked by the Germans. He said they blew open a safe they found there and that he took a tiny painting from it, a watercolor portrait of a woman, dated 1813. He carried the picture with him after that—a secret shame, as he considered it stolen property.

Waller and her husband, TV veteran Barry Nolan (*Hard Copy*, *Evening Magazine*), began filming her conversations with her father, and eventually traveled to France with him to find the family that owned the chateau—ultimately providing her father, and the film, with a dramatic moment of closure.

The film has won multiple awards, including at the Telly Awards and the Hollywood International Independent Documentary Awards. /

Facing page: Erik Jacobs; This page: Tara Sullivan (top); Vernon Doucette (bottom)

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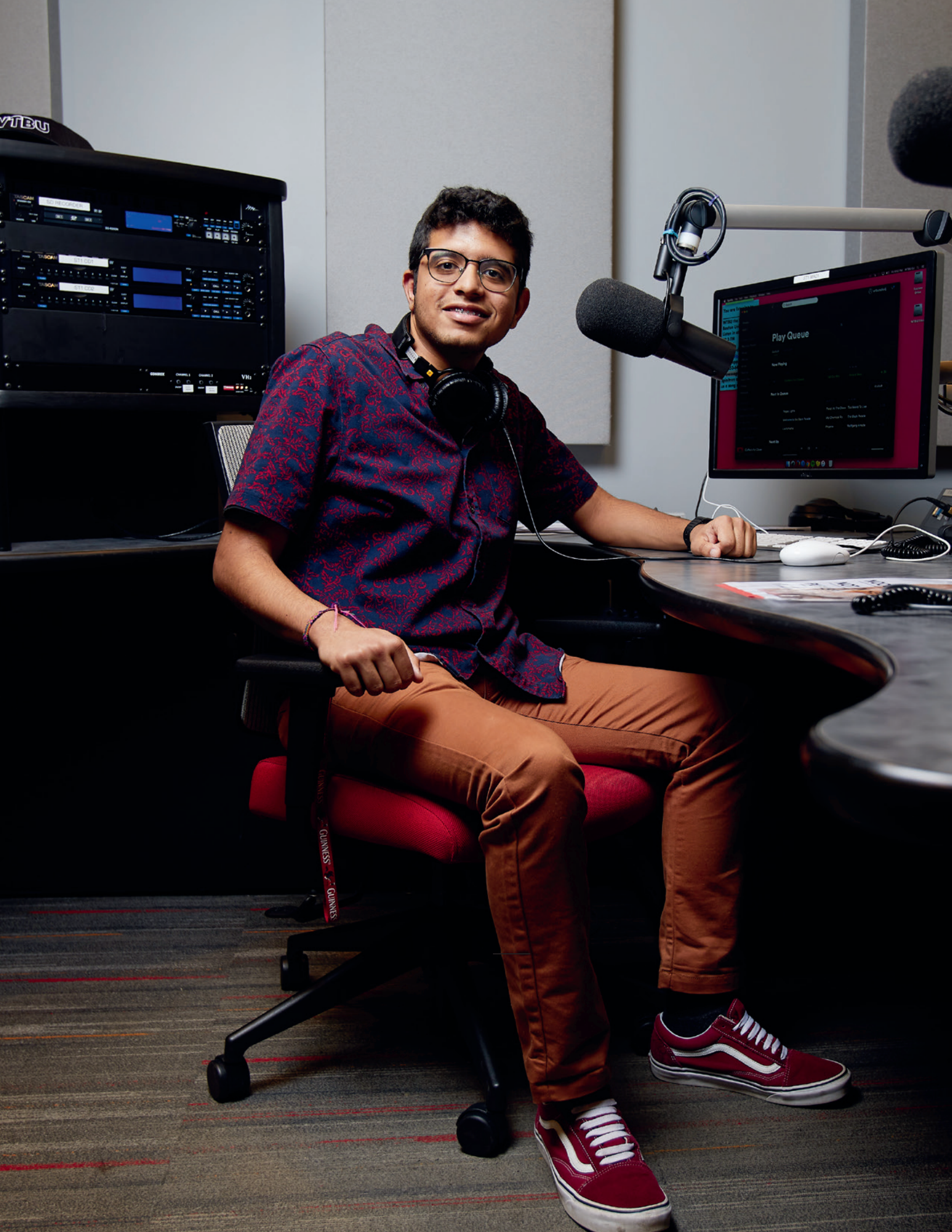
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EFRAIN HERNANDEZ
DISCOVERS
HIS PASSION
FOR RADIO
AT COM

By MARA SASSOON
Photos by KELLY DAVIDSON



Hernandez joined WTBU, COM's student-run radio station, his first semester on campus. He started as an intern and now hosts his own shows.



was late September 2017. Efrain Hernandez was settling into the beginning of his sophomore year at BU when he got a notification on his cell phone that Hurricane Maria had made landfall in Puerto Rico. The alert was unsettling to Hernandez ('20), a native of Caguas, a city located 20 miles south of San Juan. Hernandez's entire family was back on the island. He sat in his Boston dorm room trying to gather all of the information he could on the storm's impact. He turned on the television and flipped to CNN: "I think they were reporting from the airport and I remember

seeing the palm trees look like they were cut in half. Leaves were just violently blowing around," he says. He immediately texted his mother to check up on her, but his messages were all flagged with notices of "not delivered." It would be three days, Hernandez says, before he was able to get in touch with his family to find out that everyone was okay. In those long, nerve-racking days of monitoring the situation through countless television and radio reports and news articles, Hernandez saw the importance of keeping the public informed and strongly felt the value of pursuing his journalism degree.

BOSTON BECKONS

For a long time, Hernandez assumed he would stay in Puerto Rico when it came time for college. "I knew we weren't really that well off," he says. "So I thought I'd stay there, where it would be cheaper to study."

But when he was offered the chance to take the SAT with a voucher, which would in turn allow him to have his application fees waived for select colleges, he seized the opportunity.

Long fascinated with "how stories can move us—even news reports," he says, he knew he wanted to study communications and COM was at the top of his list.

"I figured I'd apply just for the sake of saying that I at least applied. Because I really didn't think BU was going to happen," he says. "Even if I did get accepted, I thought it was going to

be a case where I wouldn't actually be able to go because of the financial situation." When he did get accepted, Hernandez traveled to campus for Multicultural Community Weekend, an opportunity for admitted students to learn more about life at BU.

The trip marked his first time traveling anywhere outside of Puerto Rico. His visit fueled his excitement to attend BU. "I immediately fell in love with the whole university. I thought it was amazing. I loved the city. I loved the people I met there," he says. "But then, on the plane ride home I was kind of bummed out because I had gotten so excited to go to BU, but I didn't know if there would be any kind of financial aid that would help me attend for four years."

Hernandez's concerns were soon alleviated when he was awarded the Lilly Family Scholarship, generously funded by George Lilly (GRS'54, COM'56), founder of SJL Broadcasting, which operates television and radio stations around the US and the Caribbean, and his sons Kevin (Questrom'90,'97, COM'97) and Brian ('89). Today, Brian is the company's chief executive officer and Kevin is its president. Their scholarship supports students studying journalism at COM, with a preference for students from Puerto Rico or American territories in the Caribbean.

George Lilly says he established the scholarship to pay it forward. "When I was a student, I received a scholarship from COM that was much needed and appreciated. With my success in broadcasting, in part attributable to my education at BU, I was blessed with the ability to help others in the same way," he says.

The scholarship was a game changer for Hernandez. "When I found out I got that financial aid package, it became very real for me that I could actually go to BU. That was when I was like, 'Yes, I am going. 100 percent,'" he says. "The scholarship means everything to me. It's allowed me to find my calling."

THE MYSTERY OF RADIO

Hernandez joined WTBU, the University's student-run radio station, the first semester of his freshman year. He was instantly hooked. "I thought, 'I love this. I see a career here.'"

He started as an intern at the station and quickly worked his way up to deejaying his own talk radio shows, which have covered topics ranging from embarrassing childhood moments to favorite anime shows.

"I like the kind of weird aspect of just talking into the void," he says. "In radio, you're speaking into a microphone, and you hope that there's somebody on the other side who is listening and wants to interact with you. I like that mystery."

Outside of radio, Hernandez writes for the *Bunion*, the student-run satire news publication, and has been a COM Ambassador since his freshman year.

He has also worked with the Boston University Initiative for Literacy Development as a literacy tutor at Boston-area public schools since his first semester, an experience, he says, that has rounded out his communications studies. Working with

"THE SCHOLARSHIP MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME. IT'S ALLOWED ME TO FIND MY CALLING."

elementary school students who know limited English, his job was not only to help them with homework and tutoring, but also to "make them feel welcome." Every year, he says, he encounters "the one kid who is really shy and then eventually blossoms. Working with these kids just warmed my heart and it was like that every single semester."

FINDING HIS PLACE

When Hernandez returned to Caguas for Thanksgiving in the months after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, he recalls walking down supposedly familiar streets, but "barely recognizing anything. It was like a whole new island. It wasn't the one I left," he says.

His father's parents' home had severe flood damage. "All of their furniture was ruined," and, he says, his grandmother on his mother's side was one of the last people to get her power restored.

This year, Hernandez landed two internships at WBUR, the largest NPR station in Boston. He's interning with the station's morning and afternoon newsrooms and with its podcast, *Endless Thread*, which discusses compelling stories sourced from Reddit. "This internship is like a dream come true—I've been listening to that podcast for the longest time, and now, I'm actually interning there. It's amazing."

Hernandez knows he wants to pursue a career in audio journalism, but in considering his postgraduation plans, he is torn.

"The effects of Maria are still very much present right now in Puerto Rico," he says, and he always thinks about his family there. "I love the island—I've lived there virtually all my life. I love my family and all of my family's there. I have friends there," but, he adds, "Boston is where I want to be after graduation. Boston feels like home." /

A BRIDGE TO HOLLYWOOD

HBO EXEC JAY ROEWE IS HELPING DRIVE
TELEVISION'S GOLDEN AGE—AND STRENGTHENING
THE COM-LA CONNECTION

By MARC CHALUFOUR
Photos by PATRICK STRATTNER





ABOUT AN HOUR'S DRIVE NORTH OF BELFAST, IRELAND,

two rows of ancient beech trees have formed a gnarled tunnel above a country road. The Dark Hedges, as the picturesque formation is known, took two centuries to form—but just a few seconds to become world-famous. In the second season of *Game of Thrones*, Arya Stark, a key figure in the series, flees her home. Seated on the back of a horse-drawn carriage, she travels down the misty lane as the camera pulls back, dramatically revealing the trees. It's a haunting, surreal setting that fits right into the fantasy series' imagined world of Westeros.

A lot of creative decisions went into that scene, from casting and costumes to cinematography. But for HBO, the network behind the show, there's another factor involved in selecting a location: tax credits for film and television productions. By the next year, the United Kingdom had begun offering such an incentive, meaning that for every dollar spent from the production's Belfast headquarters, HBO would get a percentage back. That intersection of creative and business decision-making is where Jay Roewe, HBO's senior vice president for West Coast production, works. He helps the network find the perfect setting for each show, then oversees the financial side of productions that vary from the quirky comedy *Curb Your Enthusiasm* to the sci-fi/Western mash-up *Westworld*. For Roewe ('79), making business decisions that put each show's creative team in a position to succeed is the perfect challenge—and his success has also given him the opportunity to help connect COM students to their dream jobs in Hollywood.

FINDING THE RIGHT TUNE

Roewe grew up in a musical family. His mother taught him the piano when he was 7. He picked up the trombone as well. "I was actually pretty good at it," he says. But he wasn't sure how to carve a path in the arts that would also pay the bills.

That path started to reveal itself at BU, where Roewe studied film, minored in business and worked at WTBU, the student radio station. "It exposed me to things outside of the creative process," he says of his education. At the radio station, Roewe recalls record labels shipping them new albums to promote every week. For the first time, he began to see the intersection of art

and business. When a professor hired him to produce a short documentary about freshman orientation, Roewe began to see a future for himself in film. "I enjoyed the organizational side as well as the creative side," Roewe says. "And I remember reading about the future of media and entertainment, and about how many jobs and what kind of growth there was going to be."

After graduation, Roewe spent five years working as a freelancer on Boston-area productions, starting as a production assistant and working his way up to producer, before moving to Los Angeles. He never abandoned his musical roots—he still refers to meetings and conversations as "jamming"—so the music video industry was an obvious place to land. It was MTV's heyday and within a couple of years Roewe had produced dozens of videos. These included 1980s staples like Bon Jovi's "Living on a Prayer" and "You Give Love a Bad Name," as well as videos for Mötley Crüe, Def Leppard, Steve Winwood, Jody Watley and more. Shoots were often thrown together in just a few days, but that crash course in producing launched Roewe's career. Soon, he was taking on larger projects, producing Madonna's 1991 tour documentary *Truth or Dare* and the pilot episode of *Beverly Hills, 90210*.

FINDING A HOME

Roewe had worked for HBO as a freelancer, first shooting footage for a documentary about the Harlem Globetrotters, then as a line producer on a Billy Joel concert and a Billy Crystal comedy show in Russia. In 1994, he joined the company full time, first producing films, then miniseries. "To be around people who are among the best in the business, it pushes you, it's motivating," Roewe says. "And it's a company that continues to evolve as the media world has been evolving."

This was at a time when the network was focusing more on multiepisode series—to better attract and retain subscribers—and Roewe's projects included *John Adams* and *Angels in America*, which both won Emmys for outstanding limited series. At the same time, HBO's television division began producing increasingly ambitious shows, carrying cinematic storytelling and production quality across multiple seasons. *The Sopranos*, which premiered in 1999, ushered in what many call the golden age of television.

Roewe's first chance to work on a recurring series came about a decade later, with *Game of Thrones*. The show, based on a series of fantasy novels by George R.R. Martin, was a big gamble for HBO. The books had a passionate following, but they were set in sprawling, fantastical landscapes traversed by massive armies on horseback and fire-breathing dragons. Such a show would require a production of epic scale, not unlike producing a feature film for each episode. That gamble paid off, though, as *Game of Thrones* became a phenomenon. By its final season, more than 10 million people were watching each week and the show had won a record 59 Emmy Awards.

"For us to be able to reach out into the industry, particularly at a time when there's such a sea change going on...it's an invaluable resource."
—Cathy Perron



The HBO lineup that Roewe works on extends from the Larry David sitcom *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (left) to the sci-fi/comedy *Avenue 5* (below).

While *Game of Thrones* may have been HBO's biggest draw for the better part of a decade, the network has more than 100 productions going at a given time. Roewe and his team are constantly vetting new project pitches, working on budgets for 10–20 green-lit shows and receiving daily updates from line producers stationed on sets around the world.

BUILDING A BRIDGE

When Roewe arrived in Hollywood in the mid-1980s, he found his own way in the business. Now, he's hoping to help ease that transition for fellow Terriers. "There wasn't much of a bridge between Boston and LA," he says. "When I finally got to HBO, I felt it was important to begin to give back—so I reached back to BU and struck up a relationship." He also began talking to—and fundraising with—other COM alums in the business.

One of the first products of those conversations was a series of student tours of Hollywood, one or two weeks long, each spring. That soon blossomed into the BU in LA program, one of the University's most popular study abroad options, with 190 students participating in 2019–20. At least a couple of students have interned at HBO each year, and many have stayed on as employees after graduation.

Cody Brotter ('13) was one of those interns. The screenwriter spent a semester in Roewe's office then stayed on as a temp. He recalls a very different transition to LA from the one his mentor had experienced 30 years earlier. "There's a huge network out here, and not only that, they're really excited to help young people," Brotter says. "[Jay] was just an open book." Six years later, Brotter is finding regular screenwriting work in Hollywood.

Roewe has maintained his relationship with COM, serving on COM's Dean's Advisory Board and BU's Board of Overseers. And he became a COM parent—his son, Chris ('14), studied film and television. He also often provides advice for faculty and students alike. In 2008, with the industry going through a major change—Netflix had just launched its streaming service and YouTube was only three years old—Cathy Perron, then director of the master's in television program, thought COM needed to capitalize. "I was starting to see what was going on in our industry, with the marriage of technology and content, and thought it would be a good

idea for us to create a program that would prep students for a new era," she says. She called Roewe for advice.

"Cathy was very ahead of the curve and visionary, and reached out to me and we jammed on a structure of what that might look like," Roewe says. What emerged is COM's Media Ventures Program. The graduate program challenges students to develop a media business and culminates in Pitchfest—where they present their thesis project to a panel of media executives and entrepreneurs, Roewe often among them.

"For us to be able to reach out into the industry, particularly at a time when there's such a sea change going on, to access people who are working day to day through this kind of disruption—it's an invaluable resource," Perron says. "It makes all the difference in the world."



THE NEXT BIG THING

While the legacy of *Game of Thrones* lives on in Northern Ireland, the show's historic run ended in May 2019, after 73 epic episodes. The finale drew an HBO record 19.3 million viewers, but left HBO with a massive challenge: How to replace its most popular show.

Meanwhile, the television business keeps evolving, and HBO with it. AT&T, which bought HBO's parent company, Time Warner, in 2018, has reportedly pushed for an increase in content. On top of adapting to production delays and shoots with social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year brings the launch of HBO Max, a streaming service combining HBO originals with the Time Warner archives. So Roewe and his colleagues are in search of the next big thing. In 2020, they've launched new shows, like *Avenue 5* from *Veep* creator Armando Iannucci, will produce a third season of *Succession* and brought back an old classic, with a new season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. And if that's not enough, *House of the Dragon*, a *Game of Thrones* prequel, is scheduled for 2022.

"Once you've created something like [*Game of Thrones*], people want you to replicate it," Roewe says. "It has put pressure on us to keep doing things differently, in a way that people will notice." /

"When I finally got to HBO, I felt it was important to begin to give back—so I reached back to BU and struck up a relationship."
—Jay Roewe

Facing page: Erik Jacobs; This page: Alex Bailey (above); John P. Johnson (top)

COM/STATS

FACULTY

FULL-TIME FACULTY

86

TOTAL FACULTY

219

PROFESSORS

22

MASTER AND SENIOR
LECTURERS

14

ASSOCIATE
PROFESSORS

33

LECTURERS
AND INSTRUCTORS

135

ASSISTANT
PROFESSORS

15

SHIFTING FOCUS

HEATHER ELDER IS NAVIGATING A
CHANGING PHOTOGRAPHY INDUSTRY

By ANDREW THURSTON
Photos by GABRIELA HASBUN



P

otos taken with Polaroid’s instant cameras are so synonymous with the seventies that even memories of the time seem to come encased in a little white border. But at about seven bucks for a 10-picture pack of film—adjusting for inflation, the equivalent of more than \$40 today—those speedy snaps weren’t cheap.

Heather Elder had a Polaroid SX-70 camera back then, but she had a little more freedom to shoot.

“My father worked at Polaroid for years and he would bring film home,” says Elder (’91), now an agent for professional photographers. She was encouraged to play and experiment and says “those experiences informed who I am: I see life through a camera lens, see life in a moment in time.

“I think it’s because I had a camera in my hand early on that I chose photography as my career.”

Elder is owner and CEO of Heather Elder Represents, a San Francisco-based agency representing photographers and directors, connecting them with advertising agencies and brands across the country. She negotiates deals and contracts, showcases photographers’ work and liaises with the agencies and brands, her clients. Elder also runs a blog (notesfromarepsjournal.com) and podcast (*Dear Art Producer*) tracking industry trends and sharing the expertise and advice of her peers and agency experts.

Instant cameras might be having a renaissance—Polaroid is selling cameras again—but not much else in the photography industry remains the same from when Elder started snapping. Or from when she started her business in 1995. Helping photographers stay relevant in the age of Instagram and gifs has become an increasing focus for Elder, both in her work and in her philanthropic support of COM students, whether she’s speaking in class or funding new equipment.

TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Elder didn’t start out as a photo agent—often called a rep. In fact, she *really* didn’t want to be one. Her first job out of college was as an account executive at Leonard Monahan Lubars & Kelly, an agency in Providence, R.I. It seemed a good fit. She was from the Ocean State, had learned to love account work during her time with AdLab, COM’s student-run agency, and had the perfect first client: Polaroid.



“We were able to really make a name for ourselves as a small regional agency,” she says. “I got the creative bug, I understood the value of creative. And I started to learn about client service and how important that was.”

When Elder decided it was time to move on, a photographer friend suggested she become a rep—she even knew of a photographer looking to partner with someone.

“I thought I absolutely do not want to be a rep,” says Elder. “Every time a rep came into the agency, everyone said, ‘Urgh, the rep is here.’ Everyone felt sold. Back then, it was a sales job and that didn’t sound fun to me.

“But I loved the creative part of it and I loved the photography part of it.”

She decided to try it, but to also change what the job could be. Using her advertising experience, Elder built her business by positioning herself as an expert resource to advertising agencies—matching them to the best photographers—and to photographers, being what she calls “a sales and marketing partner who values innovation and evolution.” Soon after starting Heather Elder Represents, she moved to San Francisco and landed right in the middle of a boom.

“There was so much work to go around, so it was a very easy time for me to make a name for myself and to take some chances in how we marketed ourselves,” says Elder. “When the dot-com bubble burst, I had built a roster of photographers and we stayed

“I wouldn’t be where I am today—personally or professionally—if it weren’t for my BU education. I credit COM with giving me the perspective to think broadly about solving a communications challenge and being flexible and innovative about how to solve it.”

— HEATHER ELDER

in business during that time—and I continued to innovate and encourage my photographers to innovate.”

Some of that innovation was forced by external changes to the market.

“The traditional sales rep, where you take someone’s portfolio, knock on a door and get a job, has mostly gone away,” says Elder. In the past, she says, agencies would send a layout for an ad and ask for a photographer to put their own spin on the image. Now, agencies want photographers to create libraries of photos—and cinemagraphs and short films—for not just traditional ads, but Instagram stories or TikTok campaigns. Reps still have to promote their photographers and showcase their work—whether it’s through networking, social media or portfolio shows—but they also need to work with them to figure out how images might be used as a campaign moves from one media format to another.

“Our industry has turned upside down,” says Elder. “Clients and brands are looking for more content than they ever have. We have to understand all the different channels the content can live in—we’ve gone from a single image to creating multiple forms of content. The photographers have to be a partner in a way that they never were before.

“What I can bring to a photographer—along with helping them with strategic positioning, setting business objectives and

crafting marketing plans—is an understanding of a dynamic industry and how they can stay relevant.”

PARTICIPATING IN THE FUTURE

Sharing that knowledge and expertise is one of the reasons Elder started her blog, which now also highlights her podcast. She’s produced posts and podcast episodes on social media branding, working with creative directors and computer-generated imagery. Elder has also spoken to a COM class about how her job and advertising have evolved—and still are.

“People are going to be looking to them to help determine what the next age of advertising is like,” she says. “I told them, ‘You need to speak up, you need to participate, you need to have a point of view, because the industry is looking to figure out what it’s going to become.’”

Returning to COM turned into something of a family moment for Elder. Her daughter, Casey (CGS’19, COM’21), was part of the class and Elder’s own mom traveled up from Rhode Island. “It was an awesome experience for me,” she says. It came at a time when Elder had decided to become more involved in her alma mater. Elder and her husband, John, CEO and cofounder of the creative agency Heat, have long supported COM, but recently stepped up their giving to contribute to the College of Communication and Student Life Funds.

“I was at a time in my life where I could sit back and reflect on those experiences that influenced me,” she says. “And I am also at a point in my life financially where I can support and give back.”

Given how important that Polaroid camera was in shaping her career, Elder likes the idea of funding equipment and spaces that allow students to experiment and learn new skills. Recent donations have supported the Communication Research Center, which has used biometric technology to study emotional responses to media and virtual reality to explore immersive storytelling, and the purchase of a 3D printer for AdLab, where Elder made her first forays into the advertising business.

“Those tangible things make a difference in the students’ lives,” says Elder, who loves receiving letters from students sharing their excitement about the projects and assignments her family’s gifts have enabled. “And maybe they wouldn’t have that experience that will inform who they are for the future, if we didn’t donate money.”

It’s a bonus that one of those benefiting is Casey, who’s studying communications and PR.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today—personally or professionally—if it weren’t for my BU education. I credit COM with giving me the perspective to think broadly about solving a communications challenge and being flexible and innovative about how to solve it,” says Elder. “I feel like BU has stayed true to its core values about what’s important to them. I know technology has changed and classes have evolved, but what I took away from my experience at BU and what Casey is taking away are very similar.

“I see Casey learning how to live her life as an adult and I love that BU provides the opportunities and it’s up to you to take advantage of them.” /



THE EVOLUTION OF PR

**DON WRIGHT REFLECTS ON THE
CHANGING WORLD OF PR AND THE
INFLUENCE OF THE LATE
HAROLD BURSON AT COM AND
ACROSS THE INDUSTRY**

By MARC CHALUFOUR

When Harold Burson first visited COM in the 1950s, he was barely older than the students he'd been invited to speak to. The college was at the forefront of the evolving public relations field, having launched the first master's program in PR a few years earlier. And Burson (Hon.'88), who cofounded Burson-Marsteller in 1953, was about to become a leading voice in the industry as his firm grew into one of the largest public relations companies in the world. Burson appreciated the role of higher education in preparing students to enter the profession and maintained his relationship with COM until his death in January 2020.

Burson's legacy is hard to overstate. Burson-Marsteller brought PR and advertising together in one business and was one of the first communications companies to expand globally, eventually operating more than 50 offices worldwide. Burson represented corporations like General Motors and Coca-Cola, and counseled presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. Peers have called him the Babe Ruth of PR. *PRWeek* dubbed him the most influential PR figure of the 20th century and, in a remembrance published after his death, referred to him as the "spiritual leader" of the industry.

Don Wright recalls meeting Burson in the mid-1970s. "For some reason, that I still don't understand, Harold Burson put his arm around me nearly 40 years ago," Wright says. Burson encouraged Wright throughout his career teaching PR. When a job opened at COM in 2006, Wright recalls Burson telling him, "Going to Boston University would be a good way for you to cap off your career." When he was offered COM's Harold Burson Professor and Chair in Public Relations in 2010, Wright wanted to be sure that Burson approved before he accepted the position. "I was told that he enthusiastically approved."

Wright spoke with *COM/365* about how Burson helped evolve PR and how the field continues to change today.

COM/365: You knew Harold Burson for a long time, on both a personal and professional level. Can you describe his influence on the PR industry?

Don Wright: There's absolutely no question that Harold Burson dramatically changed public relations. He was a

strong advocate for diversity. He had a lot to do with moving public relations out of the dark ages from the publicist role up into an organizational role. He was a class act.

You mentioned the "dark ages"—can you elaborate on that?

If you turn the clock back to the 19th century, what you had was a lot of people trying to hire public relations people to fix things. They would give journalists money under the table to write a story with this slant as opposed to that slant. As we moved across the 1900s, we started moving in a direction where the main things in public relations were telling the truth and proving it with action.

How has the role of the PR person changed in more recent decades?

Harold pointed out that, when he first entered the business after World War II, most of his work was helping organizations and clients answer the question, "How should we say it?" The decision about what to say, and certainly what to do and how to do it, had been made by others, and the public relations people were the word-smiths. They took all that information and put it into a news release or magazine story or whatever the vehicle of



Don Wright

Previous spread: Dan Watkins, Joppen (inset); Facing page: Dan Watkins; This page: Allan Hunter Shoemaker

BURSON ENCOURAGED WRIGHT THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER TEACHING PR. WHEN A JOB OPENED AT COM IN 2006, WRIGHT RECALLS BURSON TELLING HIM, "GOING TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY WOULD BE A GOOD WAY FOR YOU TO CAP OFF YOUR CAREER."

communication was for that. Soon it wasn't uncommon for PR to be involved in helping the organization decide what to say in addition to how to say it. Then, in the most effective organizations, we got involved in counseling people on what to do and how to do it, in addition to what to say and how to say it.

How does technology fit into that evolution?

Regardless of whether you're a fan of President Trump or not, and regardless of whether you feel he's using Twitter effectively, the reality is unbelievable. The president, at two o'clock in the morning, decides, "I'm gonna put out a tweet." In years gone by, maybe you read some things historically about presidents who wake up in the middle of the night and jot something down on paper, and meet with advisors the next day. And maybe the next week, they do something about it or work it into a speech. Now it's just blasted right out there.

When Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, it took 12 days to get news to London. When John Kennedy was assassinated, it took about 12 minutes. Today, it would be 12 seconds, if that. It was much easier, in earlier times, to control the flow of news. Technology has changed the communication landscape so tremendously.

What do you think a strong PR strategy looks like today?

We have so many problems in the world because we can't communicate effectively with each other. The most successful organizations have really strong public relations or corporate communication departments. Look at Johnson & Johnson. If you go to their headquarters in New Jersey, their code of ethics is carved into the wall. It's not something that's typed on a sheet of paper that can change every 10 days. What you're seeing is the communi-



HAROLD BURSON (1921-2020)

PR legend and BU benefactor had a long relationship with COM

Harold Burson (Hon.'88), cofounder of Burson-Marsteller and transformative force in the public relations industry, died in January at the age of 98.

PRWeek named Burson the most influential PR figure of the 20th century, and both the Public Relations Society of America and the Arthur W. Page Society inducted him into their respective halls of fame. He was a generous supporter of COM and hired many graduates during his career.

Working for American Forces Network at the end of World War II, Burson covered the Nuremberg Trials, and was the only reporter to obtain an interview during the trials with Associate Justice Robert H. Jackson, the chief American prosecutor.

After his US Army discharge, he founded a small agency in New York, leading him to partner with advertising pioneer William Marsteller. In 1953, they joined together to build a new company bearing their names that grew to become one of the world's largest public relations companies. Following a 2018 merger, the company is now known as Burson Cohn & Wolfe.

In a 2017 interview with Don Wright, the Harold Burson Professor and Chair in Public Relations, Burson recalled his first visit to BU, to speak to PR students. "I found myself learning as much from them as they learned from me," he said.

Throughout his career, Burson supported public relations research and education, developing training programs and mentoring young professionals. His company had a long history of collaboration with BU and hired many COM graduates.

In 1988, Burson was awarded an honorary degree by the University, and in 1995 the chair in public relations was established in his name. /

“I’VE GOT A BUNCH OF AWARDS—AND NONE OF THEM MATCH BEING THE HAROLD BURSON PROFESSOR. THERE AREN’T VERY MANY ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND THERE CERTAINLY IS NOT AN ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS WHERE THE PERSON THE POSITION’S NAMED AFTER IS AS FAMOUS AS HAROLD BURSON.”

—DON WRIGHT

cation department rising in importance to the organization. In the most successful companies, they have a CCO, meaning chief communication officer. This is somebody who, in many cases, reports directly to the CEO of the organization.

Do you have a favorite story about Harold Burson?

I asked on a number of occasions, “What’s the most important thing you’ve ever done?” He, in many ways, was responsible for removing the Confederate flags from the campus of the University of Mississippi. He was very proud of that.

In the 1990s, the chancellor at the University of Mississippi wanted to remove the Confederate flag from campus and end the band playing “Dixie” at the football games. Harold was brought in to help, and he said there’s only one way to get those flags out of there—that’s to get the football coach, Tommy Tuberville, to agree. Tuberville [currently a candidate for US Senate in Alabama] basically said, “No way.” So Harold said, “Well, let me ask you this: Do the flags hurt the football team?” “Oh yeah, we go to an African American recruit’s home, and the kid is ready to commit to Ole Miss, then a week later another SEC



Legendary PR executive Harold Burson, whose relationship with COM began in the 1950s, celebrated a birthday on campus in 2011.

[Southeastern Conference] school shows up with video of [the band] playing ‘Dixie.’” So Harold was able to determine that this hurt the team. [Editor’s note: In 1997, with Burson’s help, the University of Mississippi asked fans not to fly the Confederate flag at football games, and banned flagpoles and sticks in the stadium, but the band continued to play “Dixie” until 2016.]

What does it mean for COM to have had a relationship with someone of Burson’s stature?

I think it means everything. Certainly, as far as public relations research and education, most of the gifts that people give, they give to where they went to school. He wasn’t obligated to give BU anything, but he did. And it wasn’t just the money—he came here a lot, he spoke in our classes. We have a spring break trip to New York, where two of our faculty and a bunch of our students visit various agencies; Harold was very supportive of that. There were lots of times that he went above and beyond.

What are the key things that you took from Burson that you now feel responsible for carrying on in your teaching?

Honesty, ethics, truth, openness.

What does having the title of Harold Burson Professor and Chair mean to you?

I’ve been very fortunate. I’ve got a bunch of awards—and none of them match being the Harold Burson Professor. There aren’t very many endowed professorships in public relations, and there certainly is not an endowed professorship in public relations where the person the position’s named after is as famous as Harold Burson. Having the title is, without question, the biggest honor I’ve ever received. / This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Facing page: Erik Jacobs; This page: Vernon Doucette

COM/STATS

STUDENTS

COM UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

- BS IN ADVERTISING
- BS IN FILM AND TELEVISION
- BS IN JOURNALISM
- BS IN MEDIA SCIENCE
- BS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

1
TOTAL PHDs AWARDED
(SEE PAGE 10)

2,081
TOTAL UNDERGRADUATES

501
TOTAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

EMERGING MEDIA STUDIES: **50**
JOURNALISM: **61**
FILM/TV: **98**
MASS COMMUNICATION: **292**

TERRIER HEADLINES

A Pulitzer Prize, Hall of Fame induction and two dynamic brother filmmaking duos capped a big year for alums



Alexandra Wimley ('17), at left, center, received a Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting alongside her Pittsburgh Post-Gazette colleagues. The paper covered the tragic shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue as it happened and for months afterward.

On October 27, 2018, a peaceful Shabbat morning service at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue was tragically interrupted by a lone gunman, 46-year-old Robert Bowers, who killed 11 congregants and injured 6 others. The massacre was the deadliest attack ever on the Jewish community in the United States. In the hours and days that followed, the community gathered to mourn and pray.

There on the ground was photo-journalist Alexandra Wimley ('17), who arrived at the scene within minutes of the mass shooting. She had been working for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* for only 25 days, but her work would be recognized with a Pulitzer Prize, awarded to the paper's staff for breaking news reporting. We spoke to Wimley about the experience.

COM: Where were you when you got the call to cover the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue?

Alexandra Wimley: I live about a five-minute drive from the synagogue. My editor knew that, so I was one of the first calls that she made. This was probably between 10 and 10:30 a.m. She called me and said, "We're hearing about an active shooter in the synagogue, and we need you to go." I was there in seven or eight minutes.

The *Post-Gazette* covered this story for weeks. What was it like to be covering a story for such an extended period?

Every single day, my assignment was related to this. The week after was hard because we were covering the funerals. But continuing to cover it eventually helped me process my own experience. A lot of things that happened afterward—people coming together to raise money and to offer support, the vigils—showed me the beauty and richness of this community. It's nice to be the local journalist in this situation, because you're not just covering the tragedy and then leaving, you're also covering the good stuff that comes out of it. I found that to be therapeutic.

What was your reaction to finding out that your team was receiving a Pulitzer Prize?

It was surreal. It was exciting, of course, because it's a Pulitzer—and it means that we did our job well.

Visit bu.edu/com/comtalk for a longer version of this interview.

—Emma Guillén

Facing page: courtesy of Alexandra Wimley (top left); Alexandra Wimley/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (top right x2); This page: Jackie Ricciardi (top); John P. Filo/CBS (left); Showtime (right)

Bob Fishman ('69), a pioneering director for CBS Sports, was inducted into the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame. Fishman, who joined CBS in the 1970s, was the first director to place a camera inside a NASCAR racecar and has directed the network's coverage of the NCAA Basketball Tournament since 1982, as well as broadcasts of numerous other sports, including baseball, football and Olympic figure skating. Visit bu.edu/com/comtalk for a profile of Fishman.



Two COM alums were among those honored at BU's 2019 Alumni Weekend. **Erica V. Mosca (CGS'06, COM'08)**, top left, founder and executive director of Leaders in Training, a nonprofit that works with first-generation college graduates, received a Young Alumni Award. **Pete Souza ('76)**, top center, White House photographer for presidents Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama, received a Distinguished Alumni Award. Other recipients included (front left to right) Dennis L. Via (Wheelock'88), Sandra L. Lynch (LAW'71, Hon.'12), Carol Jenkins (Wheelock'66) and (top right) Andy X. Vargas (CAS'15, Pardee'15).



Showtime aired *100%: Julian Edelman*, a documentary filmed and edited by brothers **Griffin Nash (CGS'06, COM'08)** and **Clifford Nash ('08)**. The film follows the New England Patriots' star receiver from a serious injury, through grueling rehab and a suspension for using performance-enhancing drugs, to a climactic 2019 Super Bowl victory, where Edelman was named MVP.



After becoming the first woman to run a top-five firm when she became president and CEO of Ketchum in 2018, **Barri Rafferty ('88)** was named to *PRWeek's* 2019 Power List of the top-50 communications professionals. Rafferty served as COM's commencement speaker in 2019.



Karen Holmes Ward



Lauren Shuler Donner

A pair of COM alums were among BU's 2019 honorary degree recipients, with **Karen Holmes Ward ('77, Hon.'19)** and **Lauren Shuler Donner (CGS'69, COM'71, Hon.'19)** each receiving a honorary Doctor of Humane Letters during the University's commencement ceremony.

As public affairs and community services director for WCVB Chan-

nel 5, Boston's ABC affiliate, Holmes Ward helps lead Commonwealth 5, the station's initiative linking viewers interested in philanthropy to a range of non-profit groups. She also hosts *CityLine*, the weekly public affairs magazine show about issues facing Greater Boston's communities of color. COM "focused my interest in journalism and launched me on my career path," she says.

For more than 25 years, films produced by Shuler Donner—including *Pretty in Pink*, *You've Got Mail*, *X-Men*, *Deadpool* and many more—have earned more than \$7 billion at the box office and earned her a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In addition to receiving an honorary degree, Shuler Donner delivered COM's undergraduate convocation address.



The *Washington Post* called **Andy Cohen ('90)** a "Decade Influencer" in its roundup of five people who shaped popular culture in the 2010s. "Cohen, a reality-TV innovator behind the camera long before he became a talk-show host, has an uncanny radar for juicy details of famous and semifamous people's lives," the *Post* said of the host of Bravo's *Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen*. Cohen has also produced several popular reality programs for Bravo, including *Top Chef* and the *Real Housewives* franchise.



Melissa Adan ('14), a reporter for NBC 7 and Telemundo in San Diego, received the Al Neuharth Award for Investigative Journalism, presented by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Knight Foundation, for her coverage of San Diego County migrant shelters.



One of 2019's surprise hit films, *Uncut Gems*, was written and produced by **Benny Safdie ('08)** (left) and **Josh Safdie ('07)** (center). The film, which stars Adam Sandler (right), tells the fast-paced, grittily realistic story of Howard Ratner, a wheeler-dealer from New York's Diamond District who is in over his head with gambling debts. The film made more than \$50 million at the box office and earned the Safdie brothers a profile in the *New Yorker*.

Facing page: Chris Sorensen (top); Dan Aguirre (bottom left); Michael D. Spencer (bottom right); This page: Julieta Cervantes (right); Getty Images (top left); Cheyanne Dorey, Anaya (top right)

THANKS TO ALL OF YOU



In a year when BU completed a historic decade-long, \$1.85 billion capital campaign, there is much to be thankful for. You contributed more than \$3.7 million to COM last year and that support made many of the stories in this magazine possible—providing funds needed for scholarships, research and equipment. You also offered advice and expertise that helped students and recent grads develop their skills and launch their careers. Thank you.

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WHY I GIVE



When **Jill Davison (COM'92)** graduated from COM, there was no social media, and only the earliest of today's lightning-speed information exchanges. Since then, it's been "change on all cylinders," Davison says. But attending COM turned out to be the most valuable preparation for rapid media change that she could have had. "Every day, I put to work what I learned at COM," she says.

Davison is vice president of corporate communications for Meredith Corporation, a multiplatform media company that produces *People*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Food & Wine*, *InStyle*, and *Martha Stewart Living*, among more than 40 titles. "These brands transcend print publications," she says, with their content living across the digital world, from social and video sites to experiential and voice platforms, such as podcasts

and Alexa Skills. Davison works to promote new content and covers, product launches, marketing partnerships, events and other media initiatives. Knowing how to navigate this burgeoning media universe is where her COM training comes in. "At COM, we learned from media industry leaders," says Davison. "The school attracted them as teachers and we were the great beneficiaries."

Among COM's lessons, says Davison, was the value of hard work, balance and objectivity. "In a news reporting class," she says, "I learned that those basic who-where-what-why-when-how questions are the DNA that will always be critical in communications work, regardless of how the media landscape changes."

Gratitude for her time at COM is at the heart of her support for BU through the COM Fund. "COM gave me a great start right out of the gate, and now I want to help make that possible for others through the COM Fund's scholarships."—*Francie King (GRS'80)*

WHY I GIVE



"Going to BU was a lifelong dream," says **Mark Walton (COM'76)**. "My family was originally from Barbados, and my aunt Vivienne Walton (SON'67) was the first to go to college."

Through his aunt's admiration for the University—fortified by the legacies of alums Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS'55, Hon.'59), Barbara Jordan (LAW'59, Hon.'69) and Ida Lewis (COM'56)—Walton saw BU as a place where he could learn and grow.

"COM gave me professional training that set me up for a 40-year career," he says, noting that Lewis, a pioneering journalist and editor, gave him his first jobs, as a summer intern and then editorial assistant on her magazine, *Encore*. After working in New York as a print journalist, Walton headed to Yale, earning a master's degree in public and private management.

Walton began giving to COM after a letter arrived from an African American alumna who described how the school was diversifying. "You want to support what you see as progress," he says. Today, the Jonathan Walton Memorial Graduate Student Financial Aid Fund supports COM students, with a preference for those from underrepresented groups. The fund is named for his late son, who attended BU's College of General Studies.

Walton advises students to look beyond the silos of their chosen specializations. "Learn how all the pieces fit together," says Walton, who is president of sales and marketing for Lilly Broadcasting's One Caribbean Television in New York. "I grew up in a world where the editorial people didn't know what went on in the advertising department and didn't want to know. Understand those pieces, and you'll have attained learning that stretches far beyond communications."

—F.K.

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Facing page: courtesy of Mark Walton (left); courtesy of Jill Davison (top); This page: courtesy of Cindy and Jim Eppolito

WHY I GIVE



"We raised our kids to follow their own passions," says **Cindy Eppolito (Parent COM'19)**. "Our daughter, Sophia, is doing this, thanks in no small measure to BU and COM. So in giving to BU, we want to support other students who follow their passions there."

A voracious reader, Sophia Eppolito ('19) had loved journalism in high school and wanted to pursue it professionally. "When Sophia walked onto the BU campus, and toured the College of Communication, we knew this university would be special to her," says Eppolito.

Once at BU, Sophia "grabbed every opportunity she could and made the most of it," her mother says. She loved reporting and became campus news editor of the *Daily Free Press*. She later signed on as a co-op student with the *Boston Globe*, then headed to London to study abroad. In summer 2018, Sophia returned to the *Globe* as an intern, eventually becoming a part-time reporter and homepage producer. After her BU graduation, she was hired by the Associated Press in New York as a news associate.

"Giving to the COM Fund makes sense for us," says Cindy Eppolito. "Everything we have experienced at BU has shown us that the University is a well-oiled machine, which clearly has allowed Sophia to follow her passion. Today, she's fulfilling her dreams, and that really motivates us."—F.K.

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Maddie Malhotra ('19) documented Brian Miser, a human cannonball at the Topsfield Fair in Topsfield, Mass., for Advanced Visual Storytelling. "I loved this work—it was a great piece of documentary and feature photography that played to her strengths as a sports photographer," says Greg Marinovich, Malhotra's professor. Malhotra is now a staff photographer for the Boston Red Sox and also produced several of the photo shoots for this magazine.



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