

# TC TODAY



SPRING | SUMMER 2025

## Creating the Ripple Effect

**Bold Impact**

**AI in Education**

**Mental Health Today**





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Where True Change Begins®

## A Note to Our Readers

So many of our readers have shared with us how much you cherish *TC Today*, and it's been a joy for our team to reimagine the magazine and bring it back. At a time of much uncertainty, with media competing for your attention in every sector of our lives, we hope this publication offers you refuge: a moment to put your feet up and join your community, wherever you are, in reflecting on the uplifting and meaningful work of Teachers College, and especially our alumni across the globe. You're part of something meaningful, and there's so much to be proud of.

At *TC Today*'s home in the Office of Institutional Advancement, our storytelling is driven by providing our community with value — through inspiring stories and insightful knowledge — and this magazine is another route in that journey. Our 100,000 alumni are making an impact through collaboration on campus and in all corners of the world.

This is for you, and we look forward to your feedback and ideas, which you can share at [tctoday@tc.edu](mailto:tctoday@tc.edu).

Yours truly, from TC Way,  
The *TC Today* Team



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PHOTO © BRUCE GILBERT



Teachers College  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Dear Readers,

I often say that one of my favorite parts of my job as President of Teachers College is when I get to speak with students and alumni. Invariably, I learn as many new things about TC from those conversations as I do about the people I meet. Everyone has a unique experience to share about their scholarship, whether on campus, in communities through fieldwork, or out in the world post-graduation across the fields of education, health, and psychology.

And they all make an impact, in many different ways.

Yet there is also something universal at play, spanning different generations, religious and ethnic backgrounds, geographies and subject matter: They all share a powerful connection to their TC experience — a particular professor, a specific class, an area of research they hadn't previously considered, or cohort of peers who became lifelong friends. All of these turned out to be life-changing moments, leading to much more than they had anticipated, experiences they will draw on throughout their lives, as they extend that impact to others.

I never tire of hearing these stories. Not only have I shared similar experiences over my nearly 35 years as a faculty member and now President of the College, but I also still experience that kind of alchemy. Every day, I learn something new, simply by interacting with our TC community, dropping into a symposium or guest lecture, or chatting as I get a cup of coffee.

These exchanges often provide me with a new perspective, sometimes even a new direction. That's because, as a whole, the TC community is devoted to continued learning, questioning, exploring and building — often together.

I'm truly enriched by this culture and fortunate to be a part of it.

With this relaunch of *TC Today*, our intent is to bring that culture right to your door. In these pages, you'll read about how ideas developed, took root and then took flight — a "ripple effect" that continues even now. We hope you are inspired to develop your own new ideas as you read about your colleagues, friends, professors and fellow alumni.

We are so glad to continue this tradition of sharing and learning, and seeing where it will lead.

With appreciation,

Thomas Bailey  
President

# As Seen on TC Way

Dear readers, what if I told you that the metaphorical center of Manhattan was not the exhausting Times Square, but further uptown? Yes, 120<sup>th</sup> Street bustled with invigorating dialogue and big milestones for our community during the academic year. As we brace for the hot days of a city summer, we can't help but look back to cooler moments, like when **TC alumna Monique Herena (M.A. '17)**, the Chief Colleague Experience Officer at American Express, imparted wisdom on Social-Organizational Psychology students during a special fireside chat and networking event last fall: "You will learn something from every single person you encounter — and others can learn from you."

That emphasis on service was also deeply felt during **Alumni Day** in October, when graduates across generations convened to honor the 2024 Alumni Award winners, and hear from experts about the power of connection. And if gathering in community was not enough, the new **Cowin Career Closet** mobilized alumni, who donated professional attire to support students and mitigate a key barrier to career advancement.

Alumni also stayed energized by sharing their work with one another, whether through various shows at the **Macy Art Gallery** or conferences like **TC's Midwinter Climate Institute**, during which hundreds of NYC public school teachers gained critical tools for meaningful climate education.

So much happened at Teachers College this past year, and while we can't give you a glimpse at everything, we'll give one last honorable mention to one of our favorites: the **Faculty Appreciation Awards**, a student-voted honor celebrated each spring that reminds us of the profound impact we have on one another. We hope to see you on TC Way soon.

—Morgan Gilbard, *TC Today* Managing Editor



Monique Herena (M.A. '17, third from left) and President Thomas Bailey (center) ahead of Herena's fireside chat last fall. Pictured from left to right: doctoral students Elizabeth Hyde and Yael Silverstein, Herena, Bailey, doctoral student Zoë Troxell Whitman, Professor of Practice Bill Pasmore and doctoral student Nilima Ajaikumar (Photo: Bruce Gilbert).





Alumni Award honorees Claudia Schrader (Ed.D. '02, Ed.M. '01, M.A. '92) and Vikash Reddy (Ph.D. '16, M.Phil. '15) with President Thomas Bailey, and fellow award recipients Beverly Elmyra Johnson (Ed.D. '86, Ed.M.'83), Louis N. Wool (Ed.D. '14) and A. Brooks Bowden (Ph.D. '14, M.Phil. '13).



Art & Art Education student Camila Roriz; Judy Burton, Macy Professor of Education; Tom Lollar, Senior Instructor; and Jun Gao, Adjunct Assistant Professor, at the "Fall Studio Works" exhibit at Macy Art Gallery.



Staff from TC NEXT, the College's career services support office, celebrated the Cowin Career Closet opening in February.



TC's Midwinter Climate Institute was the largest sustainability event on record hosted at the College.



The 2025 Faculty Appreciation Awards included honors for Lecturer Adele Ashley (second from left), winner of the Teaching Award, and Associate Professor Ioana Literat (second from right), winner of the Priscilla Wohlstetter Faculty Mentoring Award. Pictured with KerryAnn O'Meara, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost and Dean of the College (left) and Marie Miville, Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and Professor of Psychology & Education (right).





# WHAT PARENTING TAUGHT ME about *Learning*

**David Flink (M.A. '08, dis/Ability Studies), Founder & Chief Executive Officer of The Neurodiversity Alliance**

In 2014, in my book *Thinking Differently*, I wrote about being a neurodivergent third-grader long before the term “neurodiverse” was widely known. At the time, my biggest struggle was that I couldn’t read at grade level and often acted impulsively — challenges that led well-meaning adults to assume I wasn’t trying hard enough. Those assumptions weren’t just frustrating; they shaped my entire experience in school.

As someone who has spent years advocating for neurodiverse students, I have seen firsthand how these assumptions and biases — *often unintentional*

— can limit opportunities, undermine confidence and reinforce systemic barriers in education.

Bias in education is often about the subconscious assumptions that shape expectations. Too often, students who think and learn differently are seen as less capable, as underachievers, or as simply not trying hard enough. I know this firsthand. In third grade, struggling with dyslexia and ADHD, I overheard my teacher, Ms. K, tell my mother, “He must try harder. Just encourage David to try.”



What made her think I wasn't trying? Everyday, I pushed myself with everything I had. Yet, despite my efforts, I was placed in a box — one that defined me by my struggles rather than my potential.

Later, when I was identified with dyslexia and ADHD, I finally had language for my learning differences. But language alone wasn't enough. I still had to navigate a world that viewed students like me through the lens of outdated biases — biases that suggested we weren't working hard, couldn't learn (literally labeled *Learning Disabled*), weren't deserving of resources to accommodate our different learning styles, or wouldn't achieve success. Over time, I built an organization and scope of work focused on challenging those assumptions, advocating for students who identify as being neurodivergent, and working to create systems that recognize and support all learners.

And then, I became a parent.

Parenting, I quickly learned, is an education of its own. It offers no syllabus, no grading rubric, and no final exam — only a series of daily lessons in patience, adaptability and humility. What surprised me most was how much my experiences as an educator and advocate mirrored my experiences as a father. Just as I had worked to dismantle biases in the classroom, I now had to confront my own unconscious expectations about how my children would learn, grow, and experience the world.

It's easy to assume that learning is linear, that effort always yields immediate results, or that success follows a predictable trajectory. But watching my children explore, struggle and persist reminded me of a truth I had known since childhood: Learning is deeply personal. It's shaped not just by ability but by environment, community, support, and, most importantly, the belief that growth is always possible.

Whether in the classroom, workplace or home, true inclusion requires rethinking outdated assumptions about intelligence, effort and potential. My children, students and colleagues remind me daily that our role isn't to fit people into narrow definitions of success — it's to create space for them to thrive as they are.

My time at Teachers College gave me the tools and motivation to answer that call to action — ensuring that any student, anywhere in the U.S., can access

**“Help your child discover what makes them feel strong, not just what makes them fit in.”**

the resources and support needed to build an inclusive community on their campus through The Neurodiversity Alliance. This belief continues to drive my work today as we challenge systemic biases and push for educational models that honor all learners.

As both a parent and an educator, I've come to see that one of the greatest gifts we can offer our children — and our students — is the space to learn in their own way, at their own pace. We do this at The Neurodiversity Alliance not by forcing them to fit into rigid molds, but by recognizing their unique strengths, challenging outdated assumptions, and ensuring that they know, beyond a doubt, that they are capable.

If I could offer one specific piece of advice to fellow parents, it would be this: Help your child discover what makes them feel strong, not just what makes them fit in. Celebrate the things they gravitate toward — whether that's building, storytelling, movement, empathy, or imagination — and build learning moments around those strengths. When we affirm a child's natural talents, we empower them to approach challenges from a place of confidence, not deficit.

In the end, learning isn't just about acquiring knowledge or even trying harder; it's about discovering potential. And sometimes, it takes seeing the world through the eyes of a child to remember that.

*David Flink (M.A. '08) is a leader at the forefront of the neurodiversity movement. As a student at Brown University in 1998, he founded Eye to Eye, now The Neurodiversity Alliance — the largest national organization founded by and for individuals with learning differences. He is also the author of Thinking Differently: An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities, and was named a GQ Man of the Year in 2015 and a Top 10 CNN Hero in 2021.*



# REMEMBERING THE Regalia & More

Beaming graduates celebrating alongside proud families, friends and faculty have defined Teachers College's Convocations for the past 138 years. In honor of the Class of 2025, we reflect on snapshots from nearly half a century ago.

Share your throwback pictures with *TC Today* for future issues by emailing [tctoday@tc.edu](mailto:tctoday@tc.edu)



'69

Graduates celebrate with family and friends in 1969

'70

A new TC alum captures the moment on Convocation Day in 1970



'72

Elementary school students celebrate with their teacher on graduation day in 1972





'78



A new doctoral grad and his family walk down 120<sup>th</sup> Street towards TC in 1978



Like many graduating parents today, a new grad celebrates with her baby in 1978



'80

A graduate and her family following the Convocation ceremony on May 14, 1980

'85

Graduates gather with their families outside of TC's Zankel Hall on May 15, 1985



*All available information about the subjects of these photographs has been included in the captions above. If you know anyone pictured or would like to request a digital copy, please let us know by emailing us at [tctoday@tc.edu](mailto:tctoday@tc.edu).*

*These photographs were gathered from the College's Archives at the Gottesman Libraries, and were captured by Stanley Seligson Photography, as well as others who are now unknown.*



## COURTYARD *Conversations*

### The Storied Art Scholar Judy Burton, Macy Professor of Education

A defining force in art education at the College for nearly 35 years, Judy Burton — TC’s Macy Professor of Education — arrived on 120<sup>th</sup> Street at a key inflection point. Art students worked in weathered studio spaces, and what would become the beloved Macy Art Gallery was a temporary storage room with collapsing walls. Working closely with leadership, Burton shaped and nurtured the Art & Art Education program over the next several years. She strengthened the program’s dual emphasis on studio practice and scholarship, helped secure funding to revive studio spaces and the Macy Arts Gallery, led community arts projects from Miami to Beijing, and offered visionary support to students that helped chart a new chapter for the program.

“That was the best possible challenge that I could have had at that time,” reflects Burton from her office, a

charming space resembling an attic on the top floor of Macy Hall. While the challenge presented to her in 1990 may have intimidated others, Burton saw the immense possibility, thinking then: “I can build something. We can make something good happen.”

For Burton, the flourishing program is almost like a painting — with her colleagues, students and alumni “each leaving their mark over time.”

A fine artist and subsequently a developmental psychologist from London, Burton “cannot remember” a time when she didn’t draw and make things. Her early career as an art teacher sparked an interest in how art shapes imagination in young people, allowing Burton to forge a unique path at the intersection of the arts and the development of human minds.



Below, Burton unveils her reflections and wisdom for *TC Today*.

**Favorite TC Memories:** During her first visit to the College before joining the faculty in 1990, Burton found herself starstruck when she unexpectedly met TC's late Maxine Greene, a legendary education philosopher at the intersection of arts and social progress. The chance encounter struck Burton, who had spent years reading Greene's work at the University of London. "I nearly dropped dead," recalls Burton, who had imagined Greene as a slight woman only to be taken off guard by Greene's tall stature and deep voice. "I must have stood there dumbfounded, and many years afterwards, I told her that story and we had a wonderful laugh."

Burton also fondly recalls unearthing a recommendation letter for one of the College's most revered alumni, the modern artist Georgia O'Keeffe, among a vast collection of files stored in today's Macy Art Gallery. The brief letter, authored by faculty member Arthur Wesley Dow in 1916, simply stated: "*Miss O'Keeffe is very good with her hands.*" This letter of "faint praise" now resides in the College's special collections, thanks to the stewardship of Burton.

**Best Advice:** "Prize your imagination and be 'present' to art. We are sorely in need of new ways of thinking about the arts, education and society and their intertwining," says Burton. "We need to not be frightened to rethink things. It's valuable to rethink things in the light of the past, and I don't mean this skittishly, but thoughtfully, to ask all the time: 'Are there better and newer ways of doing what we believe we should be doing?' How can we reflect on what we know, and feel and know them differently?"



*I Go to Church in Brooklyn* by Kristin Brenneman Eno (Ed.M. '04, Art & Art Education), a multimedia collage included in the Macy Art Gallery's alumni exhibit, "Accidents," showing through July 10

**Strongest Influence:** Teachers who imparted wisdom to Burton on the value of dialogical learning, through both the symbolic use of different artistic materials and open-ended discussion. "It is complicated to learn how to dialogue, genuinely and well. But I really do believe — particularly as I come at this both as an artist and as a developmental psychologist — that thinking is engendered through a dialogical approach to teaching and learning," says Burton. "We need to ask challenging questions to make people reflective and curious about what it is they think and care about as they position themselves in their worlds."

**Thoughts on How AI is Influencing Art:** "We have to ask, in this process, do we lose the kinds of unmediated experiences that are represented in and through the arts and which capture our human selves? Are fundamental human proclivities being lost in the excitement, drama and expansiveness of media?" questions Burton, who does use digital materials in her teaching.

"I want to know what [generative AI] can give us, beyond what is instrumental and functional. How does it tap into the kind of deeper recesses of our ability to position ourselves in the world of others?"

**Greatest Hope for the Future:**

"We have to get better at talking about the arts as normative voices, as natural proclivities of human minds, as ways of stretching out and saying important things to each other," says Burton, referencing the Macy Art Gallery exhibit at the time of this interview that explores how the arts shape the choices and values of culture. "We need to be more thoughtful in the ways we think about the education of artists as educators, as leaders who nurture these capacities in others. We have lots of challenges."

— Morgan Gilbard





# *Introducing the Silver Roundtable*

Celebrating Lifelong Contributions and  
Fostering New Connections

TC alumni are invited to join the Silver Roundtable, a new affinity group bringing together alumni who are in or approaching retirement.

Scan the code to learn more about your fellow alumni and share your updates.



**[tc.edu/affinity](https://tc.edu/affinity)**

# AI *in Education*

As generative AI increasingly emerges in everyday life and Silicon Valley races to push the tech even further, experts describe the technology's impact on the economy as akin to that of the Industrial Revolution. AI will transform up to 60 percent of roles in advanced economies according to the International Monetary Fund, and educators must quickly integrate AI and other tools into their teaching to prepare students for future employment.

Join us as we explore how some of our alumni are participating in this new digital renaissance, and how TC faculty are advancing research and pedagogy related to AI.





# With an Expert

## Ed Tech Leader Cindy Johanson (M.A. '89)

To understand the potential of education technology today, TC alumna Cindy Johanson (M.A. '89, Philosophy & Policy) offers an enthusiastic and forward-looking perspective, shaped by more than 30 years in the field. As the Executive Director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation since 2010, she leads the growth and impact of initiatives such as Edutopia. Previously, Johanson advanced digital operations at the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), where she served as the Senior Vice President of Interactive and Education, a role through which she launched and grew the organization's web presence.

*Johanson spoke to TC Today about ed tech right now, artificial intelligence in schools and more.*

*What in education technology is most exciting to you right now and why?*

**CJ:** AI in education gives me the same goosebumps I felt back in 1994 when I was at the Public Broadcasting Service and we launched our first website — that sense of witnessing a fundamental shift in how learning happens. Today, tools like ChatGPT and Claude can respond to each student's unique questions and interests, while empowering teachers to focus on what matters most: the deeply human work of building relationships and developing critical thinking skills. When AI handles the rote tasks, students can engage more meaningfully — making connections across subjects and building the creative, collaborative problem-solving abilities that will shape their futures.

*How are you feeling about the opportunities offered by ed tech and AI for project-based learning and education more broadly?*

**CJ:** I'm optimistic about how AI can finally make project-based learning (PBL) accessible to all educators — not just those with extensive support and resources. We've long known that PBL leads to deeper, more relevant learning, where students tackle real-world problems, but many teachers have found it challenging to implement well — the planning, differentiation, and assessment can be overwhelming. AI tools are starting to change that by helping teachers design authentic projects tailored to their students' interests, generating just-in-time resources, and streamlining assessment in ways that make PBL much more manageable. What excites me most is that as these tools lower the barriers to implementation, we'll see more classrooms evolve into dynamic spaces where students aren't just memorizing content — they're applying knowledge through meaningful work that combines academics with social-emotional learning and real-world relevance.



COURTESY OF JOHANSON

*“I’m constantly discovering new tools that reshape how I learn and interact with information.”*

*What’s the most valuable resource that’s shaped your thinking?*

**CJ:** With technology advancing so rapidly, I’m constantly discovering new tools that reshape how I learn and interact with information — honestly, I feel a little bounce in my step; it’s an exciting time to be alive. Lately, I’ve been especially impressed by Google’s NotebookLM, which turns dense documents into interactive, podcast-style summaries, and AI assistants like Claude, which enriched my recent trip to Portugal by offering instant historical context for cathedral mosaics (far beyond what a guidebook could offer) and helping with practical travel needs. These tools aren’t just convenient additions to my day — they’re fundamentally transforming how I experience, understand, and connect with the world.

*Can you tell us about your favorite TC memory?*

**CJ:** I was incredibly fortunate to learn from giants like Lawrence Cremin, Maxine Greene and Ellen Lagemann — professors who didn’t just teach content, but fundamentally reshaped how I see education’s role in society. Some of my fondest memories, though, come from living in Whittier Hall. Sharing meals and late-night conversations with my international suitemates expanded my worldview in ways that were just as impactful as anything I learned in the classroom. And I can’t talk about TC without mentioning the historic basement pool with the lion’s head fountain. There was something almost magical about those quiet swims — peaceful moments in such a beautiful, storied space that felt uniquely TC and left a lasting impression.

*What’s your greatest hope for the future?*

**CJ:** A peaceful world, a healthy planet and a culture of everyday kindness — that’s the future I hope we create, together.



# *Brave New World*

## Recent Alumni Take On AI



Before 2022, when most alumni graduated from Teachers College, generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT were still largely the stuff of Silicon Valley imagination. Nevertheless, TC alumni were prepared to tackle the promise and pitfalls of AI with their foundational preparation in problem-solving and ed tech. As the public contends with an AI-driven future, we caught up with a few alumni on their work in the field.

**Azadeh Jamalian (Ph.D. '14)**

**Cognitive Studies**

CEO of education-technology start-up  
**The GIANT Room**

What if young learners could leverage tech to advance their growth, rather than using it as a shortcut to avoid learning? That core belief drove Azadeh Jamalian (Ph.D. '14) in 2018 to build on her start-up background and launch The GIANT Room, which offers play-based, STEM and learning opportunities to young students. Now, AI is added as another tool in GIANT Kids' toolbox. The GIANT Room has partnered with the Joan Ganz Cooney Center from Sesame Workshop and the Robin Hood Learning + Technology Fund to pilot a new program that integrates creative writing, AI literacy, and science for second and third graders at two schools in Queens.

In using AI as a tool for visual expression and prototyping, Jamalian explains, kids see that the technology is sometimes flawed and that humans still call the shots. "They learn you are in the position of power to actually iterate and make changes — and AI is like another pair of scissors, a tool in the service of your ideas," says Jamalian, whose 2019 TED Talk also spoke to the importance of empowering students in the classroom.

The task for educators lies in helping kids learn how to effectively communicate with AI software and leverage it to bring their ideas to life. "It's a process," she said, "of not only learning how the engineering works, but really trying to find the words to express what is on their mind."







*“[Children] learn you are in the position of power to actually iterate and make changes — and AI is like another pair of scissors, a tool in the service of your ideas.”*

COURTESY OF AZADEH JAMALIAN

*“My degree really prepared me for thinking through the big questions around the human impact of what’s going to happen to people because of AI.”*

## Nina Bamberg (M.A. '20) International Educational Development

Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Pedagogy Ventures

While public discourse often focuses on AI’s pitfalls, innovators have the opportunity to shape what ethical usage looks like. Nina Bamberg (M.A. '20) is in that group, overseeing a promising classroom tool that — among its many features — helps teachers facilitate Socratic seminars, and leverage creative opportunities like AI-driven conversations with historical figures and debates.

“I feel like I’m using my TC experience and where my passions have been to apply them to this space,” explains Bamberg, whose TC background in human rights and international education serves as the foundation for her work.



COURTESY OF NINA BAMBERG

“We’re thinking about what AI means for education. How do we interact with it in a way that’s responsible and ethical?” explains the TC alum, who continues to work closely with her former TC instructor Felisa Tibbitts on developing a professional development course around AI and human rights.

As far as what’s next, Bamberg hopes her work is empowering teachers to decide how AI can best work in the classroom. “It’s going to take teachers trying things out, and it’s going to take student voices being part of the conversation,” she said, “and then eventually that can help shape what the bigger policies might be.”



*“That’s what we should go out and do after we graduate — never stop searching for the answers to the most complex questions.”*

**Eddie Lin (Ed.D. '21)**  
**Instructional Technology & Media**  
**Data Scientist**  
**Meta**

While AI presents new challenges and opportunities across fields, Eddie Lin (Ed.D. '21) demonstrates how the ability to think through complex problems remains at the forefront of what success will look like. At the social media giant Meta, Lin focuses on quality assurance within AI programs and large-language models.

“A lot of this stuff was not part of the curriculum or part of the background training I received at TC,” he explained, “but TC did set me up for success and set a good foundation to really understand all this.”

As a student earning his degree in instructional technology and media, Lin worked closely with TC faculty like Charles Lang and Sandra Okita to better



understand the links between machine learning (another term for AI) and pedagogy. But the most profound lesson from this training wasn't related to tech alone — rather, the value of uncertainty in searching for the best solutions.

“We were talking about some kind of research without a good answer — debating the topic because there is no good [singular] answer to many of these questions,” recalls Lin. “That’s our mission, right? That’s what we should go out and do after we graduate — never stop searching for the answers to the most complex questions.”

— Will Bunch  
Contributing Writer



# *The Academic Brief*

## How TC Is Driving AI Research and Pedagogy

On 120<sup>th</sup> Street, TC faculty across programs are leveraging artificial intelligence to enhance teacher preparation, student success and more. Among them are Irina Lyublinskaya, Professor of Mathematics & Education, and Erik Voss, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics & TESOL, who gave us a closer look at their scholarship.

### Cultivating AI Literacy

Beyond focusing on knowledge-based learning, educators must help students develop the critical thinking skills and ethical frameworks necessary to become AI literate — i.e. leverage AI responsibly throughout their lives and careers. This perspective is the focus of *Teaching AI Literacy Across the Curriculum*, the forthcoming book from TC's Irina Lyublinskaya, Professor of Mathematics & Education, and TC alumna Xiaoxue Du (Ed.D. '22), which offers educators 40 actionable lesson ideas, discussion topics and more across grade levels and subjects.

"AI literacy has the potential to spark curiosity, boost critical thinking, and foster a love of lifelong learning, but it all comes down to how we, as educators, choose to integrate it," write Lyublinskaya and Du, who aim to help teachers leverage AI seamlessly in lessons alongside required curriculum.

**Why It Matters:** Lyublinskaya and Du's new book responds to the need for professional development tools to support educators as the future of AI in education takes shape. They assert that we must have an AI-literate society in order to use AI responsibly, ethically, environmentally, and to improve and increase access to education.

"Teachers are central to the success of AI literacy education," explain the co-authors. "We are the ones who introduce students to AI concepts, guide ethical discussions, and help students apply AI to real-world problems. However, teaching AI literacy requires a specific set of skills and knowledge that many of us as educators may not yet possess."





PHOTO © ROB DAVIDSON

Irina Lyublinskaya, Professor of Mathematics & Education

**What's Next:** Lyublinskaya and Du are conducting research that will assess the efficacy of their pedagogical framework in helping teachers develop AI literacy. Lyublinskaya will once again teach a non-credit course focused on AI literacy with TC Academy, the College's professional development programming open to all, next winter, and is exploring additional online modules for her instruction on AI literacy. In the next several months, Lyublinskaya is scheduled to discuss her AI literacy scholarship at conferences around the world, including China, Japan and Spain.

*“Teachers are central to the success of AI literacy education.”*







Erik Voss, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics & TESOL

*“We’re bridging the gap between academia and industry.”*

## Enhancing Global Communication

At a time when students can easily use apps like Grammarly to improve their essays or Duolingo to practice their foreign language skills, what boundaries and best practices do education leaders need to foster effective, enriching learning? At the intersection of AI and language, TC’s Erik Voss, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics & TESOL, is one of the scholars exploring such questions, and annually convenes academic and industry experts from across the globe at TC’s Artificial Intelligence Research in Applied Linguistics (AIRiAL) Conference. Objectives like fair testing, optimizing tech solutions and personalizing learning experiences define this particular quest in the journey of AI in education.

**Why It Matters:** “We’re bridging the gap between academia and industry” to collaborate in resolving complex issues in AI-driven language learning, explains Voss, and “to support graduate students as the next generation of researchers and developers.” For the TC professor, experts must balance leveraging AI and innovation with meaningful learning.

**What’s Next:** Voss has teamed up with Hansun Zhang Waring, Professor of Applied Linguistics & TESOL, to develop a framework that will measure how naturally chatbots can converse with humans, and, ultimately, help developers create educational experiences that can more effectively impart real-world language skills. Voss will also publish research that examines AI-driven writing assessments, which similarly need to advance to appreciate the complexities of writing style choices across purposes. “We need to trust the score of the machine in order to make decisions or take action based on those results,” explains Voss.



# Sparkling Innovation with TC's Digital Futures Institute

How can educators leverage tech tools and innovative approaches more effectively? This central question drove President Thomas Bailey and faculty to launch the Digital Futures Institute (DFI), an interdisciplinary hub for digital innovation to support teaching, learning and scholarship, in 2020. *TC Today* sat down to discuss the Institute's mission, ed tech today and what's ahead with Lalitha Vasudevan, DFI's Managing Director, Vice Dean for Digital Innovation, and Professor of Technology & Education; and Coterminous Professor Charles Lang, DFI's Senior Executive Director. *This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

*DFI is approaching its five-year anniversary. What kind of challenges have been the focus of your work?*

**Charles Lang (CL):** The two driving forces conceptually were digital transformation and then COVID at that point. We were tasked with, "How do we get our arms around digital learning moving forward?"

**Lalitha Vasudevan (LV):** DFI was in the works before the pandemic hit, and — as Charles said — it shaped what our first couple years were focused on, but we were really grounded in wanting to bring together service and scholarship. Part of that meant being responsive to what people were asking for, but part of that mission also meant providing our community with on-ramps. In other words, it's one thing to have information about online and hybrid teaching, but you actually have to create opportunities for the faculty to engage with pedagogy and tools in hands-on ways, including approaches that they don't already envision. Of course, the vision for DFI was always much larger than that: to grow intentionally and responsively to different audiences. So what do students need? What do alumni need? What do staff need? And that helped frame our initial four focus areas for research and practice: digital

pedagogy, tech for social good, play and multimodal scholarship. We are developing a new area of focus on the societal and educational impacts of artificial intelligence, which is similarly both responsive and forward looking.

*Let's talk more about multimodal scholarship — the use of multimedia and non-traditional mediums to advance learning. For those who grew up with traditional research and textbook-based learning, why is multimodal scholarship so important?*

**CL:** Our work is responding to the world that now exists, where multimodality is the norm and the expectation. Everyone has a smartphone in their pocket. So how do educators and researchers, within that context, leverage multimedia in a way that is going to help learners the most, and maybe combat some of the negative side effects of the technology in our lives now?

**LV:** To echo Charles' point about the increasingly multiple ways that people are communicating, multimodal learning builds on what people are already bringing to a classroom and asks them to produce new forms of outputs or use different practices, more so





**Lalitha Vasudevan**, DFI's Managing Director, Vice Dean for Digital Innovation, and Professor of Technology & Education

Join DFI for one of their upcoming Tech Playgrounds — during which you can explore different ed tech tools.



[tc.edu/dfi](https://tc.edu/dfi)



**Charles Lang**, Coterminous Professor and DFI's Senior Executive Director

than more traditional approaches might. Part of what we are also seeing with faculty who are engaging in their own multimodal research is that they're also finding new ways to ask different types of questions. Thus, we have worked to institutionalize structured support for multimodal pedagogy and research, or what we have identified as multimodal scholarship, to provide resources and community for those seeking to expand their practices of seeing and making meaning with the use of emerging technologies and creative media tools.

*DFI also works closely with teachers to help them develop ed tech skills, particularly around AI in the classroom. What have you learned from those experiences about what lies ahead?*

**LV:** As far as AI is concerned, emerging technologies are sometimes inserted into educational conversations with the aspiration that they're going to suddenly solve something. The reality is that life keeps changing and new challenges surface. What DFI is trying to do is to be responsive to needs while providing stable structures to experiment with that shifting landscape.

**CL:** We need to play to the strengths of our community, we can be ground zero for the implications of AI for education.

**LV:** We know that when people are able to see, listen and be in community, that changes the way they're able to learn. What TC brings to the table is a humane and pedagogically grounded lens to the conversation about AI development and integration in schools. Teachers

and principals have seen products foisted on them for decades. And the same is going to be true of AI. TC as an institution has an obligation to raise critical questions on how these technologies are applied and to equip people with knowledge so they can make intentional choices. It's humans who are going to advance AI.

*What's next for DFI?*

**LV:** As DFI approaches its five-year anniversary, we are aware that the world has changed dramatically in that time, both technologically and sociopolitically. The need for educators, researchers, and learners to be savvy in their assessment and use of technology has never been more urgent, and we aim to address that need through a range of impactful and interactive experiences and outputs — workshops for faculty, internships for students, translating research with media like podcasts and video series, and immersive exhibitions that are open to all. We are grateful for our partnerships with faculty, students, staff, and the organization and industry partners that have made this work possible. Looking ahead, we would like to expand some of the work with teachers and young people that we've recently piloted, and reach more audiences, including our alumni who are having impact around the world, and who see the value of providing opportunities for teachers and students and faculty to be creative, to be imaginative in their thinking. That's going to help us scale up, innovate and do more for the communities that we work with.





# ALUMNI SHARE YOUR NEWS!

Spread the word about your latest project, book or role with our community.



*Learn more about your fellow alumni  
and share your updates.*

**[tc.edu/alumni/update-your-info/](https://tc.edu/alumni/update-your-info/)**



# REFLECTIONS FROM THE Alumni Council

May 16, 2025

Like many of my fellow alumni, my 37-year career in education has brought me to call many places home — from Indiana to TC to Georgia. Where we live — or rather, where we grow — so often shapes us. In Texas, my home state, we say, “Texas forever,” but for so many of us, this sentiment more readily applies to Teachers College. In my eight years on the Alumni Council, I have had the pleasure of meeting hundreds of TC grads — still only a fraction of our community of almost 100,000. We come from all walks of life: different corners of the world, with unique experiences and outlooks. But what is always most striking to me is our shared vision for a better world for everyone, and how TC has become part of our DNA.

*TC Today* offers an opportunity to meet your fellow alumni in the comfort of your own home. In reading about their meaningful work across disciplines, I am once again reminded of the enduring mark Teachers College leaves on all of us. As I wrap up my term at the end of May, it’s a pleasure to reflect on this, and welcome new alumni council president Jane Elizabeth Brown (M.A. ’10). Throughout this issue, you’ll see numerous opportunities for you to get involved in our alumni community. I hope you will join us.

Sincerely yours,



Brian Kennerly (M.A. '92)  
President of the TC Alumni Council



**TC Alumni Council**  
Teachers College, Columbia University



# ALUMNI Happenings

Teachers in the TC alumni community gathered for a back-to-school happy hour aboard The Baylander, a naval ship turned bar docked near TC's campus, last fall.



Katherine Liu (Ed.M., M.A. '96), Kimberly Masiello (M.A. '10), Kim Flomenhoft (M.A. '01), Morgan Stickle (M.A. '23) and Jessica Lee (M.A. '07) mingled at Hess Brewing in San Diego last winter.





Peter Coleman (Ph.D. '98), Professor of Psychology and Education, and Director of the Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, and President Thomas Bailey discussed Coleman's research in conflict resolution at a January luncheon in Boca Raton, Fla., hosted by Trustee Marla Schaefer (M.A. '03).



Alumni gathered in São Paulo, Brazil, and in cities across the world in celebration of TC Impact Day, the College's annual day of service, in April.

Alumni enjoyed a visit to The Bass, Miami Beach's contemporary art museum, in February.







PHOTO © JD CLOSSER

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# CREATING THE Ripple Effect





PHOTO © ANTHONY LIU

Trustee Edith Shih (Ed.M. '78, M.A. '77)

Scientists say that a pebble dropped in a calm pond causes ripples far beyond what can be seen with the naked eye. Such is the case for catalysts like Trustee Edith Shih (Ed.M. '78, M.A. '77), whose impact can be felt from New York to Hong Kong — where she has cultivated a community of Teachers College alumni who turn to her for support and guidance as they navigate their own journeys.

“Edith is always asking, ‘How can I help?’ and then rolling up her sleeves to make it happen,” says friend and fellow TC alumna Vivian Chung (M.A. '04). “From mentoring young graduates to rallying alumni around TC’s mission, she ensures our community isn’t just connected, but alive with purpose...She embodies the idea that impact isn’t measured in accolades, but in the lives you uplift.”

Now, Shih is the Executive Director and Corporate Secretary at CK Hutchison Holdings, a Fortune 500 company. And though Shih graduated from Teachers College in the '70s with degrees in TESOL and Applied Linguistics before embarking on a robust law career, one might appreciate that she never fully left.

Her memories playing Beethoven duets with her classmates on the piano in Whittier Hall remain vivid. Her time as a TESOL teaching assistant taught her how to be a “better listener and collaborator” throughout her career.

Years later, when New York City’s front-line medical professionals didn’t have access to personal protective equipment (PPE) at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, Shih teamed up with numerous Columbia University alumni in Asia to send millions of PPE items to medical centers in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts, as well as TC and Columbia — enlisting TC students to help.







*Shih Scholars gather on campus with **Edith Shih** (front row, second from right), President **Thomas Bailey** (second from left) and **Roberta W. Albert (M.A. '97)**, Vice President for Institutional Advancement (front row, left)*

And so when Shih established multiple scholarships to support master's and doctoral students from Asia in 2012, she embarked on a journey that has now supported more than 30 alumni and current students in building careers of purpose with limitless possibilities.

"A donor doesn't want to just give money," explains Shih, the former President of the Columbia University Alumni Association of Hong Kong, whose volunteer leadership extends to the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the English Schools Foundation and the Hong Kong Chartered Governance Institute.

"I want to bring scholars along and open doors, and many donors are very prepared to walk along with them," says Shih, who has served on the TC Board of Trustees since 2010. "We learn from the scholars too."

With Shih's support, TC student scholars gain access to the tools they need to make a difference through their TC education — compounding change alongside faculty and colleagues in research labs, classrooms and more.

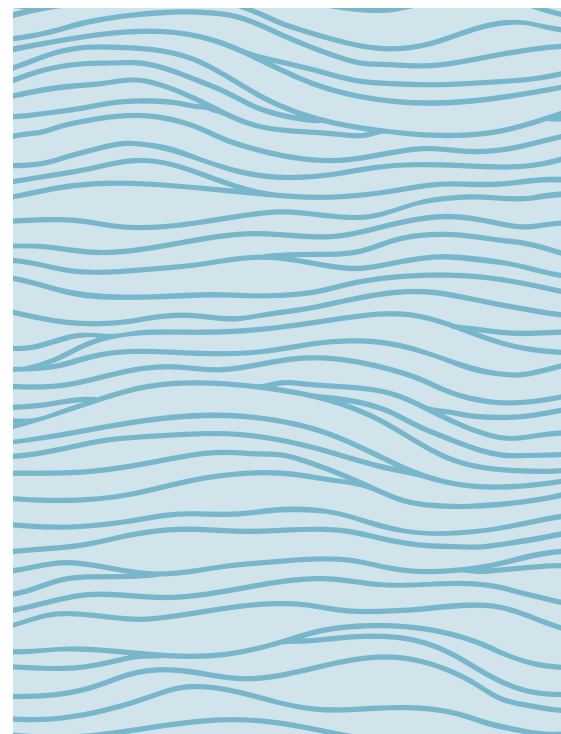




PHOTO © ANTHONY LIU

Shih and College leadership convened alumni, students and friends at a March reception in Hong Kong. Pictured from left to right: Columbia Business School alumna Anita Ma ('99); panelist Wai-Kai Hou; panelist Esther Chan (M.A. '09); panelist and Columbia University alumna Jennifer Yu Cheng ('03); Shih; Albert; Henan Cheng (Ed.D. '10); and Vivian Chung (M.A. '04)

“Edith’s the kind of person who speaks to people with real attention, heart and soul...I’ve been very moved by how deeply she cares about her scholars and all alumni. It’s incredibly unique.”

—Shih Scholar Ruohao Chen (Ed.D. '23, Adult Learning & Leadership), who assisted Shih’s PPE donation efforts, was inspired by both Shih and his professor to establish the Victoria J. Marsick Endowed Scholarship





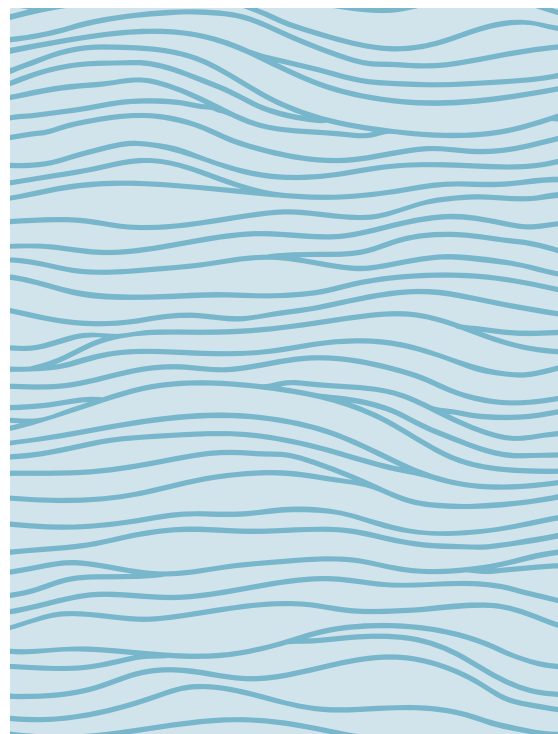
PHOTO © HUA-CHU YEN

Gita Steiner-Khamsi, the William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Comparative Education, with student and Shih Scholar Tianyu Feng (M.A. '26)

## Cascading Impact for Students & Beyond

Support as an international student was essential for Tianyu Feng (M.A. '26) during her undergraduate years in Los Angeles amid the pandemic. Now a recipient of the Edith Shih Endowed Scholarship in TC's International & Comparative Education program, Feng aims to advance social-emotional learning resources for students back home in rural China and for international students like herself.

“Overcoming my personal struggle has given me a deep understanding of the importance of mental health support in educational settings,” explains Feng, who hopes to establish her own nonprofit one day and sees culturally-sensitive support resources in China as essential. “Receiving the Edith Shih Scholarship is not just an honor but a reinforcement of my dedication to education as a means of social change.”





At TC, Feng has been profoundly influenced by her adviser Gita Steiner-Khamsi, the William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Comparative Education. A leading scholar on education policy in developing countries, Steiner-Khamsi has expanded the worldview of students like Feng in order to prepare them for data-driven scholarship that “amplifies the voices” of underserved youth.

In planning to return to China to strengthen social-emotional learning in rural communities, Feng is part of a generation of students helping realize a key component of Steiner-Khamsi’s work. As part of her efforts with the United Nations

Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Steiner-Khamsi is focused on helping developing countries build the capacity for locally led education policy and planning — the key indicator between countries that have more effective education systems versus those that don’t.

“It’s usually experts — American experts — who say what is needed in poor countries,” explains Steiner-Khamsi, who, in addition to her professorship, serves as UNESCO’s first Chair in Comparative Education Policy. “Local experts should be able to document with data what the needs are in their country.”

For Steiner-Khamsi and the next generation of international education scholars, fostering local capacity for education policy reform is about more than who is doing the work; it’s about supporting scholars equipped to embrace the complexity of local challenges in order to develop effective solutions.

“Many of my students hope to take what they learn in my classroom and translate it into reform and teachings when they return to their own countries. I try to bring TC to the world and the world to TC.”

“Edith is a remarkable role model for the Columbia alumni community in Hong Kong, extending her influence well beyond Teachers College...Her unwavering support, generosity, and dedication inspire me and many others to foster a similar sense of community and connection.”

—Columbia Business School alumna Anita Ma (’99), an advisor for the Columbia University Alumni Association of Hong Kong, where Shih serves as Advisor Emerita

# Exponential Results for Fellow Alumni

In the short time since she graduated from Teachers College, Shih Scholar Sitara Maria (M.A. '21, Clinical Psychology) has already meaningfully advanced patient care in New York City. Through her work at the boutique consulting firm HCLS Consulting, Maria develops and implements strategic solutions to complex challenges at both the systemic and patient levels — advancing equitable access to mental health care for New Yorkers while reinforcing ethical and sustainable business models for providers. Her work centers on the critical intersection of

medicine and mental health, with a particular emphasis on chronic disease management and its profound interplay with behavioral health.

Consider, for example, a patient presenting with shortness of breath and chest tightness. While a traditional approach would exclusively assess medical causes, New York State's Collaborative Care Model integrates behavioral health assessments at the outset. This holistic approach enables clinicians to connect patients not only with appropriate medical treatment but also with a mental healthcare team under Maria's purview.

“By embedding behavioral health within medical practices, we're normalizing these conversations and making care more accessible,” explains Maria, noting that the program often serves underserved populations, such as patients insured by Medicaid or from the migrant community. “I go to sleep at night thinking that I'm making a difference, and that impact fuels my drive to keep moving forward.”

But Maria's keeping her focus on what's ahead as she plays a key role in HCLS's expansion to New Jersey and California — major milestones just four years after Maria was one of the firm's first few employees.

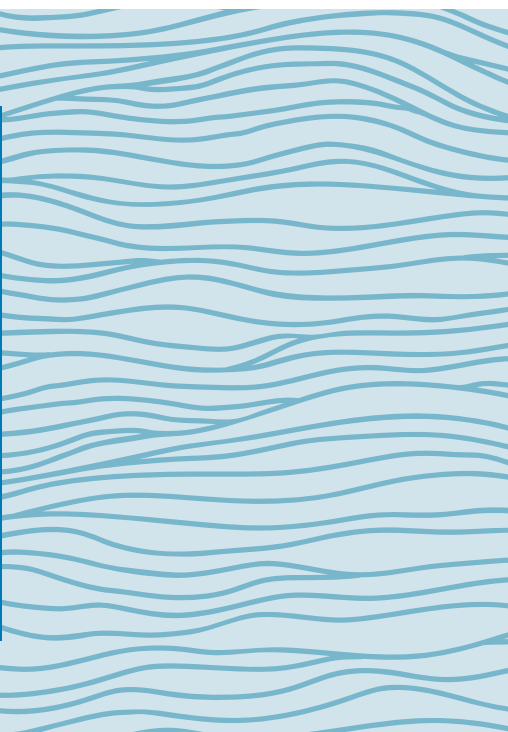
“I am genuinely grateful to Dr. Edith Shih for her doctoral fellowship support at Teachers College. Researching languages has been my lifelong passion and profession. After completing my degree, I hope to join the research faculty to make a greater impact in the field of applied linguistics. I also aim to set up my own scholarship program to help more students and to pass down the legacy I have benefited from as a student.”

—Shih Scholar Zhizi Chen (Ed.D. student, Applied Linguistics)



COURTESY OF MARIA

*Shih Scholar Sitara Maria (M.A. '21, Clinical Psychology)*



At the time, as she graduated from TC in the middle of the pandemic, joining an emerging company felt like a risk.

“Maybe I get some of that from TC — the courage to take a chance, whether it’s betting on yourself or betting on things that you believe in. And I think I did a little bit of both,” says Maria.

A Clinical Psychology graduate from New Delhi, Maria credits the Edith Shih Endowed Scholarship with empowering her to study at the College — where an emphasis on statistical analysis and critical

thinking created a launchpad for her future career. Maria continues to identify the pain points healthcare professionals face and is currently focused on developing solutions around these challenges, with a primary emphasis on leveraging data to drive impactful change.

Her work at TC’s Global Mental Health Lab — which dismantles barriers to care in underserved communities across the world through research and service — imparted the core principles that inform the scholar’s efforts here in New York City.





“The only way to do this work is through guidance from local teams,” explains TC’s Lena Verdeli, Founder and Director of the Global Mental Health Lab, and Associate Professor of Psychology & Education. At the Lab, Verdeli leads students in hands-on projects that emphasize collaborative learning.

“We train our students to come from a space of cultural humility, and learn from the expertise of the community members and their allies regardless of their level of education. It’s these kinds of partnerships that can create sustainable and sustaining care.”

For Maria, this approach to building sustaining solutions that respond to community needs is a critical pivot for more traditional healthcare models. “Ideas often stay in academia when they actually need to be in industry,” says Maria, who finds the robust inquiry and critical thinking skills instilled in her at TC as essential in helping her tackle the most difficult of questions related to improving patient care. “Those classes profoundly shaped the way I see and approach the world.”

For Verdeli, watching students like Maria implement core principles in distinct ways embodies the full life-cycle of the work.

“It makes me feel that the impact the Lab’s work has on the communities around the world is multiplied. And it takes on a life of its own,” reflects Verdeli, who, like her colleagues and donors like Shih, is part of an exponential cycle that defines the TC community itself.

“My students will be the next generation of mental health professionals, trainers, researchers and leaders,” says Verdeli. “They’ll make their own discoveries.” Like a pebble dropped in a pool of water, these ripples are felt near and far — across individuals and throughout their lives.

— Morgan Gilbard





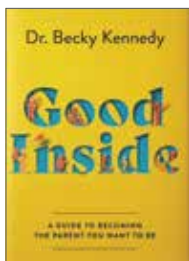
**Lena Verdeli**, Associate Professor of Psychology & Education, collaborates with students in her office as part of work for the Global Mental Health Lab

“Edith is a great role model of mine, showing how you can support people and inspire them to never give up. She’s encouraged me to keep moving forward to see how far I can reach. To know Edith and have her as a mentor is a privilege.”

—Shih Scholar Ting Zhao (Ed.D. '25, Education Leadership)



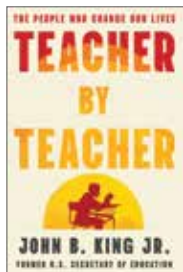
# What We're Reading



## *Good Inside: A Practical Guide to Resilient Parenting Prioritizing Connection Over Correction*

**Becky Kennedy** (Ph.D. '10)

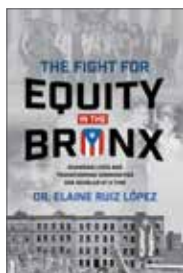
This *New York Times* bestseller by TC alumna and parenting expert Becky Kennedy offers a unique approach to navigating common challenges while prioritizing “connection” over “correction.” Through her insight and over a decade of parenting expertise, Kennedy offers a valuable resource for the next generation of parents who want to raise their children proactively, fostering lifelong self-awareness, confidence, resilience and more. The book is a companion to her business to support parents, also named Good Inside, for which Kennedy and her partner Erica Belsky (Ph.D. '12) received Medals for Distinguished Service at this year’s Convocation.



## *Teacher by Teacher: The People Who Change Our Lives*

**John B. King Jr.** (Ed.D. '08, M.A. '97)

In his memoir, TC alumnus John B. King Jr. — former U.S. Secretary of Education and current Chancellor of the State University of New York — shares his inspirational life story as a rising educator and reflects on the challenges he faced, all of which eventually led him to serve in President Obama’s cabinet. An ode to educators and mentors who inspire students to “keep going,” King’s first book examines the impact of education and mentorship, particularly for students in underserved communities.



## *The Fight for Equity in the Bronx*

**Elaine Ruiz López** (Ed.D. '95)

In this captivating memoir, TC alumna Elaine Ruiz López chronicles her journey from a struggling high school student to an Ivy League graduate, and the challenges she overcame despite the inequalities and disparities she faced growing up in the Bronx education system. Ruiz López details her resilience and pays it forward to the next generation of students by offering encouragement and actionable solutions. The must-read is an anthem for educators, activists and policymakers interested in community advocacy and education reform.



## *Melinda the Crow*

**Thomas Sendgraff** (M.A. '20)

This vibrant children’s picture book by TC alumnus Thomas Sendgraff is tailored for young readers ages four to eight. Sendgraff highlights the significance of kindness as Melinda, a small black crow, grapples with feelings of loneliness and isolation. Determined to seek genuine friendship, she embarks on a journey that reveals just how challenging it can be to discover kindness in the world around her.





# *Field Study* Navigating Mental Health Today

Your niece's favorite mental health expert is viral on TikTok. Your Instagram feed is filled with ads for supplements promising to alleviate your stress. Your neighbor texts a counselor selected for them by an algorithm late at night. And together we are in an era preoccupied with self-improvement, in which the media we consume, the things we buy and what we're interested in are often defined by helping us become the "best" versions of ourselves.

Mental health support — or the illusion of it — has never been more readily available. And yet, we are still struggling. Anxiety disorders affect nearly one-third of U.S. adults, with numbers steadily rising each year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Kids are in crisis, with mental health issues rising more than 40 percent in the decade before the pandemic, and becoming even more dire in the years since, with John Allegrante — TC's Charles Irwin Lambert Professor of Health Behavior & Education — finding increases tied to social media, substance use and more.

This dissonance is profound. So what does it truly mean to actually help people in this complicated moment, and how are our alumni channeling their expertise? Regardless of their specialty — whether intergenerational trauma, cultural barriers or pediatric mental health — what remains striking is their unwavering commitment to the work, especially during this unique time. The alumni we spoke with for *TC Today* offer a reminder of how mental health professionals serve a critical purpose in life's journey for so many — from the formative childhood through the challenges of adulthood. Our psychology alumni walk alongside people during their toughest moments and help them scale steep mountains, so they can turn around and see how far they have come.

During Convocation, we recently celebrated another class of psychology professionals, ready to help take on these challenges. Reflecting on the alumni who precede them continues to fill us with hope for the future.

# Healing *Generational* Wounds

## Psychologist Mariel Buqué (Ph.D. '19) is helping clients, and herself, break cycles of trauma

By the time celebrated psychologist Mariel Buqué graduated from TC, she was already developing her fresh methodology to address intergenerational trauma. Buqué embarked on this journey after a difficult session with a client, and as she investigated the sources of inherited trauma and what practices can help people heal, she was able to identify the roots of her own generational pain as a Black immigrant Dominican woman. Buqué developed methods to counteract the mental, physical and spiritual effects of inherited trauma, which she details in her book *Break the Cycle*, leading to healing for her clients, her family and, importantly, herself. “If I am to be a clinician that requires a client to go into their deepest vulnerabilities, then I have to hold myself to the same standards,” says Buqué.

Whether speaking to her 300,000 social media followers or those watching her on the news at home, Buqué has emerged as an influential voice in the mental health space and expert in intergenerational trauma. She shares her wealth of knowledge through media appearances and her practice, Break the Cycle Trauma Center, which provides a host of trauma-informed, culturally responsive and inclusive services to clients from a wide range of backgrounds. “I’m honored that I have a public and international voice so that the mental health conversation can reflect the experiences [of people like me] and the ways that we can best heal,” she says.



COURTESY OF BUQUÉ



We sat down with Buqué to learn more about her inspirations, career and how she continues to break the cycle. *This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

*What has it been like to work through intergenerational trauma alongside your clients?*

**MB:** Going through the process alongside my clients was both insightful and heavy, but I think that that's what's expected. When we get into the depths of our souls and our wounds, it hurts. What sprung from that, beyond my own personal insights, were professional insights to work with generational trauma in a way that felt more trauma-responsive and more trauma-corrective. It [also] helped me to have greater compassion for the journey that my clients were on.

*How have conversations around mental health changed during your career?*

**MB:** When I first came into this space, the conversation felt very psychology 101. [But] right now, I feel like we are in the 'how' era of therapy and mental health — the era in which people are more open and hungrier for actual tools so they can learn how to engage in the healing process. It's a beautiful thing to see as a clinician that has

been in this space for a number of years. I can have these very in-depth conversations about the complexities of the mind, about the ways in which healing can be complex, and I find that to be a much more rewarding experience.

Because I saw this landscape shift, in my book, I was very intentional about going into the rooted causes of why we're in pain, [as well as] how systems are diseased and perpetuate harm for so many of us, especially vulnerable populations.

*Are there any major lessons from your time at TC that continue to influence you?*

**MB:** TC has opened doors for me and has allowed me to see myself in different ways. During my first year, I had the incredible honor of being mentored by [lecturer] Dr. Elizabeth Fraga, who created the Bilingual Latinx Mental Health Concentration within the Counseling Psychology program. I was the first doctoral student to graduate with that concentration, [and] it was such a pivotal part of my journey at TC.

It helped me to see what my mission was in this work and how to tailor the work from an intentional cultural framework that considered

the human that's sitting vulnerably in front of us. I felt very seen and like I had a clinical home in that concentration.

*You mention your family's cycle-breaking practice in the book, how are they continuing that work?*

**MB:** My mom surprises me all the time with the ways in which she continues to [find] a healthier and happier self. The ways that she's taking care of her health, which was never a factor in her life before, the ways that she engages in humor, all these things are a part of the lifting of pain. [Her joy] helps me to feel like the hard moments we [went] through to get here were worth it. I also reflect that to clients, and even clinicians within my practice, to help them understand there is something to look forward to once we get through the mud.

— Sherri Gardner  
Contributing Writer



“There is a unique gift within all of us that is waiting to blossom. When we are in spaces that are highly demanding, oftentimes we get caught up in the day-to-day and forget that there is a greater purpose that we're all here to fulfill.”



# A Life of Guidance

Recently retired Marybeth Griffin (M.A. '87, Counseling Psychology) looks back on her decades-long career as a school counselor

Thousands of students and families turned to Marybeth Griffin for support during her 34 years as a school counselor in the South Bronx and Westchester.

“Kids are incredible. To be a supportive person on their journey as they figure out who they are is such a beautiful gift,” explains Griffin, who sees school counseling as her calling. “I happened to find the right place in the world for me, and I’m so lucky.”

The daughter of a U.S. Air Force attorney, Griffin grew up around the globe — in Thailand, Germany and five American states. Her eclectic upbringing informed her choice to focus on multicultural counseling during her studies at TC, where she encountered “illuminating” faculty like Sam Johnson, who offered deep opportunities to engage with other worldviews.

“I had the most wonderful experience at Teachers College,” says Griffin. “One of the things I learned was that there are times when it’s important that I listen to others rather than speak.”

Griffin also cultivated this approach during her early career as a social worker, which she continued while a graduate student at TC. The experience marked



the beginning of her time working in high-needs communities, a watershed moment that revealed she had made the right choice to pursue counseling.

“There’s a whole different world out there that didn’t have the everyday privileges that I had growing up,” explains Griffin. “I realized just how lucky I was, and how unlucky people can be depending on their address or other variables. That was an awakening — an opportunity to be a good person and help someone figure out their way.”

Decades later in her school counseling journey, Griffin found herself at an inflection point during the pandemic. Nearing retirement age, she debated whether to end her career amid remote schooling. But she couldn’t.

“I have to come back and see this through,” Griffin thought at the time. “I have to go out in a way where I’m having contact with kids and their families.”

Supporting her students in person was critical to Griffin, who saw firsthand the kind of social and emotional challenges that researchers have identified among youth in the years since.

“How could you live through that time and not have issues?” Griffin muses. “To grow up is difficult enough, in addition to all of the other challenging things we went through.”

And so Griffin returned to Ossining High School in Westchester, New York, supporting students on their journeys for another few years before retiring in 2023. The TC alumna is on a new part of her journey, traveling frequently like in her youth. But her 34 years in schools retain a gratifying afterglow.

“To be walking in the halls with young people who are just figuring themselves out and enjoying life is amazing. And to offer parents a different way of looking at their children, and vice versa with children and teachers, is such a gift,” says Griffin. “It’s such a remarkable thing to touch so many people’s lives.”



A portrait of Pervis Taylor, a Black man with short grey hair and a beard, smiling and looking slightly to the left. He is wearing a black turtleneck and a black blazer. The background is a dark, neutral grey.

# Closing the Mental Health Gap

COURTESY OF TAYLOR

## Breaking down barriers, TC alumnus Pervis Taylor (M.A. '17) shares advice for “healing forward”

As Pervis Taylor approached his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, he found himself at a crossroads in his career, eager to advance his impact as a mental health practitioner. During a visit from his mother that weekend, her mantra of “spirit, mind, and body” resonated deeply with him. Just days later, he came upon the same phrase on TC’s Clinical Psychology webpage, affirming his decision to pursue his graduate studies in the program.

“Mental resilience incorporates three things: the spirit, body and mind,” shares Taylor. “I’ve faced numerous challenges in life, and while I can’t shield others from hardship, graduating from TC has equipped me to empower young men and organizations with tools to navigate adversity.”

Taylor’s work is critical in light of recent findings from the American Psychiatric Association, which indicate that Black men are significantly less likely to seek help for mental health issues compared to their peers. Additionally, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that Black men are 20 percent more likely to experience serious psychological distress and face a suicide risk. These findings highlight the need for more open dialogue about men’s mental health — an initiative that Taylor is committed to leading.

“My goal is to help men transition from merely surviving to truly thriving,” he shares.



Now the CEO of his own start-up, Avertent Wellness, healing practitioner, emotional intelligence specialist, author and life coach, Taylor is sharing insights for men that have helped him cultivate mental resilience.

### 1. Recognize Your Humanity

“Our culture promotes the idealization that men must be providers, leaders and show limited emotion. I want men to understand that we have the right to embrace our humanity instead of conforming to roles that don’t resonate with who we truly are. Vulnerability should be celebrated, not ignored.”

His first book, *Survival Mode*, provides insights into how men can navigate trauma and embrace a full range of human emotions through the “4 A’s:” acknowledgement, acceptance, articulation and alchemy. “Embracing your humanity means looking beyond societal expectations and caring for yourself first.”

### 2. Prioritize Self-Care and Connection

Taylor recommends creating a care plan that includes a healthy diet, exercise, self-reflection and meditation. “Self-care is a crucial, yet overlooked step in men’s wellness,” shares Taylor, citing how research has shown that self-care is clinically proven to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Men can also prioritize their mental health by creating a support network that may include therapists, peers, community groups, and cultivating “lifelines:” trusted relationships with friends, family and partners. “Authentic connection is what we need most as a society right now,” Taylor explains. “Everyone has something valuable to share, but many feel they lack the space to do so. It is vital for men to surround themselves with those who are ready to listen.”

### 3. “Heal Forward”

“[Professor of Psychology and Education] Dr. Lisa Miller shared with me that healing is a continuous process, but it’s important to look forward with resilience,” he shares. His book, *Heal Forward*, reminds men that “healing is not always linear; it’s continual” and serves a roadmap for “wholeness” using the “4 V’s:” vision, verified (embracing your true self), voice and vulnerability.

“I want men to have a sense of agency for their lives — something I needed on my healing journey — and to know that joy is possible if we are intentional about our mental health. First and foremost, it’s about you, that human soul — I want that person to be healed.”

— Jacqueline Teschon  
Contributing Writer



“Being a TC alum has emboldened me to advocate for myself and others through a mental health lens in a way that I never was able to before.”



COURTESY OF MODELL

# A Counselor's Commitment

Growing up is hard, but Gila Belsky Modell (Ed.M. '18, School Counseling) offers a glimpse at the rewarding work of supporting students, families and teachers

As a school counselor, TC alumna Gila Belsky Modell, provides social and emotional support to students from pre-K through eighth grade at Atrium School in Watertown, Mass.

But if you ask Modell what her role looks like in practice, she would say it is anything but sitting in her office during the school week and waiting for someone to knock on her door. Instead, her strategy focuses on providing comprehensive support to students, teachers and parents to help kids navigate challenges across various parts of their lives.

“TC surrounded me with a cohort of individuals and inspiring educators passionate about doing similar work. It continues to be a hallmark piece of my resume that I had this education.”

“With knowledge of needs, we can support kids in a more thoughtful and critical way,” Modell said. “We work in partnership with each other.”

Often, she may be found discussing emotional regulation or healthy friendships with students, collaborating with teachers in their classrooms, or building stronger community relations by educating parents.

“I’m educated as a teacher and believe that my goal as a counselor outside the classroom is to help students be more successful in class,” explains Modell, who feels she is able to foster a more supportive ecosystem for students because of the latitude she is given at Atrium, an independent school which prioritizes unique curriculums, small class sizes and co-teaching with differentiated learning instruction.

“Each child has their own experience, and it happens because we’re so hands-on in individualized ways,” says Modell.

It is an approach to counseling that Modell has also refined over more than a decade of experience and study. Raised in a family of educators — including her grandparents who were both seasoned teachers — Modell was drawn into the world of schooling early on.

“I’ve always been teacher-like and a compassionate caregiver,” she said. While an undergrad at Cornell, Modell’s volunteer work helped her see her truest passion: making a difference in the lives of young people by focusing on education and mental health.

“It was clear I wanted to work on social and emotional needs, and if I was in a classroom, that couldn’t be my priority — academics would’ve come first,” she said. “That was an indicator to me that my passion would be better spent in a different room.”

After teaching middle school, Modell decided to pursue Counseling studies at Teachers College. “It’s the premier preparation for working in schools, so for me there was no question,” she said. “I knew if I could go there, I would.” While studying at TC, Modell conducted clinical fieldwork at a public school on the Lower East Side, furthering her dive into the heart of counseling.

“TC surrounded me with a cohort of individuals and inspiring educators passionate about doing similar work,” she said. “It continues to be a hallmark piece of my resume that I had this education.”

After seeing the transformative power of counseling, she hopes school systems can become aware of the value of hands-on counselors — particularly in places where resources often don’t meet needs.

“Children spend the majority of their lives within a school, and we have the greatest means for impact and interventions in those buildings,” Modell said. “If I can support kids through my role, then teachers can focus on what they do and students and teachers can be more successful.”

— Natalie Schachar  
Contributing Writer





# TC Board of Trustees Appoints Three New Members

Teachers College has elected Christina M. Capodilupo Schwefel (Ph.D. '09), Dennis Holtschneider and Tom Rogers (Ed.D. '05, M.A. '02) to its Board of Trustees.

“Christina, Dennis and Tom have achieved great professional success while demonstrating a profound commitment to the well-being of society through their work across mental health, higher education and K-12 schools,” said President Thomas Bailey of the new members, who were appointed throughout 2024. “Their credentials, along with their devotion to Teachers College, uniquely qualify them as leaders of our esteemed institution, and we are proud to welcome them to the Board.”

“The Board’s newest members are alumni and friends who care deeply about the Teachers College community and the future of the school,” said Leslie Morse Nelson, Chair of the Board. “The experience and expertise they bring will strengthen our collective work on the Board of Trustees to support TC’s continued success.”

## Meet

Christina M. Capodilupo Schwefel  
(Ph.D. '09)

Dennis Holtschneider *and*

Tom Rogers (Ed.D. '05, M.A. '02)

## Christina M. Capodilupo Schwefel (Ph.D. '09)

Christina M. Capodilupo Schwefel is a graduate of and adjunct faculty member in the College's Counseling Psychology program. She currently serves as a consultant for several private practices in the Boston area and acts as a supervisor of clinical practice for students in the doctoral program at TC. Previously an assistant professor at the University of Hartford, Schwefel has authored numerous publications and presentations that focus on research topics such as body image, eating disorders and microaggressions. She has consulted with academic institutions across the country regarding their policies on gender and race.

In addition to her academic pursuits, Schwefel is the founder of *Forme Barre*, a boutique fitness company that she operated for over 12 years before selling the company in 2022. In addition to Teachers College, she is an alumna of the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Ed.M.) and the College of the Holy Cross. She is an engaged supporter of youth hockey and a member of the Corporation of the Winsor School.



COURTESY OF SCHWEFEL



COURTESY OF HOLTSCHNEIDER

## Dennis Holtschneider

Dennis Holtschneider is a consultant with Nygren Consulting, where he works with executive and governance leaders on matters of strategy, organizational change and leadership development. He previously served as president of both the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, and DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the nation, from 2004 to 2017. Holtschneider also served as executive vice president of his alma mater, Niagara University; clinical associate professor of higher education at SUNY Buffalo; and assistant professor of higher education at St. John's University, in addition to lecturing at Harvard University. He also held leadership positions with Ascension Health, the nation's largest nonprofit health system.

Holtschneider is co-founder of the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH), which assists cities on six continents in addressing street homelessness and is the primary adviser to the United Nations on this topic. He has served on numerous boards, including the St. Louis Symphony, where he led its strategy committee. His doctorate in higher education policy is from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education.



## Tom Rogers (Ed.D. '05, M.A. '02)

Tom Rogers is the superintendent of the Syosset school district. Under Rogers' leadership of more than 10 years, Syosset has won numerous accolades for its performance and inclusivity. Rogers previously served in a dual role as the district superintendent for Nassau County and CEO of Nassau BOCES after leading the New York State Council of School Superintendents, an education policy advocacy organization supporting senior school administrators, as its executive director.

Rogers is a graduate of Teachers College's Educational Administration program and the University at Buffalo. His philanthropic work includes service on the Board of Trustees of the Rauch Foundation, and he has served on numerous boards including the Long Island Children's Museum Board (Vice-Chair), the Teachers College President's Advisory Council, the Middle States Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools, and the Long Island Arts Alliance. His wife, Lisa Mulhall, is also a TC alum (Ed.D. '05, M.A. '99), and they credit the College with steering them into their careers and to each other.



COURTESY OF ROGERS



PHOTO: TC ARCHIVES

## Nancy K. Simpkins *Elected Trustee Emerita*

The Board of Trustees elected Nancy K. Simpkins as Trustee Emerita after 12 years of service this spring. Since 1989, she has served as an advisor to the Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership, the first university-based center dedicated to preparing independent school teachers and administrators — established in 1977 by Simpkins' parents, the late John and Patricia Klingenstein.

"I love the Klingenstein Center, and I've never met a graduate who didn't feel it had improved her professional or educational life," Simpkins once said.

Simpkins joins 16 others as Emeriti Trustees. "We're extraordinarily grateful to Nancy for her many years of thoughtful and dedicated service on the Board," said Leslie Morse Nelson, Chair of the Board. "We have all benefited greatly from her passion for education and TC's community."



PHOTO © SIRIN SAMMAN

## IN COMMUNITY Celebrating Janice S. Robinson (Ed.M. '76, M.A. '75)

Hundreds of faculty, staff and friends came together in May to celebrate Janice S. Robinson, Vice President for Diversity & Community Affairs, Title IX Coordinator, and Associate Professor of Higher Education, for her 25 years of dedicated service to the Teachers College community and her legacy upon retiring this spring.

Robinson joined TC as the College's inaugural Executive Director for Diversity & Community Affairs,

and has since built the Office as an essential support and resource for the entire community, including the Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities. Notably, Robinson was the College's first General Counsel and she has also served as Interim Ombudsperson and Special Counsel to the President. Here are just a few of the many tributes to Robinson — highlighting her extensive, far-reaching impact on TC and beyond.

"We talk a lot about living our values, and Janice walks that talk. Janice has taken steps both large and small to ensure that Teachers College is as much a home as it is a school. She has made Teachers College a better place for all of us."  
—Thomas Bailey, TC President

"You will be missed, Janice. Your voice, your vision, your ability to bring people together, those are rare gifts. But the good news is the seeds you planted will continue to grow. Your legacy isn't walking out the door. It's taken root in the people, in the policies, in the values you helped shape."

—Dennis Chambers (Ed.D. '10, M.A. '02, M.A. '99), who retired in 2024 after 35 years in TC's Office of Public Safety

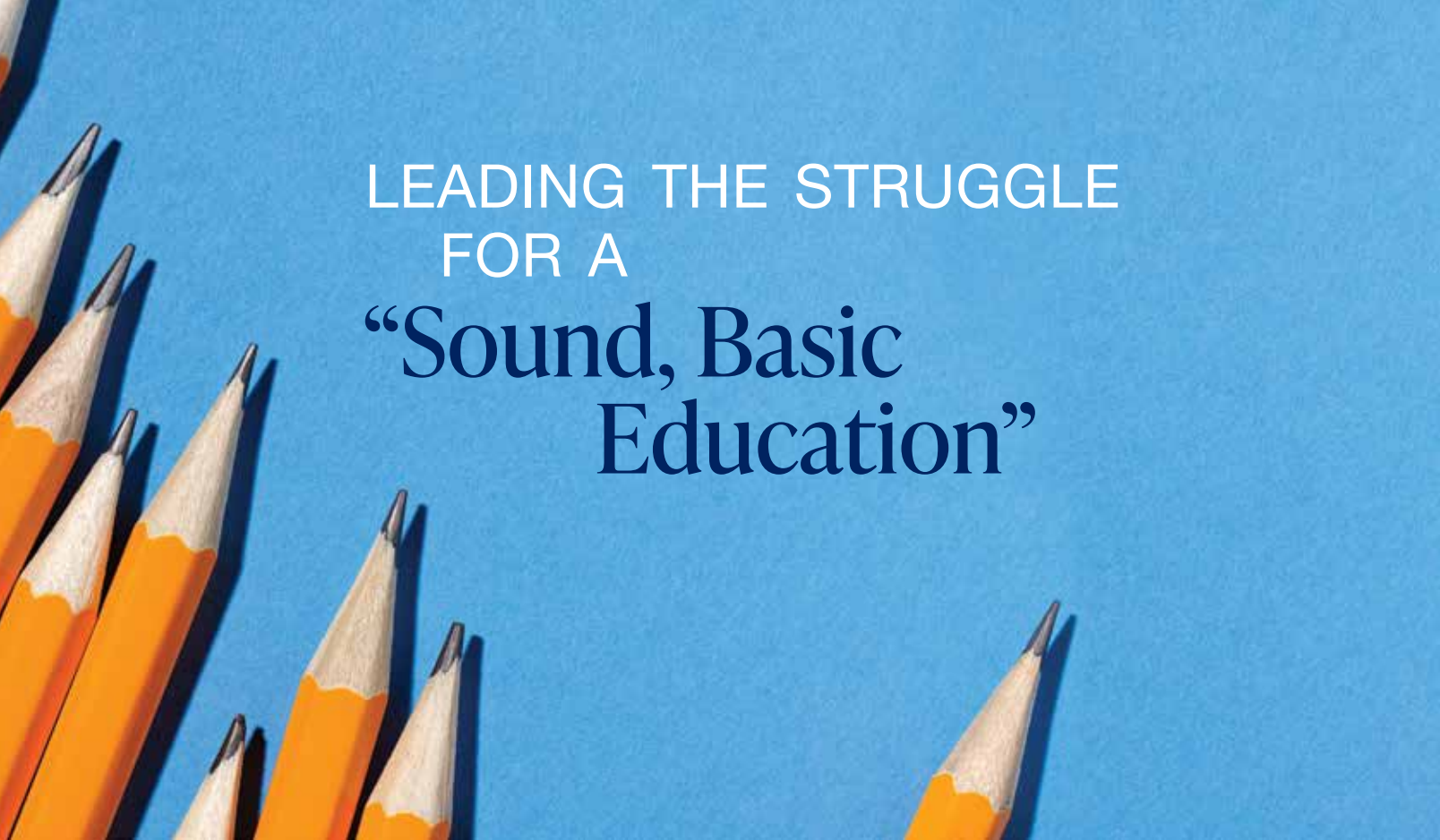
"Janice greets you. She says good morning and she also makes sure she looks at you in your eyes. She wants you to know she sees you, and she really does."

—Juan Carlos Reyes (M.A. '13), TC's Executive Director for Diversity, Community Affairs & Equity

"You support everyone. That's the measure of excellence that I see in you, everyone you support."

—Dennis Mitchell, Interim Dean of the College of Dental Medicine and Professor of Dental Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center; former Senior Advisor for Inclusion and Belonging and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement at Columbia University





# LEADING THE STRUGGLE FOR A “Sound, Basic Education”

At a critical time for education policy, research and scholarship at the Center for Educational Equity continues to advance opportunities for all after 20 years

Following major cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, many are wondering what's next for America's schools. But for TC's Michael Rebell and Jonathan Collins, complex policy issues around how to improve educational equity, fix flawed systems, and help students in need have long been their focus.

Rebell stands at the helm of the College's Center for Educational Equity (CEE), which he founded 20 years ago to leverage rights-based research, advocacy, and action to improve education for all students, and better prepare students for civic participation.

The Center has tackled school funding rights in New York State; the right to civic education in New York and Rhode Island; inequities in Kentucky schools; and other issues. It operates on the principle that an effective education is one that prepares students for democratic discourse and action.

Rebell — the Center's Executive Director, an attorney, and Professor of Law & Educational Practice — has focused much of his professional efforts on litigation to support the education-adequacy movement. On Sept. 1, Rebell will step down from his role at the helm of CEE, and Collins — the Center's current Associate



PHOTO © KSVT

Michael Rebell and the Kentucky Student Voice Team

Director — will take up the mantle. Collins, Associate Professor of Politics & Education, joined the College in 2024 and takes a more academic approach, applying his research to effect change in school board governance and expansion of democratic practice.

As the Center stands on the precipice of a new chapter, what continues to make its work so powerful is the unequivocal focus on how school systems can deliver a meaningful education to all students, even as Rebell, Collins, and Jessica Wolff, the Center’s experienced Policy Director, have expanded the definition of what that means. Critical to their work is including civic education and democratic practice.

“For many students, school is the first community they experience outside their immediate family, and school is where students learn the fundamentals about rights and responsibilities,” explains Rebell. “We’re proponents of having more frequent and substantive conversations around how our country works, and how we can get involved in our communities.”

*“School is where students learn the fundamentals about rights and responsibilities.”*



PHOTO © ROB DAVIDSON

**Michael Rebell**, Executive Director of the Center for Educational Equity, and Professor of Law & Educational Practice

## Honoring the Scales of Justice

Policy experts, education law scholars and advocates may know Rebell from his first foray into the spotlight, when, as counsel for the plaintiffs representing the interests of New York City students, he challenged New York State’s funding formula for public schools with his seminal case in 1993, *Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) v. State of New York*. The New York State Court of Appeals upheld CFE’s right to pursue a constitutional challenge to how the state funded public schools and, in 2003, ruled that state officials must “determine the actual cost of providing a ‘sound, basic education’ and establish a fair, need-based funding system.” After a series of higher court challenges that were upheld, the state legislature approved billions of dollars in additional state school aid.

Fair funding remains a key issue for Rebell, who is currently advocating for New York State to overhaul, not merely tweak, the formula for distributing education

aid to local districts. He believes that homelessness, pandemic-related learning loss, and students’ mental health needs have particularly compounded the need for a funding reevaluation. Rebell asserts that New York’s current approach violates the 2003 Campaign for Fiscal Equity ruling; he and the Center teamed up with the American Institutes for Research to analyze state data and offer officials a comprehensive, up-to-date, new school funding system to replace the 18-year-old funding formula the state is still using.

Rebell recognizes that funding alone won’t solve the problem of providing all New York students a “sound, basic education.” The CFE case expanded the definition of “a sound, basic education to include education that prepares students to be active and effective participants in a democracy.”

“The definition [change] was really powerful. It emphasized the skills kids need to be productive as civic participants — capable of voting and serving on a jury,”





PHOTO © NINA WURTZEL

**Jonathan Collins**, Associate Director of the Center for Educational Equity, and Associate Professor of Politics & Education

explained Rebell, noting that “the court was really clear on the purpose of public education.”

Responding to that legal initiative, the New York State Board of Regents asked Rebell to head a statewide task force that developed a detailed definition of “civic readiness” that the Regents have adopted, and created a civic seal program that has now been adopted by 620 schools throughout the state.

Through a state-based strategy that recognizes challenges at the federal level, Rebell is now litigating similar concerns on behalf of a Kentucky student coalition, who claim that the state’s public schools have failed to prepare students adequately for civic engagement, and have fostered achievement gaps.

In addition to mounting legal challenges, the Center has also partnered with the New York State Education Department to promote civic learning, media literacy training and youth engagement opportunities

through DemocracyReady NY. It’s “one of our best accomplishments,” says Rebell, who is currently working on expanding the model to other states.

## Reimagining School Boards

While Rebell takes on legal questions related to education policy, much of Jonathan Collins’ research drills into school boards, and what they can do to restore public trust and increase positive engagement — a specialty that’s taken on more relevance since 2020 and aligns with the Center’s emphasis on civic participation.

“COVID injected a level of partisan conflict into school governance that hadn’t been there before,” explains Collins, noting that pushback against vaccine and masking requirements, as well as DEI policies and transgender student rights, have made local school boards proxies for larger national issues.



PHOTO: JESSICA WURTZEL

Jonathan Collins (second from right), pictured with some of his team and students.

The phenomenon — often referred to as the parents’ rights movement — exploded in 2021 when conservative political action committees (PACs) began pouring millions into local races. And while the movement has gained grassroots support, the infusion of PAC money into local politics has surfaced questions about what it means to meaningfully participate in democracy — especially when only 30 percent of Americans currently attend school board meetings.

“If you open the scope of the meeting,” Collins wonders, “would more parents actively engage, and would we see true public participation? Our hunch is yes.”

Collins joined the Teachers College faculty in 2024, with interest in TC and the Center’s role in a “lineage of changing the national conversation.” Through his research and practice, he expressly wants to change how school board meetings work to make the relationship between policy discussions and actual policy more transparent and effective. For example, Collins sees a future in which AI could be harnessed to “help everyone synthesize the issues affecting schools that could be translated to board members and generate a feedback loop.”

Last August, the associate professor launched TC’s School Board and Youth Engagement (S-BYE) Lab to identify how local school boards actually function, as well as provide strategies and solutions for improvement. More meaningful participation (including student representatives in states like New York) on school boards would lead, Collins believes, to better educational outcomes for students.

In service of that mission at the S-BYE Lab, Collins has undertaken a large-scale data collection effort to track and assess school board activity, while examining strategies that could improve public engagement. Other efforts include the development of an improved participatory budget model, which would allow the public to weigh in on local government funding choices, and the development of tech tools to improve engagement between school officials and the public.

As for what’s next, both Rebell and Collins see state and local engagement as evermore critical for education in America — especially at this particular moment. Their continuing work across school boards, civic education, and fair funding carry a new level of relevance.

“There are growing questions about American democracy as a national practice, but if you look at cities and school districts, the democratic deficits — low voter turnout, poor representation, the lack of deliberation — run deeper and have for decades,” says Collins, of his work with the S-BYE Lab. “We’ll be looking to work with any school, any district, any community interested in building a new democratic infrastructure brick-by-brick.”

— Merri Rosenberg  
Contributing Writer



# TC TAKE ACTION

TC's work helps support communities across America, from deaf children in rural areas to community college students in Virginia. Recent federal grant cuts prevent TC from performing this work.

**Two actions a day can help restore vital research and service for vulnerable communities.**



We make it simple to call and email your representatives — making your voice, and the voices of our communities, heard.



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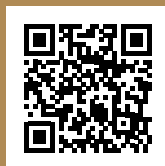
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# Becoming a Team *Dream-Maker*

## Jude Fomeche (M.A. '25) pairs his love for sports with his passion for executive recruitment and leadership

Growing up in Cameroon, West Africa, Jude Fomeche distinctly recalls the hardships that his community faced, from limited access to education and health care to poverty and political violence.

“Many children in my hometown lack the resources necessary to go to school, let alone play sports,” shares Fomeche, a graduating student in TC’s Social-Organizational Psychology program, who’s professional interest lies at the intersection of executive leadership and sports recruitment.

Years later, Fomeche made an impact at Teachers College through his work in executive leadership, with aspirations to bring the knowledge he gains back to his community in Cameroon, where he sees “untapped athletic potential.” He aims to drive nonprofit sports programming for underserved youth, noting that sports can teach invaluable life lessons. “I want to

empower children to dream big. Sports is one of the best ways to learn invaluable life lessons of perseverance and resilience,” he says, noting that he plans to dedicate the academy to his late brother, Fedyst Fomeche.

Within his first year at TC, Fomeche secured an internship with Russell Reynolds Associates, where he gained invaluable experience in the executive search space. “I worked diligently that summer to ensure that I did not leave any doubt that I would be a valuable addition to their team.”

The firm extended a return offer to Fomeche for the following summer. He emphasizes that the skills he acquired, thanks to his coursework and pointers from TC NEXT, provided him with “valuable practice and feedback on his interview responses” and “bolstered his confidence” throughout his interview process.

He first connected with the firm at the TC NEXT Employer Showcase, where he met recruiters and quickly entered the internship pipeline.

And when Fomeche, a devoted Arizona Cardinals fan, was not watching the latest game, you could find him spearheading initiatives as TC’s Student Senate President. “Serving as Senate President has taught me how to respond to moments of challenge — even moments of failure.”

He was integral in launching TC NEXT’s Alumni Mentorship Program, which pairs TC alumni with rising career students as they navigate their career journeys. “Jude’s leadership supported our pilot program of the Alumni Mentorship program,” adds Sabeen Sheikh, Director of TC NEXT. “He has championed our work, proving to be a great student advocate and partner to us.”



## *“Empower them to dream big”*

Looking ahead, Fomeche plans to continue his work in the executive search industry, drawing inspiration from his roots, family and Christian faith, which he shares have instilled a “servant leadership” mindset in him. “I have been both blessed and challenged in this life so far, and I believe that I have a responsibility to help others and give back as much as I can.”

For Fomeche, the possibilities are limitless. “Teachers College has a unique sense of familial warmth that I’ve felt from day one,” he concludes. “Above all else, you will always be encouraged to dream big.”

— Jacqueline Teschon  
*Contributing Writer*

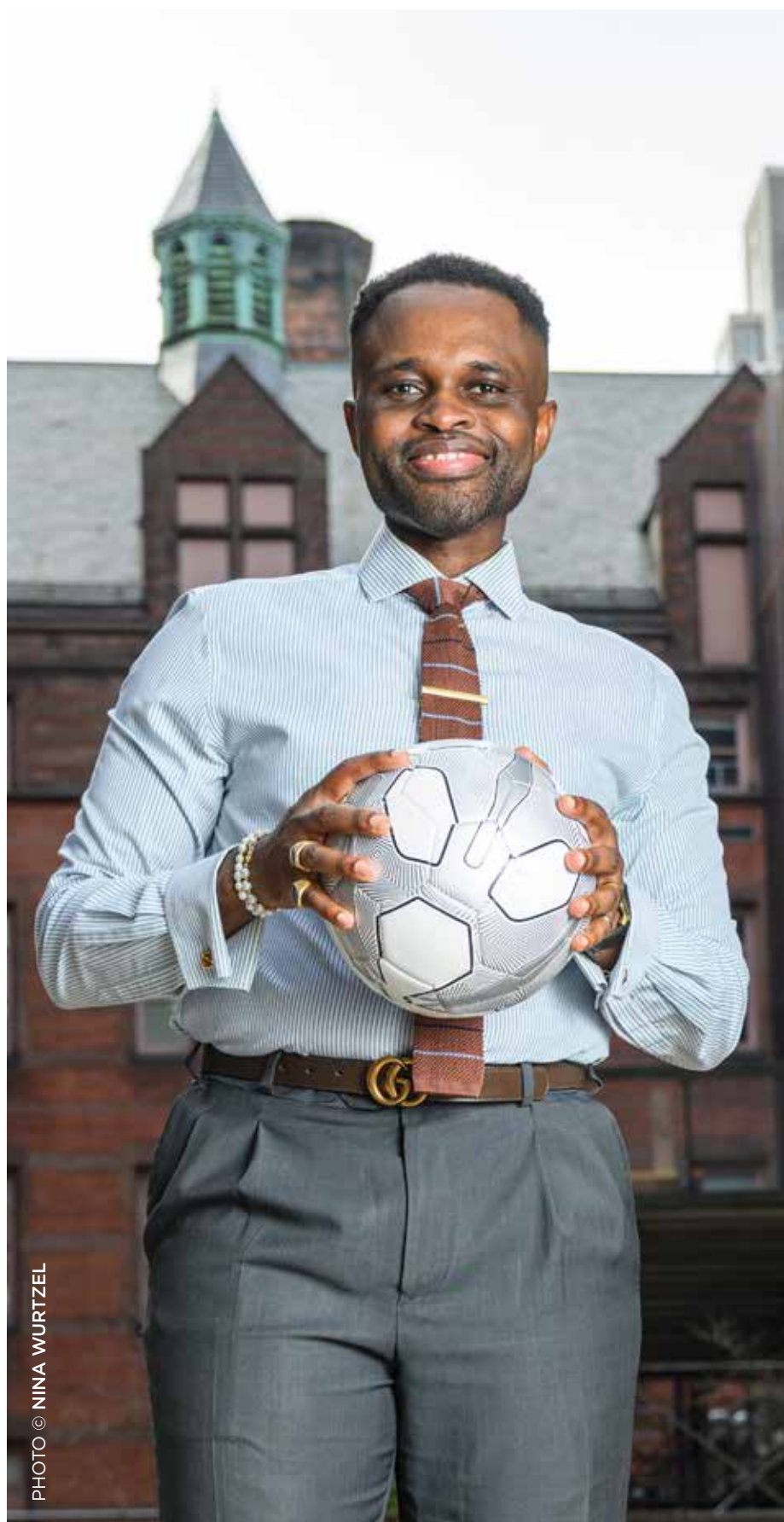


PHOTO © NINA WURTZEL

# Addressing the Digital Divide in Indonesia

## From coding to sustainability curriculum, TC student Marsha Fabiola is using her passions to pay it forward

Advancing digital literacy is a crucial priority in Indonesia, yet challenges remain in making technology accessible to all. With a population of 73.7 million, 26.3 percent of Indonesians still lack internet access, 104,000 schools remain digitally disconnected and only 27 percent of women currently work in the tech sector.

Marsha Fabiola, a current student in TC's Communication & Education program, is quite familiar with the growing challenges that her home country is facing. In middle school, she recalls being intrigued by basic coding through her final blog project, but had a limited understanding of the opportunities that the field could offer her. "I hesitated to pursue coding because there weren't many women around me in the field," she says. "I empathize with those who see opportunities but lack access."

Hoping to address the digital divide, Fabiola channeled her skills into her first role at Generation Girl, a

nonprofit organization in Indonesia dedicated to empowering young women through tech education. "Our mission is to educate young women in Indonesia to create technology while cultivating a deeper understanding of how to thoughtfully utilize it."

After just a year of working at Generation Girl, Fabiola was awarded a fully funded scholarship sponsored by Ministry Finance of Indonesia to TC's Digital Futures Institute (DFI) Scholars program after applying to TC's Communication, Media, & Learning Technologies Design program. "I was drawn to the College's unique approach to education technology and design through an ethical lens."

In her latest role as a Graduate Intern at Global Cities Inc., a Bloomberg Philanthropies nonprofit organization, Fabiola is working with accessible curricula for middle school students centered on sustainability and consumerism.

"Our goal is to introduce the concepts of sustainability and mindful consumption to children at an early age. It's truly rewarding to be part of an initiative like this, one that I wish I had access to during my educational experience," she shares. To date, the company's Global Scholars virtual exchange program has positively impacted over 127,000 students and 3,100 educators across 39 countries.

But this isn't the first time Fabiola has paired her love for sustainability with her technology expertise. Just last year, she partnered with fellow DFI Scholars and the American Museum of Natural History for EarthFest, an immersive augmented learning experience focused on biodiversity and the carbon system. Fabiola led the coding process for the exhibit's digital component. "It's about teaching youth about the world around them in a way that they truly understand."

“I wanted to find a way to make tech education more accessible.”

As for what’s next, Fabiola’s plans to return to her hometown take precedence. She hopes to lead by example for the rising generation of women in the tech industry.

“Addressing these digital disparities in Indonesia is a cause that I hold close to my heart. I’m hoping to eventually assume a leadership role in a STEM education nonprofit like community-based after-school programs or science museums,” Fabiola concludes. “So many doors have been opened since I came to TC, but more importantly, Teachers College has provided invaluable experiences that I intend to leverage to give back to my community.”

— Jacqueline Teschon  
*Contributing Writer*



PHOTO © NINA WURTZEL





PHOTO © JD CLOSER

*New!*

## THE EXPERIENCED LEADERS PROGRAM

*A non-credit offering from TC Academy and the Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership*



**TC Academy**  
Teachers College, Columbia University

The Experienced Leaders Program will run from October 2025 through January 2026. Learn more about the program and other non-credit offerings here:



[tc.edu/experiencedleaders](https://tc.edu/experiencedleaders)

Seasoned leaders in education, philanthropy and nonprofits will gain the skills necessary to make purposeful impact through the Experienced Leaders Program (ELP), a new offering from TC Academy, the College's professional development suite of courses, and the Klingenstein Center for Independent School Leadership.

"We wanted to create a program that supports individuals with extensive experience who are at a pivotal moment of transition — be it retirement or pursuing their next opportunity," says TC's Nicole Furlonge, Executive Director of the Klingenstein Center, and the Klingenstein Family Chair Professor of Practice in Education. "We designed this program to honor individual career expertise and help experienced leaders understand what it means to take their expertise and use it differently."



PHOTO COURTESY OF KLINGENSTEIN CENTER

**Nicole Furlonge**, Executive Director of the Klingenstein Center, and the Klingenstein Family Chair Professor of Practice in Education

Over six months, ELP participants will collaborate with peers, TC faculty and global experts in transformative learning and leadership. Their experience will begin with a visit to vibrant New York City. While in the program, participants will:

### 1. Grow From a Cohort of Like-Minded Peers

The program offers an opportunity for community building — an essential component of any career journey, new or established. “Often, people approaching career shifts are leaving professional communities where they’ve forged deep connections,” shares Furlonge. “This program aims to make new connections and minimize feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can occur when retiring or changing careers.”

Through co-generative peer collaborations, digital spaces to support idea exchanges, opportunities for discussion on campus and online, and individualized time with faculty, participants will gain valuable feedback that leads to discovery and deeper learning.

### 2. Take Advantage of Flexible Learning in New York City

Participants will begin their six-month learning experience with an online meet-up followed by a three-day immersion on campus. After spending time at TC, participants will stay connected through Zoom check-ins every four weeks, engaging in discussions and with visiting speakers.

“TC Academy is positioned in a way that allows us to extend our expertise and opportunities for learning beyond TC’s campus,” Furlonge says. “This means we’re providing increased access to unique, place-based learning in New York City that will inform our continued learning and community building in our online gatherings.”

### 3. Establish Lifelong Connections

At the heart of the ELP program lies the importance of connection. “Intergenerational engagement adds a unique element to the work of learning and planning through next-era transitions,” shares Furlonge. “ELP participants will interact with the robust Klingenstein network and have a chance to connect with leaders studying with us in our other programs.”

The Klingenstein Center delivers transformative learning in a community of peers. “Participants will have the opportunity to enjoy a learning experience responsive to their unique life moment. And, like other Center programs, they will undoubtedly develop relationships with peers that extend beyond their time discovering with us.”



# NURTURING Chinese Educational Exchange

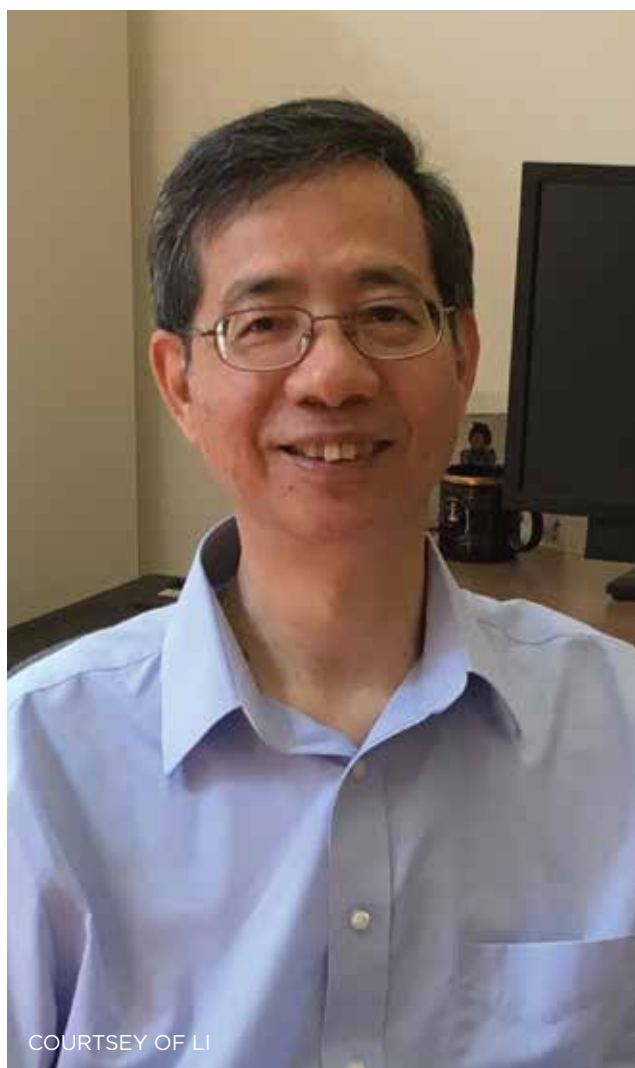
## The College's Center on Chinese Education celebrates 25 years — and honors its late founder, Professor Emeritus Mun Tsang

TC's late Mun Tsang — Professor Emeritus of Economics & Education Policy — saw the opportunity to do something big. In 2000, he founded the Center on Chinese Education — the first research institute of its kind to focus on cultivating educational advancement, leadership and exchange between China and the U.S.

Now, after nearly a quarter of a century, the Center's impact remains profound as the TC community remembers Tsang, who passed away last April at the age of 69.

Tsang — a renowned economist who led the Center until 2019 — taught at TC for more than 20 years. His research and practice focused on financial policy and education access in China. At the Center, Tsang and colleagues published research on numerous aspects of education development and executed several service projects, with efforts ranging from creating opportunities for the children of migrant workers to professional development in higher education.

Celebrated at a memorial hosted late last year, Tsang was remembered as “humble, upright and selfless.” He financially supported many students in China and the United States, with one student reportedly writing to him: “Your love crossed mountains and enabled a poor ethnic girl from the borderlands to enter university with dignity, immerse herself in the ocean of knowledge, and enjoy the beauty of university life like other students. Your support was priceless to me.”



COURTESY OF LI



Tsang's work honored his own challenging beginnings. Born in 1955, Tsang was one of 13 children and raised in an extremely poor Hong Kong neighborhood. His parents, who could not read or write, worked long days in a factory — where Tsang would labor alongside them as a child to help support the family.

When Tsang's family moved into public housing, the future economist could start attending school — and was told by a teacher that rigorous study would help him escape poverty. Later, as a scholarship student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tsang worked two jobs to help support his family, and completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in just four years. Tsang then briefly worked in chemical engineering before returning to school to earn a doctorate in the economics of education at Stanford University — so he “could do more for other people who experienced poverty, like him,” Tsang's wife Danke Li explained.

“To Mun, the power of education to change people's lives and the world was not just a slogan or a theory. It was his personal experience and professional practice,” said Li, who was married to Tsang for 38 years.

Tsang's impact remains at TC, not just through his profound memory, but also through the Center on Chinese Education's research and service dedicated to cultural exchange.

“Mun left an enormous legacy of scholarship at TC,” said President Thomas Bailey, a close friend and colleague of Tsang's in the Economics & Education program for many years. “He was a visionary leader.”

As for what's next, a gift from Tsang's former students — made in their mentor's honor — will support programming at the Center, in addition to fellowships for doctoral students from China studying in the programs of International & Comparative Education, and Economics & Education.

“Mun selflessly helped countless students, like a beacon in the cold night, lighting the way for many and allowing many to pursue their educational dreams,” recalled Henan Cheng, Executive Director of the Center on Chinese Education, and an adjunct professor in the Department of Education Policy & Social Analysis. “That's one of the special things about Mun, even still, and so many at TC: *the impact of one's legacy.*”



“It's not just research skills that are important, but social and emotional skills in imparting educational change...many of us were influenced by Mun. And he cared about individual students, but he cared about all of you, and he cared about the social outcomes of education.”

—Henry Levin, William Heard Kilpatrick Professor Emeritus of Economics & Education



*Professor Joan Gussow shares her home and knowledge with students learning about nutrition and farming.*

PHOTO © MARIA VULLO





# REMEMBERING NUTRITION LEADER Joan Dye Gussow (Ed.D. '75, Ed.M. '74)

Gussow, TC's Mary Swartz Rose Professor Emerita of Nutrition & Education, upended conventional thinking in nutrition with a focus on whole food and a sustainable future

The early 1990s were heady times for the organic food movement. Congress had passed the Organic Foods Production Act, creating a National Organic Standards Board that, in addition to members of the organic community, included representatives from Big Food and Big Agriculture. Writers such as Michael Pollan and Alice Waters were coming on the scene.

For most people interested in healthy eating, it was a time to celebrate — but Joan Gussow's reaction was to see if she could make an organic Twinkie.

At a certain point, “it occurred to me that they were trying to make sure we could produce an alternative food system that was organic that looked just like the present food system,” later recalled Gussow, the legendary Teachers College nutrition educator, crusader and iconoclast, who passed away in March at the age of 96. “So I said, what would you have to do to make an organic Twinkie, because that seemed to me the height of junk food. And it turned out that you could use all the same ingredients, substituting organic sugar and flour and a few other items, and it would be certifiable. But was that a good idea? Was it what we really meant by organic?”



## The Root of a Movement

It was a typical response from Gussow, who was hailed by *The New York Times* as “the matriarch of the eat locally, think globally” food movement. Gussow, the former chair of TC’s Nutrition Education program, was a big-picture thinker who shifted the focus of nutrition education to, as she put it, “whole foods, not collection of nutrients, as the fundamental unit for eaters and educators as well as researchers.”

In a career that spanned more than half a century at Teachers College, Gussow “challenged nutritionists everywhere to look up from their microscopes to see the cafeteria, the factory farm and beyond,” wrote *Edible Manhattan* in 2010. Her many contributions included numerous landmark books such as *The Feeding Web: Issues in Nutrition Ecology* and *The Nutrition Debate* (with Paul Thomas); her leadership on national boards and organizations, including the FDA’s Food Advisory Committee, and the Society for Nutrition Education; and perhaps most notably through her legendary course “Nutritional Ecology.”

These and many other contributions ultimately earned her nutrition education’s highest honor — the Helen Denning Ullrich Award of Excellence in Nutrition Education from the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) — and won her accolades from some of the most prominent names in the field.

*“To have a garden is  
to have a future and  
to have a future is  
to be alive.”*

Pollan, author of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto*, credited her as one of his most important teachers in learning about the food system. Famed nutritionist and media personality Ellie Krieger (M.S. ’94) has said that Gussow “absolutely transformed the way I think about food and nutrition and ultimately shaped my approach to it.”

And writing this past week on her website, the molecular biologist and nutritionist Marion Nestle called Gussow “a food systems thinker before anyone knew what a food system was.”

## Breaking New Ground

Ultimately, Gussow became recognized for focusing on what her longtime colleague and former student, Pamela Koch, Mary Swartz Rose Associate Professor of Nutrition & Education, calls “the big picture of food issues and sustainability.”

“Her concern was ‘before the swallow’ — all the things that have to happen for us to get our food,” said Koch. But communicating that vision was, for many years, an uphill struggle.

Gussow was called an anti-feminist by some for her 1988 article in the *Journal of Nutrition Education* (JNE) arguing for “introducing the public to simple food preparation skills that will enable them to cook the foods we teach them to want to eat.”

She earned the ire of food corporations for her 1972 article “Counter-nutritional Messages of TV Ads Aimed at Children” and her testimony before Congress about the poor quality of foods advertised to children on television. (Her research showed that of 388 network commercials over the course of 29 hours on Saturday mornings, 82 percent were for food — most of it of dubious nutritional value.)

And in 1980, during her own tenure as President of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior, she led a plenary session on dietary fiber, asking, in essence, whether commercial food companies should fortify processed products with fiber — a development that would undoubtedly increase prices — or, conversely, be urged to modify their processing methods so as to retain more natural fiber in foods.

Gussow staged a mock trial during the session, presided over by a real-life judge and argued by two practicing attorneys.

## Seeding Future Generations

Yet ultimately, Gussow's ideas took root — perhaps not least because of her impact on thousands of future nutrition educators in classrooms at Teachers College.

“The life-changing course for me and I'd dare say 98 percent of Nutrition Program graduates, was the Nutritional Ecology class taught by Joan Gussow,” Kate MacKenzie (M.A. '02), Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, New York City's top nutrition post, said several years ago. “The complexity of the food system exposed and really terrified many students. It was mind-blowing to learn about corporate consolidation in the food system, factory farming and the implications of population growth on food supply. And it was learning how the deck is stacked against so many people, in so many ways, that has motivated me to do this work.”

Even now when Randi Wolf, TC's Ella McCollum Vahlteich Professor of Human Nutrition, speaks with the next generation of nutrition scholars, Gussow's legacy remains at the forefront.

“Whenever prospective nutrition students ask, ‘why TC?’ — I always say it's because we define nutrition broadly based on the philosophy of Joan Gussow's pioneering work,” explains Wolf, who also serves as director of the program. “Her ideas are fully integrated throughout our entire program, and I am so grateful that generations of students will continue to be inspired by her for years to come.”

Students in the Nutritional Ecology course were assigned readings that ranged from the works of popular writers such as Michael Pollan to a chart Gussow created, titled Organic Industry Structure, which showed the relationships between major corporations and other players.

“When money gets hold of it — when the powers that be decide that they want to have a piece of the pie — all bets are off,” Gussow once said.

Gussow also frequently hosted groups of students to her house in Piermont-on-Hudson, 30 miles north of New York City, where they sampled from her garden



and absorbed tips on fortifying soil. On several occasions, students returned the favor, helping Gussow rebuild the garden after the Hudson River overran its banks.

## Preaching What She Practiced

Gussow didn't plan to be a nutritional firebrand. At Pomona College, where she earned her undergraduate degree, she was a pre-med student. She moved to New York City in the early 1950s and worked as a researcher for *Time* magazine — the only job for which the magazine hired women.

It was only after she and her husband, the artist Alan Gussow, moved to the Piermont area, that she began growing vegetables to rein in shopping costs.

“One reason I started growing my own vegetables 25 years ago was that I came to see that agriculture was in so much trouble, and the only way to change that

was to get the average person to know about farmers. But to know about farmers, people had to have farmers nearby, and to have farmers nearby was for people to buy what they grow seasonally,” Gussow once explained. “So really I was promoting a seasonal diet. It had nothing to do with Alice Waters and the taste of things.”

Indeed, Gussow was inspired to use the term “local food” by statistics on the declining number of farmers in the United States. (Farm and ranch families made up less than five percent of the population in 1970 and less than two percent of the population in 2023.)

## Questioning Tomorrow

Gussow pulled no punches when it came to talking about the future of the planet.

On one occasion, addressing the Society of Nutrition Education, she warned: “Your children’s children will never see an iceberg. They will never see a glacier. There will be no penguins, no polar bears.”

“We can’t treat nature like a machine,” Gussow said. “We need to be aware of our own ignorance in the face of a mystery like soil fertility and the productivity of the earth before we touched it. The earth was producing long before we came along. We don’t know why or how to make it happen.”

By no means was she giving up, but she felt the forces of change even in the serenity of her Hudson River garden.

“There’s this wonderful term, solastalgia, which describes the sense of loss people feel when the place they love disappears,” she reflected during a visit by students some years ago. “The place you took solace from, and the pain of that disappearance. And that’s what I’m suffering from. It’s very threatening when you’re 91 years old and you lose your garden. What do you do to keep going? Because to have a garden is to have a future and to have a future is to be alive.”

Gussow is survived by her two sons, Adam and Seth, and her grandson.

— Joe Levine  
*Contributing Writer*



PHOTO © MARIA VULLO





# Get Involved

Make new friends and network through volunteer opportunities with the TC Alumni Association, which is convening expertise, impact and fun in NYC, cities near you and online.

## Join one of our committees, including:

**The Alumni Experience Committee**, which collaborates to develop engaging alumni programming for our community, including professional networking and service opportunities

**The Young Alumni and Student Engagement Committee**, which works to welcome graduating TC students into the next stage of their TC experience

**The Regional and Affinity Groups Committee**, which helps cultivate local and interest-based relationships

**Teachers College**  
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# Quoted&Noted



We follow each other  
through the vast maze of  
creating research. ”

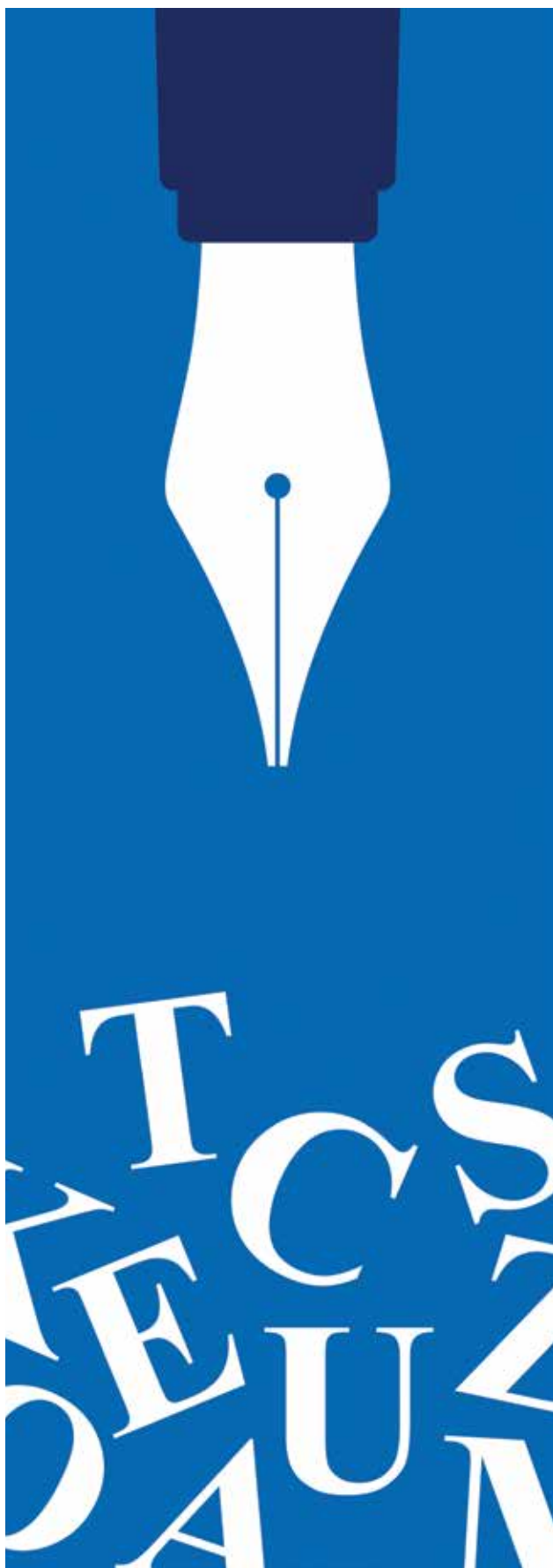
**Drew X. Coles** (Ed.D. '19), on his work mentoring students as a lecturer in TC's Music & Music Education program

**“Teacher issues are  
student issues.”**

TC senior lecturer **Amanda Mazin** (Ph.D. '11), during her testimony at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, last fall

**“As an educator, I believe  
providing spaces for  
people to feel whole  
creates permission  
to feel like they belong.”**

**José Luis Vilson** (Ph.D. '24), founder and executive director of the nonprofit EduColor, in his blog



“I see a lot of movement, and youngsters are bringing the consciousness back towards making us more sustainable and making this earth more liveable.”

**Radhika Iyengar** (Ph.D. '11), sustainability educator scholar, in dialogue with the Columbia Global Center in Paris

“We want our students to be ready for whatever winds blow, which is not about what you do or don't know, but a willingness to learn and adapt. AI is here to stay, and we want young girls to truly believe they can play a role in its future.”

**Tarika Barrett** (M.A. '00), CEO of Girls Who Code, in conversation with *Forbes*

“Culture, personal experiences, socioeconomic status — all of that impacts how students emote, and if [they're] gonna trust you to share their emotions, then you have to see and celebrate all parts of them.”

**Dawn Brooks DeCosta** (Ed.D. '17, Ed.M. '08) on her new book *The Change You Want to See*, co-authored with TC's Mark Anthony Gooden, the Christian Johnson Endeavor Professor of Education Leadership

“As stewards of our revered Teachers College, we are called to make a profound difference when we leave 120<sup>th</sup> Street and continue our work out in the world.”

**Brian Kennerly** (M.A. '92), President of the Alumni Council, at TC Alumni Day last fall





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