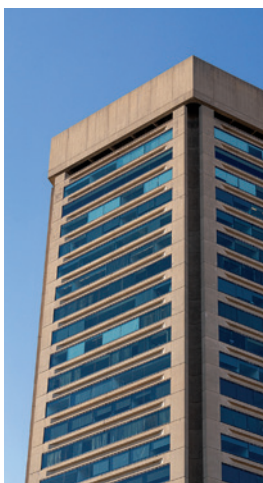


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Jack Cover '79 has left his mark on the National Aquarium.



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Brian Stelter '07 is back at CNN doing what he does best: covering the media.



## ON THE COVER



We've never had a more aptly named subject for this feature than Jack Cover '79 (though it's pronounced cove-er). Director of Photographic Services Lauren Castellana '13, '23, took this issue's cover shot. "From the moment I was informed that our photoshoot would take place at the aquarium, I knew I wanted to capture

a shot from the bridge overlooking Jack in the wetlands exhibit. This exhibit is remarkable, playing a vital role in supporting the harbor and local wildlife," she says. "We were fortunate to have a sunny day, perfect for the cover shot."



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President's  
Letter

Fellow Tigers,

It has been another terrific year at Towson University. From national rankings and new facilities to athletic championships and academic achievements, there has been no shortage of celebrations on our campus.

Our university continues to rise as a national leader in academic excellence. Last fall, the Wall Street Journal named TU the No. 1 public university in Maryland and the No. 15 public university in the country. And just this spring, we achieved the prestigious Research Colleges and Universities designation from the Carnegie Commission, a testament to the highly consequential, highly impactful research happening here at TU.

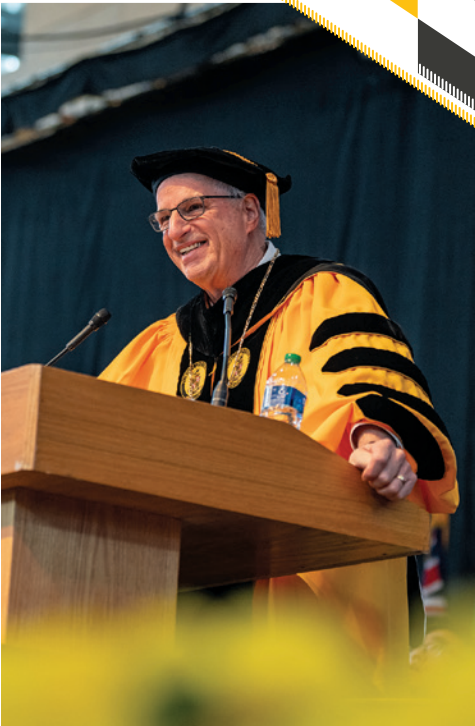
Tiger Athletics has also enjoyed great success, helping to raise TU's profile even higher. Our men's basketball team won its first outright regular-season CAA title in program history, while our women's gymnastics team continued its dominant run with its second-consecutive EAGL championship. In March, the track and field team won the ECAC Indoor Championships for the third time in school history. As a university, we are

furthering our investment in our student-athletes through the creation of the Campaign for Excellence, a \$12 million fundraising effort that will provide the necessary financial support to enhance our facilities and ensure the continued success of our Division I athletic teams (see page 12).

These milestones reflect the positive trajectory and momentum we are building at TU—momentum that is strengthened by the stories and contributions of our accomplished alumni. In this issue, you'll read about many inspiring Tigers making a difference in their communities, who exemplify what it means to be #TUproud.

TU's future has never been brighter. I look forward to all that we will continue to accomplish together in the year ahead.

MARK R. GINSBERG, PH.D.  
PRESIDENT



TREASURES

By Land and By Sea

Two rows of 15 navy-colored baseball caps line the tops of the bookshelves in TU history professor Bob Rook's office. They represent 16 years of his life.

From 2007 to 2023, Rook advised the U.S. Navy on the history and political structure of several Middle Eastern countries in which the military had engagement areas. Each hat comes from one of the 30 ships he visited over the course of more than 25 missions.

He came to TU in 2005 as the chair of the history department. Just two years later, the U.S. Navy came calling with another teaching opportunity.

"The Navy had created the Regional Security Education Program (RSEP)—a cadre of regional experts who knew the Arab world, Israel, Iran,"

Rook says. "Friends I'd met in Jordan, who worked for the Naval Academy, recommended the Navy look at me."

His responsibilities would involve deploying to sea for several weeks at a time to brief military brass on the nature of Israeli politics and strategy in the region, the nation's relationships with the Arab states surrounding them and how that could affect Navy forces.

Rook wasn't sure he could manage both roles at once.

"I had the full support of Towson University, from my dean all the way to the president," he says. "The university really went out of its way to support me when I'd be gone for two- and three-week stretches."

In 2023, he took his last official assignment with RSEP. But he says it's been enormously helpful in terms of what he does at TU with his students.

"The RSEP experience dramatically improved my teaching of military history," Rook says. "It gave me a deeper understanding and awareness of military affairs aboard ship, across the fleet, inside the Pentagon and on any number of institutional bases. It made me a better military historian and my military history classes better learning experiences for my students."



[towson.edu/rook](http://towson.edu/rook) for more of Rook's story, including photos of his military challenge coins





# Campus News



### Research Gold

TU has achieved the Research Colleges and Universities designation from the 2025 Carnegie Classification for its dedication to academic research and development. The R2 Carnegie Classification remains a goal for the institution.



### Mark Behind the Mic

Mark Ginsberg launched TU's first presidential podcast. "On The Mark" is a forum for candid conversations about meaningful and consequential work happening at TU. Episodes can be streamed on all podcast platforms.



### Tiger Pride Day

On March 5, TU hosted the 26th-annual Tiger Pride Day in Annapolis, during which more than 100 TU students, faculty and staff visited the Maryland General Assembly. The event offers students the opportunity to meet legislators and experience the inner workings of the legislature.

### TU For All

TU's efforts to make college accessible for all has been recognized on a national level. This past fall, TU was awarded a highly competitive, two-year American Talent Initiative (ATI) grant for \$250,000, provided in partnership with the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and Ithaka S+R and funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies. During the grant period, TU will launch Tigers Connect, a summer college preparation residency program for Baltimore City high school juniors and seniors. Programming, facilitated by TU undergraduates from Baltimore City, will include a mathematics bootcamp that enhances foundational skills while developing a positive math identity, study skills workshops and Q&A panels about transitioning from high school to college.



### Golden Anniversaries

In fall 1974, TU offered its first Bachelor of Science degree in occupational therapy, the first of its kind in Maryland. The next 50 years has seen the program grow to include several master's degree options and a doctoral program. Fifty years ago, TU also graduated its first cohort of nursing students. At that time, Towson State University was the only state college for nursing. Since those students received their degrees, TU has graduated more than 6,500 nursing professionals in a variety of fields and specialties.

### BY THE NUMBERS

5 years since the opening of the StarUp Accelerator, TU's center for business engagement and entrepreneurship

15 million dollars in capital funding raised by the ventures since 2020

53 new ventures launched with help from the StarUp in last five years

200 jobs added to the state workforce since the StarUp opened

### TU Comes Fashion Forward

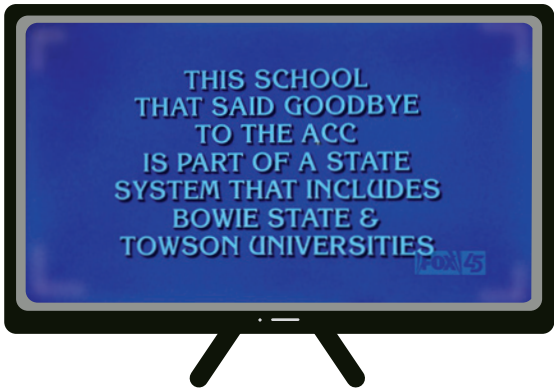
This spring, TU introduced sTUDIO '66, its first institutional fashion collection, which celebrates the school's legacy since 1866 while adding a modern touch. In partnership with Pro Standard—leaders in elevated sports and lifestyle apparel—TU marketing carefully curated a limited-edition collection that pairs premium quality with an effortlessly cool edge. Erica Green '09, '15, director of university marketing, and Priya Exantus, director of trademark licensing, worked for more than a year to bring the collection to life. The two traveled to Pro Standard's Long Island headquarters to carefully curate the items included. There they picked specific pieces that could elevate TU's brand and create TU pride in the campus and local communities. You haven't missed out (yet)! Stop by the UStore on campus or visit [towsonustore.com](http://towsonustore.com) to shop this limited collection.



### Remembering TU pioneer Myra Harris

Myra Harris '59, one of the first two Black graduates of TU and the namesake for a West Village residence hall, died Feb. 1. She was 87. In 1959, Harris and Marvis Barnes changed the university forever when they earned their degrees and became TU's first Black graduates. In June 2022, TU announced that residence halls in West Village would be named in honor of the two women. Harris also leaves a legacy of helping students access higher education opportunities. The Barnes-Harris Scholarship Endowment was created in 1993 by members of Granting Opportunity for Learning and Development (G.O.L.D.) Associates, which supports incoming freshmen from metropolitan public

high schools who are enrolled full-time and demonstrate financial need. Harris was always proud, yet humble about being recognized as one of the first of two Black individuals to graduate from TU. She demonstrated her love for her alma mater and the Barnes-Harris Scholarship Endowment by being an avid donor. Her legacy and love for higher learning will live in perpetuity through her contributions to TU. "I would never have dreamed that this would happen to me," Harris said at the residence hall dedication event in 2022. "As one of the first trailblazers, I wish much happiness and success to the students who are following my footsteps today."



### What is Jeopardy?

It is, of course, the beloved television game show that debuted in 1964. The current syndicated version was hosted by the legendary Alex Trebek from its inception in 1984 until his death in 2020. TU students and even Melanie Perreault, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, have been contestants. Ken Jennings, the show's all-time winningest contestant now hosts, and in December 2024, read the answer pictured on the left. The correct question: What is the University of Maryland?





☕ OFFICE HOURS

# The Psychology of Happiness

**Psychology professor and licensed psychologist Christa Schmidt answers a very tricky question: What makes us happy?**

In our society, our idea of what happy looks like, and what makes people happy, is actually quite different from reality. Happiness is not always about being joyful, playful or grateful, and it is not connected to how much wealth or material goods we have. The feeling of happiness is often achieved through a sense of contentment with what one has, being deeply connected to those we love and allowing room for both positive and negative emotions in our day-to-day experiences.

The idea of pursuing happiness is actually a fallacy. When you're searching for happiness somewhere else, you miss the opportunity to recognize the good all around you. And what if the current moment feels sad or hopeless? Typically, those are also times when we conjure feelings of love and appreciation for those around us. Joy and sorrow are closely linked, and where you find one, it's not hard to see the other.

Living in a capitalist society, we often have the idea that more money will lead to greater happiness. However, research has shown that money and happiness are only related to the point of being able to provide for your basic needs. If you can't provide shelter, food and basic necessities for yourself, then money and happiness are very much related. But once the money we have provides those things, material wealth and happiness are no longer strongly related. Often, focusing on making money to achieve some sort of easy and happy life of fancy cars, a large home and expensive vacations leads people to compare themselves to those who have more; and someone always has more. This way of thinking can actually detract significantly from one's happiness.

One of the most important contributors to a strong feeling of satisfaction with one's life is frequent and meaningful contact with loved ones. The people

you surround yourself with—whether it be close friends and family or even a brief but kind connection with acquaintances or neighbors—provide a wealth of opportunity to feel loved, supported and connected.

In addition to relationships, there are other factors that contribute to an individual's happiness that are often overlooked. For example, living in a country with a stable government where citizens feel secure and cared for is important to our well-being. Last summer, I taught a study abroad class in Copenhagen, Denmark, one of the happiest countries in the world. One of the things we learned was that Danish citizens are supported by a well-developed and extensive social welfare system that provides strong education, quality health care—even urban planning that considers the well-being of the citizens. While they pay high taxes, many daily stressors and struggles are managed by the government. When we talked to the citizens there, so many emphasized that having these necessities provided allowed them more time for spending with family or getting outside.

Psychologists who study happiness are also concerned with some of the

social trends that may be detracting from well-being, such as high social media use. Research into the mental health crisis we are seeing among adolescents and young adults is beginning to reveal that high amounts of time on social media is related to feeling more depressed, anxious and lonely. Social media fuels social comparison, which can inhibit feelings of connection and meaning and lead to more negative emotions.

Happiness is also not a function of blind optimism or thinking positively at all costs. The experience of hardship and difficulty, including a full experience of the difficult emotions and thoughts that come with it, often leads to building resilience, which contributes to positive emotions and coping mechanisms in the long run.

There are practices you can engage in to increase your daily experience of positive emotions. If there is something you like to do regularly, pay attention to it even for just a few moments. I love my morning coffee, for instance. Often I'm not paying attention at all to drinking it—I'm thinking about other things. But if I take 10 seconds to breathe in the aroma, feel the warm mug in my hand and watch the steam rise, this gives me a

“The idea of pursuing happiness is actually a fallacy.”

momentary boost. And if you start to pay attention to things you enjoy that you are already doing with greater frequency, you can increase your feelings of satisfaction with your life as it is. You don't have to go to a spa; it's as simple as looking up at the trees as you're walking between classes. Maybe you'll see a beautiful bird fly by. Pay attention. Training yourself to recognize good, enjoyable, beautiful things that surround you helps cultivate a sense of gratitude and contentment. These are the building blocks of happiness.



## Coffee With... Brandon Chambers

**We spoke with the TUPD sergeant and professional boxer about his love for public safety and the sweet science of boxing.**

📍 **LOCATION:**  
Au Bon Pain  
in Hawkins Hall

☕ **IN HIS CUP:**  
Hot chocolate

🔥 **ADDICTION LEVEL:**  
Zero. “I don’t like coffee. I usually drink nothing but water. This is a treat.”

**Q: How long have you been in law enforcement?**  
**A:** Twelve years total. I did 10 years with Baltimore City and now two years at TU. I left law enforcement and went to Georgia, and when I came back to Maryland, I applied here at TU because I love law enforcement and because of the opportunity for my kids to go to a prestigious school.

**Q: Why did you originally become a police officer?**  
**A:** I figured that police help people, and that’s one of the biggest things in my life. I love to help people. It just does something for my soul. When I was at Baltimore City, we would get a discount at Burger King, so I would purchase 50 cheeseburgers and feed the homeless. Here I help the kids in the boxing club. Here you’re dealing with kids, so you have to be even more patient. It’s rewarding because they look at me as a role model.

**Q: Why do you make it a priority to give back to the community?**  
**A:** Because growing up I didn’t have so much, so I know how much giving back can actually make an impact on someone. A lot of people don’t respect law enforcement, but when they see me and I’m doing good things, it gives them a new idea about police officers. I try to bridge the gap between citizens and the police.

**Q: When did you start boxing?**  
**A:** At the age of 18. I only had two amateur fights, and I lost both of them. Then I met a promoter who was a Baltimore City police officer. We became friends and I told him that was my dream, to fight one professional fight. He helped me accomplish my dream, and that one professional fight turned into 15. I fight at 118 [pounds] or 122. My record is 10-4. To have my kids see me fight is worth the world to me.


**Q: What do you love about boxing?**  
**A:** From the first time I saw Mike Tyson fight, I just loved the thrill of the competition.

**Q: Have you ever knocked somebody out?**  
**A:** Yes. Believe it or not, I actually feel bad when I do it. I didn’t get into the sport to hurt people. It’s an art to me.

**Q: Have you ever been knocked out?**  
**A:** I’ve never been knocked out, but I’ve had my jaw broken on ESPN by Bruce Carrington. He won the U.S. Olympic Trials in 2020. It was the most excruciating pain that I’ve ever felt. I didn’t get dropped, but that pain was so bad I didn’t know what was going on, so I took a knee.

**Q: How often do you train?**  
**A:** Six days a week. Right now, I’m on the 3 to 11 [p.m.] shift, so I’m at the gym from 8 to 11 [a.m.]. When I’m on the 7 [a.m.] to 3 [p.m.] shift I workout from 4 [p.m.] until about 6:30.

**Q: What’s your ultimate goal in the sport?**  
**A:** My goal in boxing is to show people that you can do anything you want to do as long as you put your mind to it. I started in boxing so late, but I’m here living out my dream and I never let anyone stop me. I want to show kids that there’s nothing that’s out of reach as long as you put in the hard work.

 [towson.edu/chambers](http://towson.edu/chambers) to watch a video of Chambers in action





# Moving On Up



**TU has sparked countless innovators. These are their stories.**

## Amanda Karfakis '99

President + CEO, Vitamin

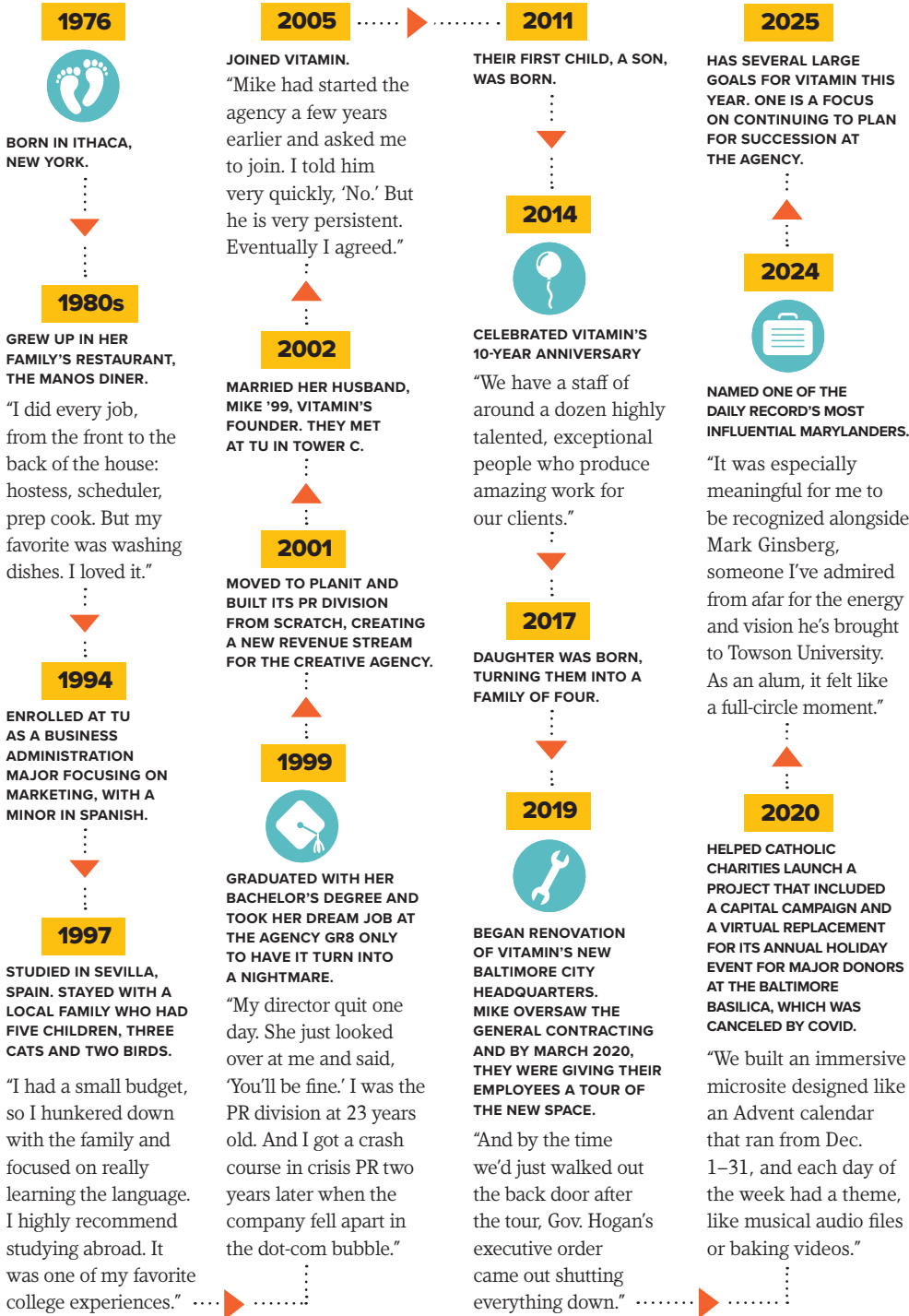
Amanda Karfakis' ethos of hard work, relationship building, clear communication and delivering top-quality results began developing when she was a child growing up in her family's 24-hour diner.

When she joined her husband at Vitamin in 2005, she focused on integrating the integrated marketing agency's services. "It was very important to me to take that approach," she says. "It feeds my interests and abilities and allows me to have more of a birds-eye view to keep all the parts working together to present a cohesive whole to the client."

Now, she is paying forward the business and learning opportunities her family gave to her.

"My 14-year-old son just did his first internship, at Vitamin," she says. "My daughter wants a dog, so we helped her set up a dog-walking business to learn how to take care of them. It's wonderful to provide them with the opportunities to develop critical thinking skills, strategy and relationship building."

 [towson.edu/karfakis](http://towson.edu/karfakis)  
for more on her journey



Breaking new ground, complementing  
current knowledge and leading to  
solutions for the public good.

# Research



## GOING BATTY

Costa Rican biologist Jorge D. Carballo Morales '25, who began his research at TU in 2023 in the master's biology program, is a student in the lab of professor Daniel Caetano, Ph.D. Carballo Morales is studying the macroevolution of bat families and how their diets play a role in their evolution and contribute to various ecosystems.



Under Caetano's wing, Carballo Morales is learning how to apply statistical methods to his data collection on bat diets. To better understand bat diversification, Carballo Morales is working through 3,000 rows of existing data to make reconstructions of bat diets from when bats first appeared more than 50 million years ago to the present day. Studying the evolution of bat diets is key to understanding how these essential seed dispersers support forest ecosystems.

## SEARCHING CELLS FOR SOLUTIONS

Professor Elana Ehrlich, Ph.D., is using her third grant from the National Institutes of Health to study Kaposi's sarcoma herpesvirus (KSHV), an infection associated with HIV/AIDS.

Her research seeks to determine how and why KSHV hijacks the cellular protein degradation system to evade the immune system and promote viral replication.

"My hope is that  
what we publish  
will one day  
translate into  
a new therapy."

By identifying proteins targeted for degradation by the virus, Ehrlich hopes to identify new drug targets.

Ehrlich is working with nine undergraduate students to test how drugs target the "tagged for trash" proteins, impact the replication of the virus and play a role in whether the virus remains latent or could infect other cells.

## MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

Professor Maria João Lobo Antunes, Ph.D., is exploring the impacts of intracity



residential mobility on deviant behaviors and victimization among minority and immigrant youth. With her background as a quantitative criminologist, Antunes has identified the need to examine how inner-city and intracity moving influences minority and immigrant youths' experiences with perpetrated or experienced violence.

Antunes is expanding her research on "cimmigration"—the merging of immigration and the legal system—with the support of the W.E.B. Du Bois grant from the National Institute of Justice and connecting it to the classroom through a special topics course, Immigrants, Crime and Justice.



# THE **FACES** OF RESEARCH AT TU



BY PAMELA GORSUCH '05, '11



BY LAUREN CASTELLANA '13, '23

TU faculty members are solving problems and improving lives through their research.

**As TU pursues the R2—Doctoral Carnegie Classification, a brighter light is shining on the interdisciplinary work already being performed by graduates and undergraduates alike that breaks new ground and further builds the university's reputation as an academic leader.**

**Through research, TU faculty in every college and discipline strive to make broad impacts on our understanding of the world and the way we live in it. Here are eight faculty members—selected in March in honor of Women's History Month—whose research examines a variety of topics, from identifying factors that maintain muscle function as we age to creating new materials that improve medical devices. Their work is making an impact on our communities and our world.**



Rian Landers-Ramos

## IDENTIFYING PRACTICES FOR AGING WELL

The general belief is that physical activity gets harder as we age. But what if older adults' muscles are aging because they're less active? That's what associate professor of kinesiology Rian Landers-Ramos set out to discover in a study comparing the small blood vessel and mitochondria function in muscles of older and younger adults with similar activity levels. The study uses a cutting-edge, near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) device that enables Landers-Ramos and student researchers in the College of Health Professions to quickly and non-invasively examine small blood vessel and mitochondrial functions, which play a critical role in preventing muscle fatigue. The study found that when activity levels are matched, there is little difference in the small blood vessel and mitochondrial functions of older and younger adults—showing that exercise helps keep our muscles working well. Her findings are meaningful on their own and lay the groundwork for using NIRS to analyze other functions that could previously only be studied through invasive and expensive clinical procedures, opening the door to future impactful research.



Vera Smolyaninova

## CREATING ACCESSIBLE SUPERCONDUCTORS

As computing technology advances so too does the need for faster processing speeds. Physics professor Vera Smolyaninova's research is working to build just that.

Smolyaninova works closely with student researchers in the Fisher College of Science & Mathematics to analyze the properties and explore the possibilities of artificial metamaterials, looking at how they can be applied to photonics and enhance the properties of superconductivity. Since photons—unlike electrons—can travel at the speed of light, using the understanding of photonics to create light-adapting artificial materials can make them work better, thereby increasing their capacity to process information. Her research using metamaterial approaches to enhance the properties of superconductors has many important potential applications, like enabling more effective and affordable MRI machines and expanding the potential of quantum computing.



Rachel Billman

## TEACHING 21ST-CENTURY THINKING

Students in classrooms today need to be prepared to work with the technology of tomorrow. That means learning computational thinking—the step-by-step critical thinking skills that enable us to approach problems systematically. Although it's a foundational skill for critical thinking, it's a newer approach in pedagogy, and special education professors Rachel Billman and Kandace Hoppin discovered gaps in how this type of thinking is taught in the K–12 environment—particularly among students with disabilities. In response, the two began implementing computational thinking instruction into the College of Education's curriculum. They collaborated with fellow faculty on professional development opportunities to weave computational

thinking into their coursework so TU students who are future special educators would be prepared to instruct on it. But they didn't stop there. Billman and Hoppin also developed a free, immersive summer camp that offers elementary and middle school students hands-on development of computational thinking skills through robotics, coding and more. Camp InSpECT gives TU's future special educators real-world, paid experience in teaching computational thinking while enabling students with disabilities a chance to develop these skills in a fun and accessible way.



Soo-yeon Hwang

## IMPROVING INFORMATION ACCESS

Librarians play a critical role in promoting informational literacy, innovation, creativity and access—an effort that doesn't stop when business hours are over. Knowing that students—and all citizens—need on-demand support finding reliable sources for information and research, Cook Library's assessment and analytics librarian Soo-yeon Hwang set to work identifying best practices for developing and implementing library chatbots at academic and public libraries across the country. By interviewing early adopters and assessing the breadth and quality of traditionally coded chatbots as well as those using artificial intelligence, Hwang's research offers librarians practical guidance to meet the unique information needs of their communities. The research is so relevant that Hwang was invited to present it at the American Library Association Annual Conference—the largest in the field.



Alison Rios Millett McCartney

## CREATING ENGAGED CITIZENS

More than 20 years ago, a new political science professor named Alison Rios Millett McCartney organized a model United Nations conference for students in underserved communities, led by political science students in TU's College of Liberal Arts. Both sides found the combination of global learning, service-learning and civic engagement so valuable that McCartney decided to expand it into a formal civic engagement course at TU. Yet when she dug into the research literature on civic engagement pedagogy, she realized no such course curriculum existed. So she decided to build one herself, weaving in pre- and post-assessments to evaluate the conference's—and eventually the course's—effectiveness in building the research, critical thinking, oral presentation and writing skills that empower engaged citizens. Today, McCartney, now dean of the Honors College, has authored three books on the subject and worked alongside TU students and alumni to build, evaluate and present what is now a national model for civic engagement.



Chris Boyd Leon

## BUILDING FINANCIAL LITERACY

Before pursuing her doctorate, College of Business & Economics professor Chris Boyd Leon spent seven years providing financial education to historically disadvantaged communities in her native Peru. As participants improved their understanding and engagement in the financial system, their economic situation also improved. Nearly 10

years later, she noticed a similar opportunity for financial literacy among her students. Boyd Leon wanted to make sure that financial challenges like paying tuition or securing income didn't distract students from their studies or impact their ability to complete their degree. It sparked an idea to build a comprehensive, campuswide financial literacy program bringing together financial information and resources from across campus. She paired that with economic research methodology to evaluate the program's causal impact on student success and well-being. The effort launched this spring with support from a Towson University Foundation grant, and initial stages are expected to be complete by the end of the year.



Comfort Tosin Adebayo

## PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is a tragedy in any context, and individuals in cultures lacking access to sexual health information are especially susceptible. That's the situation in Comfort Tosin Adebayo's home country of Nigeria. Over the past three years, the College of Fine Arts & Communication professor has researched the prevalence of sexual violence throughout the country, interviewing and/or surveying more than 100 survivors to identify culturally relevant risk markers, support strategies and prevention tactics. Now she's using the findings to create an online platform that offers anonymous emotional support for survivors as well as sexual health education and sexual violence awareness tools for all community members. The platform also gathers anonymous data that can be useful in providing recommendations to policymakers, helping make important progress in

a country where some states have no formal organizations supporting sexual violence survivors and where many avoid disclosing their experiences to even their closest friends or family.



Emily Parker

## REINTERPRETING PHILOSOPHY

Twentieth-century French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir made enduring contributions to feminist theory and literature, earning a Nobel Prize nomination. Yet the social constructs of her time meant history relegated her to a footnote of her colleague and partner Jean-Paul Sartre. This oversight means some of Beauvoir's most important works weren't translated with the care or context they deserve. College of Liberal Arts philosophy professor Emily Parker is retranslating Beauvoir's 1947 book "The Ethics of Ambiguity" with a deeper understanding of the philosopher's viewpoints on singularity, freedom and connection. Written just after World War II, the book is an exploration of how to create a good life in a world beyond your control. It's a question as relevant now as it was then, and Parker's translation will allow new generations of English-speaking students to contemplate it with greater nuance, context and depth.



[towson.edu/researchfaces](http://towson.edu/researchfaces)  
for more information





# Campaign for Excellence

## ★ PROGRESS

**Towson University Athletics has announced the launch of the \$12 million Campaign for Excellence to fuel high-impact improvements for the field house (pictured) and the Towson Center.**

“The seeds for this project were planted a long time ago, but we were able to grow it from adding offices and meeting space to totally overhauling our ability to care for and develop our student-athletes, both physically and academically,” says Steven Eigenbrot, director of athletics. “Growth like that only happens with tremendous support and vision from our leadership.”

Phase One will tackle a field house expansion and renovation as well as

the Towson Center athletic training and weight rooms’ renovation. The improvements include renovating more than 17,000 square feet of the existing 53,000 square feet of Unitas Stadium’s field house and adding 12,600 square feet to the building. The addition will expand team meeting spaces, establish program-specific suites with meeting rooms and provide important enhancements to the Dr. Francis S. Soistman Jr. ’79, ’15 (hon.) and Family Athletics Academic Achievement Center. The renovation will also include the athletic training room and a new “Fueling Zone” to better meet the dietary needs of student-athletes before, during and after

training sessions and competitions.

The Towson Center renovations will focus on connecting and improving the weight rooms and other sport performance areas within the facility by establishing a new sport performance center. Field house construction is estimated to take 18 months and could begin as early as the 2025–26 academic year with work in the Towson Center to follow closely behind.

The second phase includes a complete renovation of the Towson Center gymnasium. The project would add 15,000 square feet of indoor turf space and two practice courts for volleyball and basketball.

The Towson Center is the main hub for TU Athletics, including the department’s weight rooms, an athletic training room, recovery room and most team coaches’ offices and locker room facilities.

“These upgrades will have a tremendous impact on our team’s sports performance,” head football coach Pete Shinnick says. “With state-of-the-art equipment and ample space, our student-athletes will be able to focus on building strength, speed and agility in a way that wasn’t possible before.”



**[towsontigers.com/excellence](https://towsontigers.com/excellence)**  
for more on the campaign



**ISABELLA MINERVINI '26**  
earned a 39.225, tying for 10th all-time in TU all-around history, at a gymnastics home meet on Feb. 8.



**MIKEY WEISSHAAR '26**  
was named USA Lacrosse Preseason Midfielder of the Year ahead of the 2025 season.



**BAARA STEWART '27**  
ran the third-fastest time in TU history in the 1,000-meter with a time of 2:58.78 on Feb. 2 at the Patriot Games hosted by George Mason.



**TYLER TEJADA '27**  
shot 62.5% from three as the men’s basketball team claimed a share of the CAA title with a 76-67 win at Campbell on Feb. 22. He later was named the CAA Player of the Year.

## Loss of a Legend



Carl Runk, TU’s men’s lacrosse coach who directed the program to a place among the college elite, died Nov. 24, 2024, at 88 years old. Runk, who also served as head football coach of TU during its first three seasons from 1969 to 1971, joined the lacrosse program in 1968 in its 10th year. Over the ensuing 31 years, his teams amassed a 262-161 record while moving from NCAA Division II into Division I. They reached seven consecutive College Division Tournament appearances from 1973–79. In 1974 his Tigers won the first NCAA Division II National Championship, beating Hobart 18-17 in overtime. That earned Runk the USILA’s National Coach of the Year award, the first TU coach to earn such a national honor. It also remains TU’s only national championship in men’s sports. *For more on Runk’s legacy, see page 46.*



## GOLF

### A Triumvirate

TU Director of Golf Mike Larkin named Rachel Yu (women’s golf) and Brian Sadler (pictured) associate head coaches. Both began on Feb. 5. Yu played collegiate golf at the University of Texas Rio Grande. Sadler played two seasons at Shepherd University then transferred to TU where he earned a sport management degree in 2022.

## MBB

### Making His Mark

With the 76-67 comeback win over Campbell on Feb. 22, men’s basketball’s Pat Skerry won his 232nd game as head coach of the Tigers to hold the program record for most wins by any coach. Skerry joined TU in 2011, to direct a program that had 15 straight losing seasons. He was named CAA Coach of the Year in 2025.

## FOOTBALL

### Sign Here

TU Football signed 11 players on National Signing Day in preparation for the 2025 fall season. The program also added 11 players on Early Signing Day on Dec. 4, 2024, to total 22 players in the 2025 class: 19 freshmen and three transfers. The Tigers signed 13 defensive, eight offensive and one special teams players.

## BASEBALL

### Pick of the Litter

The CAA released its 2025 Baseball Preseason All-Conference Team, with three Tiger infielders garnering all-league honors. Jordan Peyton was named to the 2025 All-CAA preseason team after earning all-CAA honorable mention after the 2024 season. Taye Robinson and Casey Bishop each earned honorable mention nods.



# ELEVATING VOICES

BY MEGAN BRADSHAW

TU'S UNEARTHING TOWSON'S HISTORY PROJECT AIMS TO ENRICH THE UNIVERSITY'S PRESENT AND FUTURE BY SEEKING THE VOICES OF THOSE MISSING FROM ITS PAST.



It started with one thought: Why don't we teach more of TU's history to the students? History professor Christian Koot, in the College of Liberal

Arts, remembers this as a jumping off point for Unearthing Towson's History, a project that has grown to include 14 student researchers, several members of faculty and staff, a database of nearly 1,400 articles, photos and ephemera as well as 17 oral histories of faculty, staff and alumni from the last 60 years.

"The previous university archivist and I started talking about it at the 150th anniversary (of the university) in 2016," says Koot. "I thought a TSEM (a seminar-style class that teaches foundational skills for academic success) might be the vehicle to do that. When Ashley started here in 2016, I had half a syllabus. I dragooned her into working with me."

Ashley Todd-Diaz, assistant university librarian for special collections and university archives, had had a similar thought to Koot's. She and Brian Jara, director of inclusive excellence education and support, from the Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity, had started searching the university's archives to see how Jara and his colleagues could use them as an internal educational tool.

"The project also grew from the larger national movement of institutions beginning to investigate their origins and histories," Koot says. "We began to realize there was a

part of that story that we could and needed to tell as well."

**Julius Chapman came to TU** in 1969 as the first dean of minority affairs. When he arrived, Black enrollment was less than 1% of the student population. During his tenure he recruited and mentored Black students while playing a pivotal role in establishing the Black Student Union, the Black Faculty and Administrators Association and the Black Cultural Center. He also brought historically Black Greek Life organizations to campus. In 2021, TU dedicated a section of campus and placed a bust of him in the Chapman Quad to honor him and inspire passing community members. Chapman died in 2023.

The oral history arm of the project began with Chapman in late 2019. But just as the cameras started rolling, an historic event froze time: the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was meant to be a preparatory oral history," Todd-Diaz says. "We visited him at his home and got to know him a little bit, asked him some questions. Our plan was that the following semester in 2020, we were going to have students conduct the official oral history and film it."

When students, faculty and staff returned to campus after pandemic restrictions eased, the TSEM and

archival research coordinated more closely, and the project gained steam.

Koot and Todd-Diaz's TSEM, Towson University Students in the Upheaval of the 20th Century, tasks students with an original research project on something about the history of TU or its students.

To do that, they use the university archives. But as students either followed their own interests or the suggestions of Koot and Todd-Diaz, they began to see tremendous holes in the archival collection such as the experiences of Black students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students and individuals at those intersections.

"The oral histories are designed to fill those gaps in the archive and then for the students to use," Koot says. "One of the results of the project is creating a bigger corpus of information that the students can interact with and use in their projects."

**Whitney LeBlanc was the first** Black faculty member hired at TU. He came to the university in 1965 at the urging of theatre department chair Dick Gillespie. LeBlanc taught for five years—during which a group of KKK extremists unsuccessfully rallied on campus to shut down his production of "And People All Around"—before he left to create the ground-breaking TV show "Our





Lauren Castellana '13, '23

Street” and advise for the 1970s sitcom “Good Times.”

Todd-Diaz credits the student researchers’ tenacity and ingenuity in uncovering individuals for oral histories.

“One of our researchers found [LeBlanc’s] personal website and asked me, ‘Can I email him?’ He wrote back that night,” Todd-Diaz says. “It’s eye-opening for students to see that they can make these connections within their broader community. It’s a connection that wouldn’t have existed if they hadn’t taken that step.”

Allie Lawrence ’21, who majored in history while at TU, was that researcher.

“If you go back and watch my interview with Mr. LeBlanc, I was close to tears for most of it,” she says. “The horrendous stuff he had been through saddened me. I asked him, ‘Were you scared?’ He said no. I was shocked because I was scared for him. But he just had this courage that not a lot of people have.”

Another oral history that came from student curiosity was James Newton’s. He was one of TU’s first Black basketball players. In a moment of serendipity, Newton spoke about his view on the KKK protest at LeBlanc’s production.

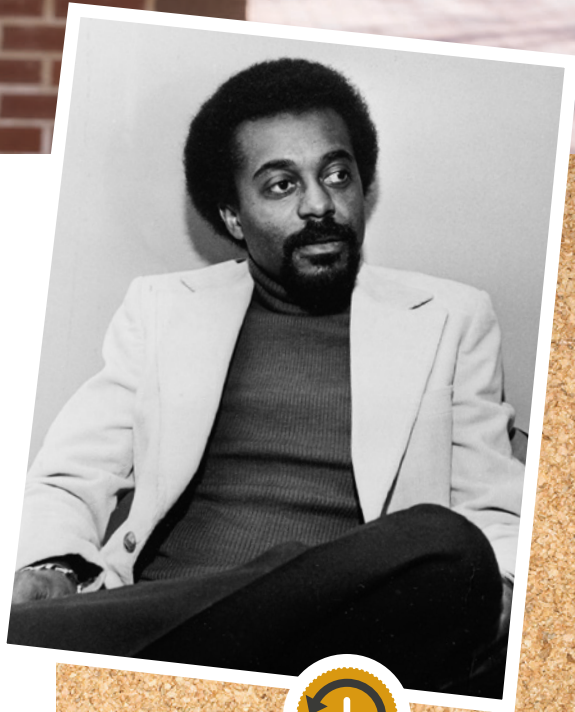
“Our researcher’s response on hearing James talk about this as a student who

hadn’t come face-to-face with so much hatred before, her question was, ‘Well, what did the university do to support you in that moment? Were there counseling services?’ And he was like, ‘No,’” says Todd-Diaz. “It’s so important for students to see from another perspective just how different the campus was and what it was like for students who were going through these incredibly traumatic experiences, essentially, on their own.”

This past fall, several TSEM students used that interview in their papers, something they couldn’t have done just a few years ago.

**Arnie Slater ’93 attended TU** after the Americans with Disabilities Act—the world’s most comprehensive civil rights legislation for people with disabilities—was passed in 1990. In his oral history, he recalls living on the 12th floor of a dorm, despite having cerebral palsy, and needing to change his major right before he graduated because of hiring prejudices in his chosen field of occupational therapy.

“One of our student researchers a couple summers ago asked, ‘What’s the history of [Accessibility and Disability Services] at TU?’ And we realized nobody knows,” Koot says.



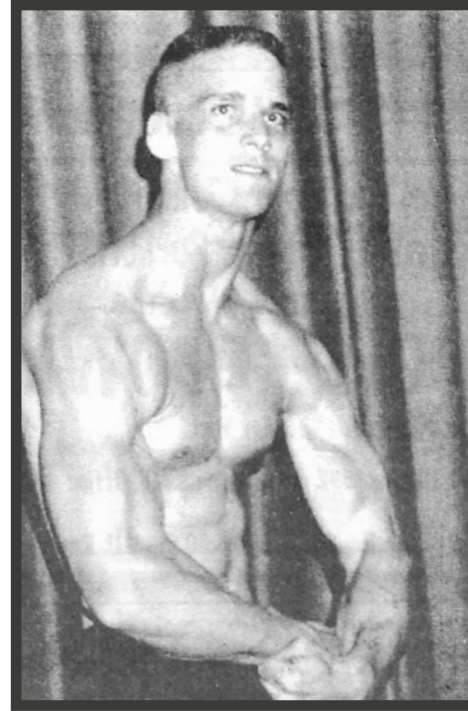
#### BE A PART OF TU HISTORY

Special Collections and University Archives is seeking meeting minutes, policies, flyers, photographs—anything relating to TU events and experiences. The archives are meant to document TU’s operations, from the university level right down to individual students, so they are requesting submissions from faculty, staff, alumni and students. Email: [scua@towson.edu](mailto:scua@towson.edu)

Above left: A bust of Julius Chapman in the Chapman Quad, dedicated in 2021. Chapman (pictured above) was TU’s first dean of minority affairs.

Arnie Slater ’93 discovered a love of lifting weights in high school, and he later earned the title of Mr. Handicapped Annapolis 1989 in a contest for body-builders with disabilities.

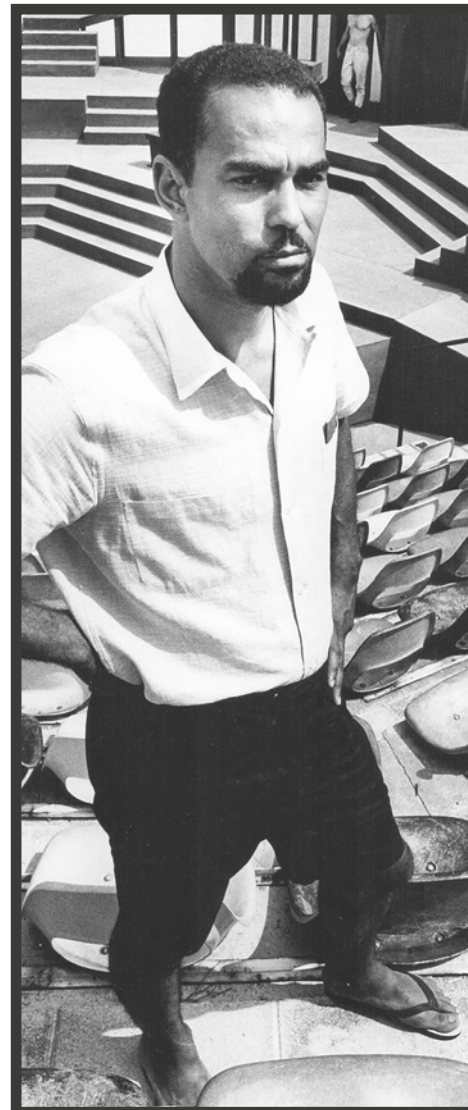
## IN THEIR OWN WORDS



#### ARNIE SLATER ’93

Liberal arts alumnus interviewed for his perspective on accessibility at TU in the 1990s

“I was in Tower C, and I think there were 12 floors. During fire drills or whatever, I was forced to go down 12 flights of stairs, which I thought was like, ‘Somebody didn’t think this out very well.’ But I was young. I didn’t complain. I just figured out a way to get down the stairs really fast: I grabbed either side of the railings down the stairs and slid down. Luckily, I never fell or hurt anybody. But I should never have been put on the 12th floor.”



#### WHITNEY LEBLANC

First Black professor at TU

“The production of ‘And People All Around’ was much more powerful than I anticipated. It was a play based on the killing of the three civil rights workers by the Klan in Mississippi. I had no knowledge of opposition to the play by the Klan until Dr. Hawkins (then-university president) called (theatre chair) Dr. Gillespie and myself to his office the day before the play was supposed to open and introduced us to two FBI people from Washington, D.C., who had gotten information that the Klan was preparing a protest to close down the production. Dr. Hawkins wanted to know what our response was. I said, ‘Well, let them come. They’re welcome to see the play.’ Dick Gillespie and Dr. Hawkins agreed with me, and the FBI said, ‘Well, it’s not that simple. We have to take some precautions.’ They assigned a particular agent to me and the students in the production. About 20 Klan members came in full regalia and protested on York Road.”





## LINDA MORRIS '69

Liberal arts alumna

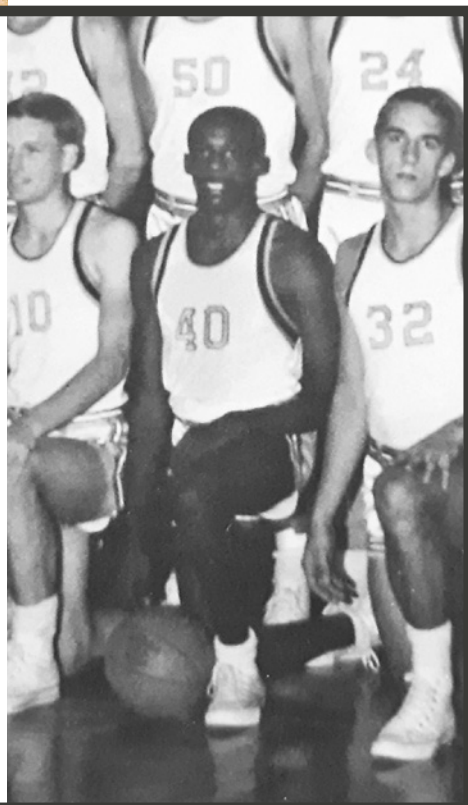
"When I went back to school (after the King riots), I was in Dr. Toland's sociology class, and he was asking students how they felt. This one guy started talking about how, 'Oh, we give them (talking about Black people) training, we give them this, we give them that and they do this to us?' I just couldn't sit there anymore. I stood up and said, 'Well, we don't want you to give us a damn thing. We just want what is rightfully ours.' He became an administrative judge for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I worked for them too, and I really thought about what he had said that day, and I could not reconcile the fact that this person who said these things became an administrative judge to adjudicate discrimination complaints."



## JAMES NEWTON '68

Men's basketball player

"I can't remember negative experiences. I can remember on the road with the team. We would travel to Virginia, and we would travel to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The team would stop for a meal, either going or coming home from a game. I remember the coach would get off the bus and go into the restaurant to find out if a Black person could eat there, and if the answer was 'No,' we would find another place to eat. The guys on the team were very frank, and their reaction could have been, 'Oh, we're bringing Newt's meal out to the bus. Let's go eat.' But there was none of that, and I respect them for that."



# IN THEIR OWN WORDS



### TELL YOUR STORY

Did you attend Towson University? Were you a faculty or staff member? We'd love to hear your story. Email Christian Koot: [ckoot@towson.edu](mailto:ckoot@towson.edu)

history and historical theory and oral history as methodology, the pair will also focus on practical skills.

"They're going to learn how to ask good questions, how to frame those questions," Koot says. "They're learning the soft skills of sitting across from someone: How do you get someone to open up and share? How do you guide that conversation?"

Linda Morris '69 is one of the alumni Lawrence spoke with for an oral history. Morris was impressed.

"She was very good. She was well prepared," Morris says. "She had very insightful questions that I might not have thought to ask. I didn't have any good feelings about Towson before I did this interview, and (the oral history) made me feel better about Towson because it was as though someone cared about capturing the true story. It's important to have everyone speak from their perspective. Because it's like a puzzle...everybody has a piece of the puzzle, and it's good to hear it so you can put it together."

**Just as national conversations** 10 years ago helped bring this project into existence, in 2025 they have swung in the opposite direction. So what should Koot and Todd-Diaz do?

"I think the people that don't want it done are not a majority, particularly of our community," Koot says. "In some ways, it's even more vital. One of the things I've always been interested in is how powerful small stories and the experience of individuals can be."

## "THEY'RE GOING TO LEARN HOW TO ASK GOOD QUESTIONS... THEY'RE LEARNING THE SOFT SKILLS OF... 'HOW DO YOU GET SOMEONE TO OPEN UP AND SHARE? HOW DO YOU GUIDE THAT CONVERSATION?'"

—CHRISTIAN KOOT, TU HISTORY PROFESSOR

What's happening on a national or global stage isn't everything; what's happened right here is an important story to tell too."

According to Koot, students in the fall TSEM recognized that the current moment is one of historical significance.

"One of the successes of the class is cluing students in that when they think about these big moments in the past, those are experienced by lots of people in small ways, like the people that came before them at Towson," he says. "So their experiences are part of that bigger story too."

Todd-Diaz talks to the students about how the materials in the archives are the unpublished ephemera that people likely weren't expecting to be read broadly: their diaries or letters, photographs, items that reflect everyday life.

"We talk about the fact that if materials [about the founding of the Black Student Union] hadn't been maintained at TU, they may be in someone's attic right now or they would have been thrown out," she says. "But because they're here and we can study them, suddenly we have this very interesting view into a sequence of events in 1969 and 1970."

Todd-Diaz stressed that the staff in Special Collections and University Archives welcome all types of material submissions.

"As the archives was being founded [in the 1970s], there was a big push to send things to the archives," she says. "But we have almost nothing from 2000 on. Part of that is we switched to digital records, and people aren't thinking

about sending things to the archives.

"It's a broader conversation that we're teaching our students, but we also need to be doing a better job as a campus of thinking about our history and what is being kept so that there are those records in the future."

**One of the ideas behind** the overall project is creating a sense of belonging for students who may not see themselves reflected in the current history as it's represented in larger narratives, the website or the archives.

Koot and Todd-Diaz hope this project continues as a venue for students learning about the history of TU as well as practicing the skills of being scholars who continue to ask questions.

"Seeing our students' dedication to this project is amazing," says Todd-Diaz. "But then also to see current students using the collection, alumni and past faculty contributing and the administration's willingness to grapple with owning our history is significant."

Koot and Todd-Diaz think there's a lot of opportunity within Unearthing Towson's History to showcase all the individuals who are part of the TU community.

"I've always very firmly believed that everyone deserves to look at the historical record and see some part within it that they can relate to," Firebaugh says. "Coming into this archival silence in regard to accessibility and disability services has really made me want to dive more into this work."

It's very clear Firebaugh, Lawrence and current researcher and history major Abigail Bowling '25 have understood the assignment.

"It is important to make sure all the voices that have shaped Towson's history are represented in our archive and in our historical presentations," Bowling says. "There's a lot of individuals who have had a bigger impact than maybe they themselves even realize. It's important that we continue to highlight those stories, and there is a certain comfort in knowing that we have this history to learn from, we have these people to learn from and they're not lost to time." **TU**



### HELP PRESERVE THE PAST AND INSPIRE THE FUTURE

Please consider helping TU continue this important work by contributing to the project's TU Foundation account. Your contribution helps us share these important stories with the public through online exhibits and resources while also strengthening our role as a resource for the wider Towson community. Visit [towson.edu/preservefuture](https://towson.edu/preservefuture) to donate.



[towson.edu/unearthing](https://towson.edu/unearthing) for more photos, links to the project archive and access to alumni oral histories




# Cover's STORY

Few people have been more integral to the National Aquarium's success than its recently retired general curator.  BY MIKE UNGER

**Jack Cover** is walking through the maze of exhibits at the National Aquarium in Baltimore with the air of a proud papa. But none of the countless kids who are zigzagging their way around, marveling at the fish tanks and reptile enclosures are his children. It's the exhibits themselves that he helped father.

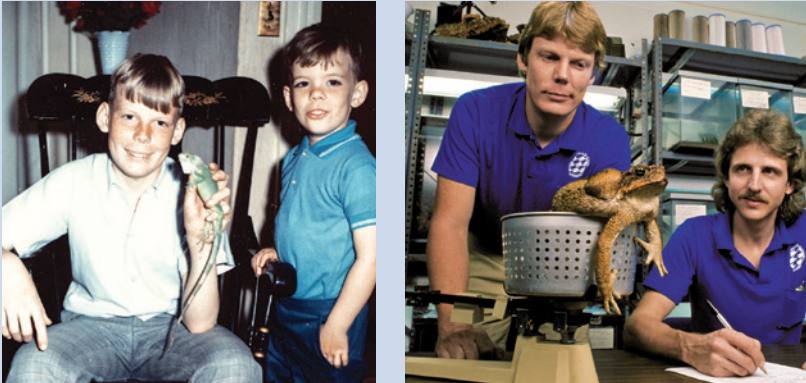
In January, after 37 years at the aquarium, Cover '79 retired. Well, kind of. A few days after officially leaving his position as general curator, in which he led the creation of some of the aquarium's most iconic installations—Amazon River Forest, Australia: Wild Extremes, Blacktip Reef, and the newest, Harbor Wetland—he's back. In addition to volunteering with Maryland's Department of Natural Resources, he plans to lend a helping hand around the aquarium every now and then. The place is a part of his very fabric. As he points out black drum fish, which, he says gleefully, have bite crushing power greater than crocodiles, he bends down to pick a piece of trash off the ground. Caring about all aspects of the aquarium is second nature to him. Cover, 68, meets staff members and visitors alike with a warm smile or a nod, but his widest grins are reserved for when he talks about the aptly named pig-nosed turtle, air-breathing lungfish and alien-like wobbegong shark that surround him.



Cover at the Australia: Wild Extremes exhibit, which he helped create.  Lauren Castellana '13, '23



Cover, holding an iguana, and his brother Joel in 1969; Weighing a cane toad in 1999 (Photo: George Grall/National Aquarium); appearing on David Letterman in 1989.



“I think the biggest joy is when you get over that finish line and you open the exhibit and see the visitors’ responses,” he says. “Most of these people are never going to go to Australia. Let’s give them a taste of Australia. Not everybody even gets to go on a field trip to the Chesapeake Bay. So let’s bring these habitats to the people.”

That’s been Cover’s primary goal since he joined the aquarium as a herpetologist in 1987. He took over as general curator in 2004 and has spent the last two decades ensuring that it remains Maryland’s most popular paid tourist attraction, with more than 1 million visitors annually. His final project might just be his crowning achievement: Harbor Wetland, a 10,000-square-foot outdoor exhibit between piers 3 and 4 in the Inner Harbor that opened last year. With 39,000 grasses and shrubs, it’s a floating habitat for fish, crabs, turtles, birds and myriad other species. Even river otters have been spotted frolicking in its marsh.

“Quite frankly, I don’t think the project would have come to fruition without Jack,” says Jennifer Driban ’07, ’11, the aquarium’s senior vice president and chief mission officer. “Jack was involved from start to finish through every element of that project for almost 14 years. He has such an array of knowledge of not only the animals that are in the aquarium but also the native species that call Maryland home. It’s a wonderful example of his lasting impact on the aquarium.”

“I think the biggest joy is when you get over that finish line...and see the visitors’ responses.”

**Not too many** kids who grow up in Baltimore—or any other place, for that matter—have a pet caiman. But a young Cover once bought one at a department store (that sort of thing being completely normal in the ’60s). When it eventually grew from six inches to five feet long—a bit too big for the Hampden rowhouse

where he lived with his parents and three siblings—he had to donate it to a reptile exhibit in Florida. The alligator-like creature was the latest in a line of out-of-the-ordinary pets that started with an innocent knock on his family’s front door.

“I was 6 or 7, and the school bus driver brought this ring-necked snake by,” he recalls. “A boy had brought it on the bus and was terrorizing the girls with it. He thought my brother and I should have it. For some reason, my mother agreed to it.”

The snake was placed in a wide-mouthed gallon jar on the kitchen table, where Cover sat, transfixed.

“The colors of it and the black and red tongue going in and out; I must have spent an hour just staring at him,” he says.

It was love at first sight. Cover quickly became obsessed with all kinds of scaly and slimy animals, riding his bike to the library to check out books on reptiles and making frequent trips to the Reptile House at the nearby Maryland Zoo to gaze at them. He also was a collector,

capturing snakes, frogs and turtles from undeveloped parts of the city like the Jones Falls, Wyman Park and Stony Run. He’d keep them in his house, and even though his parents didn’t necessarily understand their son’s passion, they encouraged him to pursue it.

His college years at TU, he says, were life changing.

“For me it was a dream,” he says of his herpetology class, trips to collect specimens in the wild and introduction to other likeminded students. “I became part of a rich community of biologists and got to explore the academic side of learning about these animals.”

Don Forester, a biology professor at TU from 1974 to 2005, was a teacher and mentor to Cover. The two remain friends today.

“Jack was like a savant,” Forester says. “He was so into herpetology—all he lacked was a formal education. He was constantly out in the field collecting things.”



Philip Smith/National Aquarium





Philip Smith/National Aquarium



Lauren Castellana '13, '23

Cover feeding breakfast to a yellow-footed tortoise.



Philip Smith/National Aquarium

Top: Cover working on Harbor Wetland.  
Bottom: Cover teaching a possible future herpetologist.

Years later, coincidentally the two lived a few blocks from one another in Harford County.

“I went over to his house and his son, Zak, was there,” Forester says. “He says, ‘Where do you keep your snake room?’ I said, ‘My what?’ Jack had converted one of his bedrooms into his snake room. He was studying patterns in eyelash vipers. He had 30 or 40 little aquaria in there each with a viper. He was breeding them and looking at the transmission of color patterns. I suspect his neighbors had no idea.”

**In his mid-20s,** Cover was injured on the job. The job being extracting venom from king cobras, scorpions, tarantulas and other venomous animals to be used for research and making antivenoms. Seems a Mexican beaded lizard had leapt past a dead mouse that was being fed to him and latched on to Cover’s hand. Getting the lizard to let go was difficult; while it was attached, it was pumping venom into his body. By the time Cover made it to the hospital, he was having an out-of-body experience. He was

throwing up bile from his gall bladder, and his life was in serious jeopardy.

“They gave me epinephrine to counteract the components in the lizard’s venom, and I went from feeling like, ‘You dummy, you died at a young age,’ to euphoric. I was ready to eat a hamburger. It was very strange, but an amazing firsthand lesson in biochemistry.”

The incident convinced him that a career change was in order, so he took a position as a reptile keeper in the Herpetarium at the Fort Worth Zoo. By this time, he was married to his wife of now 42 years, Carole, who’s a very understanding woman. They shared their Texas house with some of Cover’s critters.

“I had all these different snakes that I was breeding and learning about,” he says. “It was a little bit too hot for even the tropical snakes in Texas. This house didn’t have air conditioning, so I went out and bought a window unit, and it went into the snake room.”

Cover had always dreamed of working at the National Aquarium in his hometown, so when a position opened in 1987, he leapt at it. He was hired and began

working on Hidden Life, part of the Upland Tropical Rain Forest exhibit. He traveled to Suriname—one of many trips all over the world—to evaluate the status of the wild population of poisonous blue dart frogs, which still are bred and displayed at the aquarium today.

“The blue dart frog is found in a few locations on the Suriname–Brazilian border. There are no roads, just Indigenous people there. First, we had to go to Paramaribo, the capital, and from there we had to take a bush plane about two and half hours over unbroken rainforest,” he says, describing an Indiana Jones-like expedition. “We landed downhill on a muddy field then got in a boat for several days as far as they could go—it was the dry season. Then we started walking across the Sipaliwini Savanna, to where this frog lives. We walked for another day, getting eaten by tiny insects called no-see-ums. Finally, you come to this place where there are no people but there are these bright blue frogs.”

The arduous journey was worth it. Over the years he lent some strawberry poison dart frogs to Forester, who used them in behavioral studies at TU that resulted in

multiple published papers. After becoming general curator, Cover’s first major exhibit project was Australia: Wild Extremes, an idea he pitched.

He and his team started by traveling Down Under and taking countless photographs of the animals and the environments in which they live. He acquired animals through a variety of means (some from zoos and aquariums, some from private citizens) and worked with crews to ensure that the exhibit was practical for the animals and educational and entertaining for the public. No detail was overlooked. Doors were hidden by fabricated rock habitat and flora. Support beams were covered and finished by artisans to look like Australian sandstone. Hidden pumps created natural-looking waterflow.

“From an exhibit developer’s perspective, Jack is the rare curator who appreciates all the complexities of what makes a truly compelling living exhibit,” Robin Faitoute, former manager of exhibit development, told the aquarium’s publication Watermarks. “He understands everything from species selection to habitat

fabrication to the visitor experience. Creating an impactful exhibit experience is complicated and takes time. He is committed to the process and to ensuring authenticity and accuracy.”

Looking back on his career, Cover’s proudest accomplishment was working to pass legislation to protect Maryland’s state reptile, the diamondback terrapin. In the early 2000s he learned that they were still being harvested and exported in large numbers to Asia. Cover and other aquarium staffers joined in an effort that ultimately resulted in Maryland ending its long history of commercial harvesting of terrapins.

It’s succeeded. Cover’s seen it with his own eyes. While working on Harbor Wetland, he’s witnessed diamondbacks swim into the habitat that he played a pivotal role in creating.

“There’s a misconception that the Inner Harbor is too polluted to support aquatic life. That’s really not the case at all,” he says. “If you’re a hatchling turtle, you’re sort of the chicken nugget of the animal world. Everybody wants to eat you. You’re soft and probably tasty. You want to go into the marsh grass and

remain hidden until your shell’s big enough to eliminate some of those predators. That’s why we built these constructed habitats and floating wetlands. And then you start seeing crabs. You see northern water snakes. We are recreating habitats that existed here long before the city was built. We’re in

downtown Baltimore, but it’s kind of like, if you build it, they will come.” **TU**

 [townson.edu/jack](http://townson.edu/jack) to watch Jack Cover on “The Late Show with David Letterman” in 1989



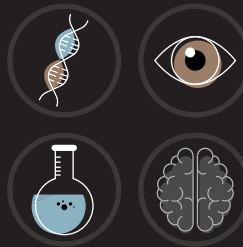
# Seeing the good

BY PAMELA GORSUCH '05, '11

At age 44, Henry Jackson was a successful financier running one of the top money management firms in the state.

Then he went blind.

He had no way of knowing a second chapter of his life—at TU—was about to begin.



**Henry Jackson** has the kind of quiet confidence that makes you stop and listen.

Today, sitting in a lab at TU's Center for STEM Excellence, his kind eyes and calm voice hint at a familiarity with adversity and the wisdom it can bring.

Indeed, it was Jackson's experience with success, illness, loss and reinvention that gave him the patience and perspective to become an outstanding and valued mentor at TU.

It didn't come easy.

The child of an Army master sergeant and schoolteacher raised in the segregated South, Jackson learned about privilege and perspective from a young age. Growing up, he recalls visiting downtown Baltimore with his family and being allowed to enter stores but not make purchases. Rather than dwell on the discrimination, his parents preached education and self-reliance as tools for combatting it. To prove the point, they enrolled him in one of the nation's leading military boarding academies.

When a 14-year-old Jackson arrived at Fork Union Military Academy in 1970, he was one of just a handful of Black students. He made a name for himself, embracing the school's high standards for discipline and discovering an interest in science. He graduated as a distinguished cadet and enrolled at Lincoln University as a pre-med major but by graduation had decided to pursue finance instead. He found a job as a floor broker at a firm in Owings Mills and worked 80-hour weeks, studying the markets in the early mornings, working

the floor when markets were open and cold-calling prospective clients in the evenings and weekends.

The military-school persistence paid off. Jackson moved up the ranks, learning the ropes at a boutique firm in Towson before establishing his own company, Baneker Capital Management. Named after mathematician and author Benjamin Baneker, the firm managed investments for high-net-worth clients. Jackson was the face of the firm, bringing in new business and identifying investment opportunities with the same intense focus that brought him success in previous roles. It enabled him to provide a comfortable life for his wife, Angela, and their two young children, Jared and Kayla. He was 44 years old, happy, in love and more successful than he'd ever dreamed.

Then his world went dark.

It came like a freight train, steady and unyielding. First Jackson noticed he couldn't see well while driving at night. Then his vision got progressively blurrier during the day. He'd visit the doctor for prescription glasses but his vision worsened again long before the next visit was due. Eventually he discovered the problem.

A progressive disorder called keratoconus was causing Jackson's corneas to thin, reducing his eyesight until at one point he was seeing 20/400—double the threshold that's considered legally blind. Doctors at multiple clinics said his best option was a full corneal transplant—an invasive procedure with a long recovery time and a 62% 10-year success rate. Struggling to manage his firm's jam-packed workload alongside his new disability and with little hope for a long-term resolution, Jackson released his clients and closed his firm.

It was a major life change. His wife stepped up at work, taking on extra shifts as a flight attendant to provide for the family. Jackson stayed at home, trying to care for Jared and Kayla as he learned to navigate life without sight. He'd relished the role of doting father, but now it was the kids guiding him through chores and school drop-off.



Alexander Wright '18

Once they were at school, the typically regimented businessman felt he could do little but sit and wait for their dismissal.

"Those were low moments," Jackson says. "I didn't want to pout about it. I was just trying to figure out what I could do."

Jackson began to mentally map each room in his home so he could navigate it independently. He learned to carefully choose places for each of his belongings so he could locate them without assistance. He created workarounds for as many tasks as he could. Two years passed.

Then one day Angela flipped through an in-flight magazine and came across a story on the Boston Foundation for Sight (BFS), a nonprofit research lab and clinic dedicated to treating diseases of the cornea. The clinic offered innovative treatment for Jackson's condition, using custom prosthetic lenses to mimic a healthy cornea and improve vision. They booked an appointment. Within days of getting treatment, Jackson began to see again.

"It was like someone turned the lights back on," Jackson says. "I could see my wife. I could see everything."

"I thought, 'I'm back.'"

With his vision restored, Jackson had a new lease on life—and he decided to use it to pursue his passion for science. He went back to school for lab certification and secured a job at the Towson University Center for STEM Excellence, a K–12 outreach program that prepares Maryland students for college and careers. As a lab technician, he prepares experiment kits for distribution to schools, trains staff on lab techniques and takes extra care to help the center's interns—many of whom come from underserved communities—see a future in STEM.

"He's phenomenal at meeting our students and interns where they are and giving them the extra support they need to be successful," says Mary Stapleton, director of the TU Center for STEM Excellence. "He's faced so many challenges and he just will not allow himself or others to not overcome those challenges."

In his 17 years at the center, Jackson has mentored more than 50 students and interns. Many of them are enrolled

in the same lab certification program where he embarked on his second career. Like him, most are new to STEM and eager to succeed in their chosen field. Jackson takes time to demonstrate lab procedures, teach professional skills and demystify techniques. He combines his military-like focus with the compassion of someone who's been in their shoes to teach the interns lab precision and professional determination, going above and beyond to put them on the path to success.

"Working with Henry is one of the best things that's ever happened to me," says Chakya Browning, a former intern of Jackson's. "He showed me how to build good habits and how to conduct myself in a professional environment. He even used his day off to take me to the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland so I could learn more about their training programs. And through it all, he gave me compassionate and direct feedback that guided me toward success. It's shaped my adulthood."

Last summer, Jackson's legacy of mentorship earned him the University System of Maryland (USM) Board of Regents Staff Award for extraordinary

public service to the university or greater community. The award is given annually to just one of the more than 40,000 employees at the 12 public universities and three regional centers that make up the USM.

Jackson says he was stunned and humbled by the honor. To him, mentoring is simply a way of affording others the same second chance that he got.

"It's a special thing to watch young people build their confidence and realize they can achieve their dreams," Jackson says. "I'm honored to help them get to that next level so they can find success."

Every two years, Jackson travels to BFS for a five-day treatment. While the science keeps advancing, it hasn't outpaced his keratoconus. These days his corneas are so thin that even with the prosthetic lenses, he no longer sees well enough to drive. Yet his future is crystal clear. Day after day—even if he retires—Jackson says he'll keep coming back to the center in some capacity to share his quiet wisdom with those in need.

Old habits die hard. **TU**



# A RELIABLE SOURCE

BRIAN STELTER '07 IS BACK AT CNN DOING WHAT HE DOES BEST: COVERING THE MEDIA.

BY MIKE UNGER

The electricity is out at Brian Stelter's house, but he's hardly in the dark. Thanks to a battery-powered computer and a working cell signal in his New Jersey neighborhood, he hasn't had to unplug. Few people in the news business are as plugged in as Stelter '07, who's been breaking news on the people who break news since his days as a TU undergraduate. In September, he proved that you can, in fact, go home again when he rejoined CNN—the network that cancelled his show in 2022—as its chief media analyst.

"Hello again, it's Brian Stelter—yes, really," he wrote in a post announcing his return. "But this is not going to be a 'Back to the Future' remake. The media industry has matured, CNN has evolved and I have changed a lot since I signed off two years ago. I loved my old life as the anchor of a Sunday morning show but, to borrow some lingo from my video game blogger days, I finished that level of the game. Time for new levels, new challenges."

He began this early January day around 6:30 a.m., when he woke up his 7-year-daughter Sunny and 5-year-old son Story then worked on Reliable Sources, the digest he founded in 2015. Today's newsletter included items on

TikTok, the coverage of the Los Angeles wildfires and unrest at the Washington Post. After taking the kids to school, he finished work on the newsletter at a Dunkin' Donuts before picking up his wife, Jamie, a television news personality, at her studio near Chelsea Market in New York City. Now, he's back at home, conserving battery power while working on the next story.

There's always a next story. The news never stops, and neither, it seems, does Stelter.

Ever since he was kid growing up in Damascus, Maryland, about 35 miles north of Washington, D.C., Stelter has been obsessed with the news. At TU, he led the Towerlight as editor from 2005–07. (Today he serves on the newspaper's advisory board.) During that time, he also ran TVNewser, a blog he started that quickly became a must read for the most powerful people in the business. In a 2006 story headlined "The Kid With All the News About the TV News," the New York Times wrote that "Mr. Stelter's blog, a seven-day-a-week, almost 24-hour-a-day newsfeed of gossip, anonymous tips, newspaper article links and program ratings, has become a virtual bulletin board for the industry.

"The network publicists generally know his class schedule—afternoons on Tuesdays and Thursdays—and barrage him with material, which they often expect him to post within minutes," the piece continued. "While recording a radio segment for one of his classes—Mass Communication 381—he turned his cellphone off for 15 minutes, then turned it back on to find one nagging voice mail message from an ABC publicist and another from CNN."

After graduating with a degree in mass communication, he joined the vaunted Times as a reporter before he jumped to CNN in 2013. It's been a wild ride for Stelter, 39, who has endured praise, criticism and personal attacks from anonymous social media users to powerful politicians.

Still, he remains undeterred.

"The news can often feel like it divides us, but the news also brings us together," he says. "Think about the eclipse last year. I love those moments on CNN when the news brings people together. I think about that as much as I think about the partisanship and bitterness and polarization. That's my optimistic take."

TU Magazine spoke with Stelter in January. The interview has been lightly edited for space and clarity.

## Q+A

### When did you first become interested in journalism?

I've been interested in the news since the first day I can remember. My grandfather got me a computer in the early '90s. So there I am at 10 years old building web pages about Nintendo games. It's not journalism, but it's something journalism adjacent where I'm gathering information, facts and publishing them on the internet.

I used to think that I never wanted to end up on TV, but a few weeks ago I was at home going through my mom's old stuff, and I found this diorama from when I was 13 years old. It says, "Someday I want to be an anchorman." I think that desire must have faded by the time I was at TU because I pivoted to the newspaper. But whether it was wanting to be an anchorman, apparently at some point, or wanting to be a newspaper editor, it was all there very, very early.

### What made you choose TU?

Like so many people, TU was just the perfect fit for me in that moment. The truth is, I didn't know a lot about the school until I was a senior in high school. I did not know a lot about the Baltimore area. Growing up, maybe because my dad worked in Washington, maybe because we had Washington TV channels at home and not Baltimore channels, I always thought of myself more as living in the Washington suburbs. But TU turned out to be the perfect distance from home, the perfect size and the perfect community. It was the perfect place for me.

I remember feeling really lost my first semester living in the Glen Towers, trekking across campus to Stephens Hall. And then in the second semester in the spring, something just clicked.

Friendships clicked into place. Activities clicked into place. And I started to find my place, like so many people do.

For me, a lot of that involved the Towerlight.

### You were the editor of the Towerlight from 2005 to 2007. What was the biggest story that you covered during those two years, and what was your experience like running the paper?

Leading the paper was everything. I think I learned 20 years of journalism in two years leading the Towerlight. On one hand I think about confrontations with the university president, disagreements that were had. On the other hand, we had a really strong working relationship where administrators were available for interviews and were interested in helping students know how the system functions.

I loved traveling to Annapolis to cover legislative hearings about the university's funding and writing about students advocating for themselves at the state level. I thought it was really interesting to understand how the University System of Maryland worked in relation to TU.

We also published a sex column that created a lot of controversy. And I look back at that now with entirely positive memories, even though it was very negative at the time, because that's what a college paper is for. It's for students to experiment. It's for students to try new ways of writing; create a little scandal as long as no one gets hurt.

If a student died off campus, if a tragedy happened off campus, I learned how to write about that in an empathetic way, how to make sure that news gets out. At its best, the campus paper is an innovation lab where students are learning and experimenting. In our case,



Courtesy of CNN

at that time, that meant doing more digitally, sending out email newsletters, trying to publish more often in more ways. But print still really mattered.

I'll never forget producing a special edition in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings, which even though it was one state away, really shook students at TU. Publishing an overnight special edition about that was a real test for the staff but also a real opportunity to learn what it's like in the real world, covering real news.

Being a part of a campus paper, even just being a reader of a campus publication, it connects you to your university. It helps you know more about your community.

I feel like I would have been blind if I hadn't had the Towerlight. I would have been so much less engaged.

### Was there a professor or two who made a big impact on your life and/or career?

Definitely. Professor Kimberly Lauffer (now at Keene State College) was an

incredible resource, as a journalism professor and as an advocate for me on campus. Professor (Emeritus) Richard Vatz's rhetoric class is one I'll never forget. He and I are still in touch from time to time. He's even been critical of my work at CNN, and that's kind of awesome. There's a joy to that.

### You joined the New York Times right after graduation. What's it like being a reporter at one of the most prestigious newspapers in the world when you're 21 years old?

Joining the Times was terrifying but thrilling. I was lucky to be choosing between a couple of different opportunities out of college. I had the opportunity to keep running my TV blog that I had started my freshman year and turned into a real business. I also had an opportunity at NBC News, but I chose the New York Times because I felt like I would be learning from the best of the best about print, about newspapers, at





Stelter in front of the Times in Manhattan in 2008.

Kanji Takeno

a time when print papers were still really vital. I felt like it would be grad school.

I thought it would be really hard to break into the print paper and get bylines in print. But it turns out the Times comes out every day. It's a bunch of blank pages until people fill it every day. The Times needed stories, and it was hungry for stories on my beat, television and media. So I was able to quickly carve out a space for myself and find a way to fit in.

I had imposter syndrome when I joined the Times, but racking up all those bylines, breaking stories and landing scoops and being willing to write stories in the middle of the night, that's what earned me credibility among my peers.

**What was your biggest scoop at the Times, and if you are willing to share it, what was your biggest mistake or misstep?**

I was covering television at a time of total reinvention. Netflix was just starting to make shows. YouTube was just starting to matter in Hollywood. So in retrospect, the stories I'm proudest of are those stories. I think my first front page story was about people watching YouTube videos at lunchtime. Nowadays, we watch videos all day long on our phones—it feels as normal as breathing. But in 2008, the idea that you would spend your lunch break streaming something on your computer was really novel and interesting. I look back and I love the

stories that previewed where the media world was going.

One of the greatest lessons I learned at the Times was the value of corrections. When I think back to mistakes that I made, it's mostly the typos, the spelling mistakes, the screwed-up names that nobody else remembers that I'll never forget. Every time I made a mistake and I needed to run a correction, I would have a very uncomfortable but necessary conversation with my editor, Bruce Headlam. I remember dreading those conversations, but I think one of the main ways that journalists can win and regain trust is by admitting when they make mistakes. Running corrections when they're necessary. I think corrections are a good thing, not a bad thing, because it shows that we're trying. I try to instill that now when I'm working with colleagues who are younger than me. Learning that on the Times' media desk was invaluable.

**In 2013, you left the Times to join CNN and become the host of “Reliable Sources.” What was your thinking behind that decision?**

If joining the Times was going to grad school, the call from CNN was the offer for a Ph.D. It's probably the second-biggest blessing of my life behind my wife and kids. At the time, I was writing about television. I had just finished my

first book. I was not looking for a TV job. I figured I was way too bald to be on TV.

But when the anchor of “Reliable Sources” moved to Fox, CNN held on-air tryouts with a different host every week. So I hosted once, then I hosted again, then I hosted again. It was a no-brainer [to accept] when CNN offered the full-time job because it was an education in television news and in digital news. CNN taught me how to anchor, taught me how to host, taught me how to interview in public.

If you think about television news, a lot of it is interviewing in front of a million people, which is a very different skill than interviewing on the phone for an article. CNN also showed me what a global 24/7 news organization can do. The Times was actively moving toward a digital subscription world, actively becoming a 24/7 global brand. But CNN already was.

The experience of reporting a story on CNN and having viewers in Hong Kong and Nairobi and London and Los Angeles all watch is extraordinary. There is a tremendous responsibility that comes with that power. To get to learn from the likes of Erin Burnett and Wolf Blitzer and Dana Bash was the blessing of a lifetime.

**You said that being let go was one of the best things that ever happened to you. Why?**

Anchoring “Reliable Sources” was the most rewarding job I have ever had. I don't regret a second of it. But I was starting to repeat myself. I was starting to bore myself. I was starting to give the same speech on air more than I wanted to. I don't regret a second of it, but I probably stayed in the job too long.

I never would have hopped off the treadmill willingly, but being pushed off was a gift in disguise for two reasons. One, because of when it happened. The day I was let go, coincidentally I was moving my family from New York City to a farm in New Jersey. I was changing everything about my life that week. And frankly, I had no idea how I was going to do it. My daughter was about to start kindergarten. My son was heading into preschool at a new school. And all of a sudden, because my CNN role was over,

I was thrust into stay-at-home dad life.

I wish everyone could have a stay-at-home dad phase. If I could wave a public policy wand, that's what I would do. Even though kids can be quite challenging.

Two, being on the outside after so many years inside CNN, was a really valuable perspective change. I had only ever worked for two institutions, the New York Times and CNN, two of the biggest news outlets in the world. To become a freelancer and write for lots of different places and go on lots of different TV channels helped me see the journalism business differently. Being more of a casual news consumer and not caring so much about the minute-by-minute headlines was a mental health break. It was a valuable change in perspective.

**Why? What were you able to learn by consuming the news as an outsider that you missed while you were an insider?**

The news environment is really well-suited for news junkies. It is not as well-produced for casual news consumers, people who don't really care about politics. And in that space, in that vacuum, there's opportunity. We saw this in the recent election, where people who were really well informed about news went one way, and people who preferred podcasts and TikTok went another way.

In addition to the show on Sundays, I was doing the Reliable Sources newsletter six nights a week and writing hundreds of stories a year on CNN.com. I feel like I almost never caught my breath. And once I caught my breath, I thought differently about the work I was doing. I usually started my stories in the middle and not at the beginning, meaning I was writing about the latest developments with X or Y. And that makes total sense for that environment. But maybe the news industry could do a better job starting stories at the beginning for people who need to be caught up.

Also, it was just fun to write for different magazines and try to write at different lengths. I almost felt like I was back at the Towerlight. **TU**

 [towson.edu/stelter](http://towson.edu/stelter)  
for more of this interview

#TU proud



**Say Hello to Your Newest (Food-Delivering) Friends**

Beginning in early March, five robots began delivering meals and drinks from select Union Food Market locations to more than 50 outdoor drop-off spots across campus. The robots are part of a pilot program from TU's Dining Services in partnership with GrubHub and Starship Technologies.

The robots contain locked, temperature-controlled compartments to prevent spills and ensure food and drinks remain at the desired temperature. Designed to act like pedestrians, they use radar, sensors and GPS to travel on campus sidewalks, detect obstacles and traverse crosswalks along Cross Campus Drive. Alarms, cameras and tracking devices protect against theft and alert staff when they need support.

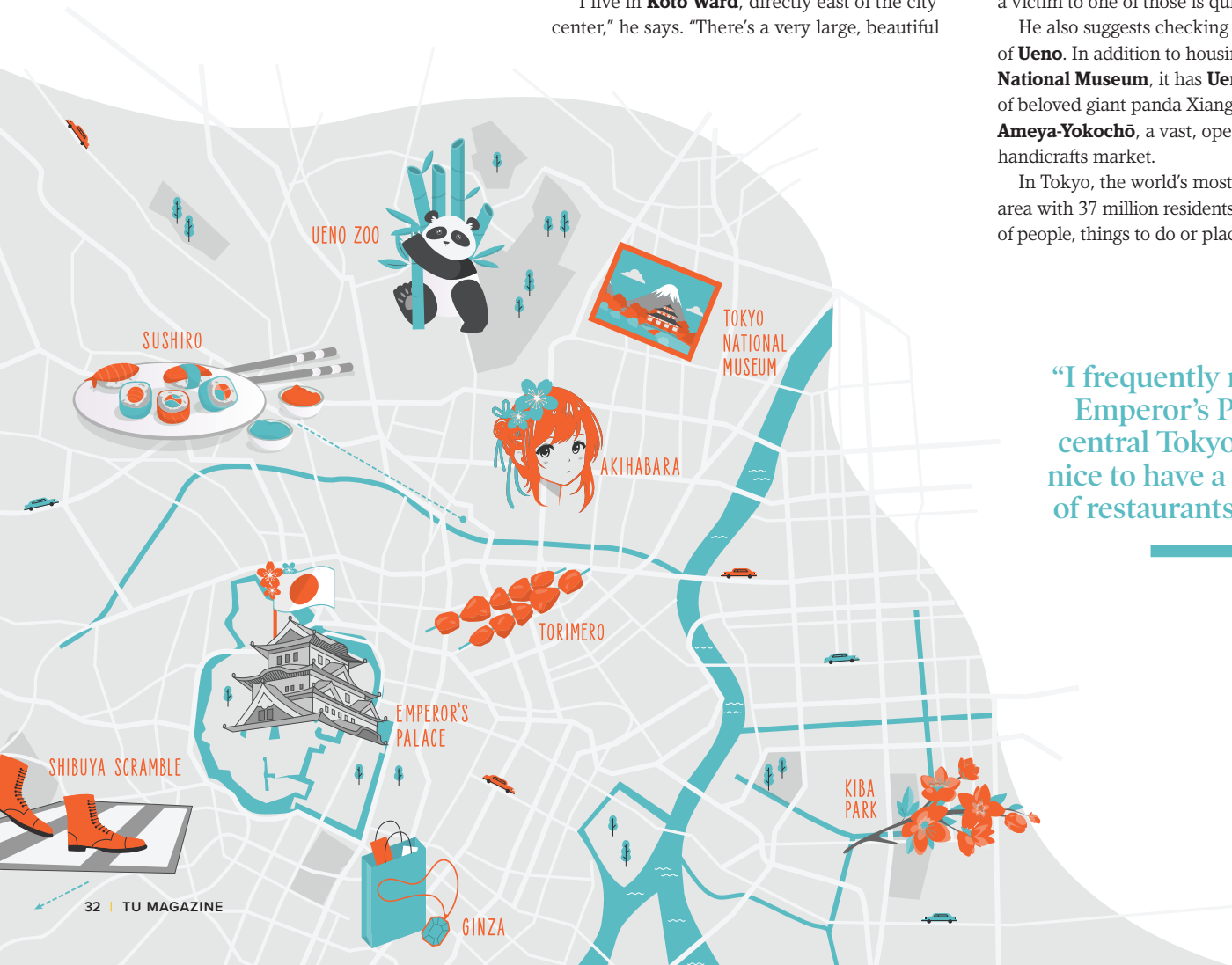




MY TOWN

Alex Wise '19  
Tokyo, Japan

- FAVORITE MUSEUM  
Tokyo National Museum
- LANDMARK  
Imperial Palace
- HIDDEN GEM  
Harumi Flag neighborhood
- TOURIST ATTRACTION  
Tokyo Skytree
- BOOK SET IN TOKYO  
"Norwegian Wood" by Haruki Murakami



Alex Wise was born and raised in central Maryland. When it came time to choose a college, he picked TU, just an hour or so up Rt. 70 from home. Aside from family vacations around the U.S., he hadn't done much traveling before setting his sights on Japan.

The business administration major's career path was initially obstructed by a global pandemic, but he eventually settled into a position at a language services provider that offered translation. Wise had taken an introductory Japanese class his last semester at TU, and he had continued studying on his own, by reading books and conversing with native speakers.

"In 2022, after a year [as a project manager working with translators and clients], I decided to apply for a master's degree program in Japan," Wise says. "I thought, 'If you don't live where the language is spoken, you can't get to that next level [of proficiency].'"

After earning a master's degree from the Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, Wise found a job at Bank of America as a corporate audit officer focusing on trading desks. He makes sure individuals who are selling stocks, bonds and securities are following industry and company rules.

When moving to Tokyo, Wise wanted a neighborhood conducive to his hobbies of running and fitness.

"I live in **Koto Ward**, directly east of the city center," he says. "There's a very large, beautiful

park named **Kiba**, about a kilometer from where I live. And I frequently run at the **Emperor's Palace** in central Tokyo. And it's nice to have a large area of restaurants around."

Among Wise's favorite places to dine out are **Sushiro**, a conveyer belt sushi restaurant, and **Torimero**, which features grilled chicken on skewers and general pub food.

"My favorite sushi is any kind of nigiri, which has raw fish sticking to a ball of rice, and I really like the negima, a skewer of grilled chicken and leeks," he says.

Wise also likes to pick up yaki-imo, a kind of roasted sweet potatoes commonly found at food trucks. Sights he recommends seeing are the **Shibuya Scramble**, a bustling, vibrant neighborhood with a huge traffic crossing; **Akihabara**, an area focused on electronics and popular culture genres like anime and manga; **Ginza**, an upscale shopping district; and **Sensō-ji**, a popular shrine to visit in Asakusa.

No matter where in Tokyo you go, Wise says a feeling of personal safety will follow (but it's wise to take care anyway).

"People often mention they feel very safe here compared to the U.S. or a European city," he says. "People don't have guns here. Violent crime incidents are rare. And especially when you're in a city as massive as Tokyo, the odds of becoming a victim to one of those is quite low."

He also suggests checking out the district of **Ueno**. In addition to housing the **Tokyo National Museum**, it has **Ueno Zoo**, the home of beloved giant panda Xiang Xiang, and **Ameya-Yokochō**, a vast, open-air food and handicrafts market.

In Tokyo, the world's most populous urban area with 37 million residents, there's no shortage of people, things to do or places to go.

"I frequently run at the Emperor's Palace in central Tokyo. And it's nice to have a large area of restaurants around."

Alumni News



California Trip

We're returning to Southern California June 20–22. Keep an eye out for more information.



Roar at the Shore

We're beachbound June 26–28 with an exciting weekend of activities in Maryland and Delaware. The schedule includes a Delmarva Shorebirds game, happy hour, family day at Jolly Roger Amusement Park and more.

View the full calendar at [alumni.towson.edu/events](https://alumni.towson.edu/events).



DADR Nominations

Help identify our most impressive Tigers! Nominate a deserving candidate for a Distinguished Alumni or Deans' Recognition Award by July 15 at [alumni.towson.edu/DADR](https://alumni.towson.edu/DADR).



2024 DADR Awards

As part of Homecoming Week, we celebrated eight noteworthy Tigers for tremendous accomplishments in their respective fields. The Distinguished Alumni & Deans' Recognition Awards are the highest honors presented by the alumni association annually.

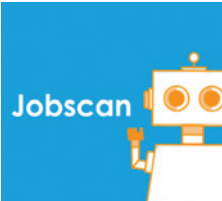
<b>Distinguished Alumni Award</b> Paul Wiedefeld '79 <i>College of Liberal Arts</i>	<b>Deans' Recognition Awards</b> Edna Primrose '84 <i>College of Business &amp; Economics</i>	Jeanne Coviello '88 <i>College of Health Professions</i>
<b>Distinguished Young Alumni Award</b> Matthew Broadwater '17 <i>Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science &amp; Mathematics</i>	Bradley Absher '15 <i>College of Education</i>	Shannon Avery '89 <i>College of Liberal Arts</i>
	Joan Cox '91 <i>College of Fine Arts &amp; Communication</i>	John Gaudiello '79 <i>Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science &amp; Mathematics</i>

Tigers Summer Reading Challenge Returns

As the days get longer, we're reminded that summer is on the way. That means it's time for our second-annual reading challenge, which will run June through August. We've kept fan-favorite categories like books recommended by a fellow Tiger, titles published the year you graduated and books featuring TU colors on the cover, but we've added some new options like romance and a title recommended on social media. Take the fun of reading to the next level by tracking your progress across a variety of genres. Sign up at [alumni.towson.edu/summerreading](https://alumni.towson.edu/summerreading) to receive your kit, including a bingo board and reading log. Then upload your log with at least five categories completed by Aug. 31, and you'll be entered to win exciting raffle prizes.



Introducing a New Career Resource



We've recently partnered with Jobscan to provide TU alumni a practical, all-in-one tool to fine-tune resumes, stand out and land more interviews. Jobscan helps align your resume to specific job descriptions and applicant tracking systems by highlighting crucial keywords, skills and qualifications employers are looking for. In addition to optimizing your resume for particular roles, Jobscan can assist with creating cover letters and enhancing your LinkedIn profile. The premium service is free to TU alumni. Learn more and request access at [alumni.towson.edu/jobscan](https://alumni.towson.edu/jobscan).





**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI & DEANS' RECOGNITION CELEBRATION:** On Oct. 17, we recognized eight outstanding alumni at the annual DADR event. Guests enjoyed networking, cocktails and heavy hors d'oeuvres ahead of the award ceremony, which featured inspiring reflections from the 2024 honorees.

- 1. Distinguished Young Alumni recipient Matthew Broadwater '17 and Distinguished Alumni recipient Paul Wiedefeld '79
- 2. Deans' Recognition Award recipients stand alongside deans from their respective colleges.
- 3. Edmund Rhynes, Jonas Jacobson '90, Edna Primrose '84, Wanda Primrose Coates and Ed McDonald '78
- 4. College of Liberal Arts Dean's Recognition recipient Shannon Avery '89 (center) and her family



**TU NIGHT WITH THE CAPS:** On Jan. 8, Tigers met in Washington, D.C., for a reception at Clyde's of Gallery Place followed by an exciting Capitals game. The Caps defeated the Vancouver Canucks in an overtime thriller.

- 1. Emily Byrnes '23 and Ashley Rucker '24
- 2. Sarita Sullivan '20, Eboni Coffey '22 and David Malloy '07
- 3. President Mark Ginsberg, Paul Bresson '91, Michael Stashik '91, Elaine Anderson, Adrian Moore '91 and Jon Solovey '92
- 4. Joseph Nickens '18 and Jai-Leen James '16



**WINTER VOLUNTEERING:** On Feb. 1, alumni worked with The Salvation Army, packaging boxes of nutritious grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy to be delivered to seniors in need. In three hours of service, Tigers put together more than 900 boxes of groceries.

- 1. Janet St. Pierre '89, Michael St. Pierre '18, Jessica Harris '20, Jacqueline Zecher '19, '22 and Benita Bazemore-Cook '01
- 2. Robin Pettiford '94 and Ashena Sparrow '18, '23
- 3. Michael '96 and Tanya Kubik with their family
- 4. Proud Tigers at the end of their shift



**TU ALUMNI ALLIANCE EVENTS:** Alumni alliances host a variety of social and professional events to keep Tigers connected with TU and each other throughout the year.

- 1. The LGBTQ+ Alumni Alliance hosted a lively drag brunch Nov. 9 at The Manor.
- 2. Layla Morgan '25 participated in "Brunching with Black Excellence," hosted by the Towson Black Alumni Alliance Feb. 22.
- 3. Katherine Gavin '98, Lisa Michoki '07 and Gennadiy Todd '18 attended the Ask Me Anything networking reception with the TU Business & Leadership Alumni Alliance March 7.
- 4. Nieco Magtanong '14, Casey Calvert '10 and Kaitlyn Maltese '13 played alongside fellow TU Marching Band Alumni Alliance members Jan. 18.








# Class Notes

**SEND US YOUR NEWS!**  
We'd like to hear about your personal and professional lives.

**SEND MAIL TO:**  
Alumni Relations, Towson University,  
8000 York Rd. Towson, MD 21252-0001

**EMAIL:**  
alumni@towson.edu

**WEB:**  
alumni.towson.edu/classnotes

-  **Tiger Connect:**  
alumni.towson.edu
-  **Facebook:**  
Towson University Alumni Association
-  **Twitter:**  
@towsonualumni
-  **Instagram:**  
@towsonalum
-  **Tag your posts:**  
#TowsonUAlum

## 1950s

**JIM ADDY '55** was awarded with a plaque and proclamation for his dedication during his 10 years as mayor of Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

## 1960s

**LAWRENCE MARTIN '69** was inducted into the Maryland Senior Citizens Hall of Fame in October 2024.

## 1970s

**SHERRY MELHORN '79** spends time at the Harford County senior centers participating in activities including chair volleyball, ping pong, pickleball, bingo,



exercise classes, cardio drumming, bocce ball, games, cards and movies. She also enjoys gardening at home. She retired in 2017 from the Defense Mapping Agency after 36 years.

## 1980s

**JOANN CAIN '86**, a longtime musician and educator, won the 2024 Avivo Prize, a \$5,000 award given annually to a music educator who



demonstrates noteworthy creativity in teaching and the ability to provide students with a strong

foundation in musicianship skills. Currently in her third year teaching K–5 music at Harford Day School in Bel Air, Maryland, Cain previously served for 14 years as a music educator in the Baltimore County Public Schools.

**JOE HELENSKY '87** published his first novel, “Distant Relative,” in



September 2024. Set in Baltimore and Seattle, the novel explores the question of what you would do now if you learned you harmed someone long ago.

**MARY ANNE PERRY '87** served as the live announcer for the Anti-Defamation League’s In Concert Against Hate at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in November. Among Perry’s duties was introducing Ben Stiller as master of ceremonies.

## 1990s

**TERRENCE CASEY '90** published his fourth book, “Forging the Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher, the 1970s, and the Origins of Neoliberalism.”

**DERRICK TERRY '95** was appointed to the Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) at the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center. The PFAC includes community-minded patients and their family members, community members and representatives from the

hospital who work with leadership.

**TARA ELLIOTT '96** was elected district court judge in Missoula, Montana, on Nov. 5, 2024. Elliott most recently was an assistant United States attorney for the District of Montana. Before that Elliott was an assistant district attorney for the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office in New York City.

## 2000s

**SHANNON MILLIGAN URBANCIK '04** published her first book, “I Hear Her Say.” It focuses on self-perception and how it affects those around us. Although picture books are typically thought of for children, the message of this story is relatable to people of all ages.

**JAKE FISHBEIN '05** founded Highlighter, an innovative AI-powered platform transforming how



families navigate special education. Drawing from his own experience as a parent of children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and his passion for education that began during his time at TU, he created Highlighter to provide instant, personalized support for families managing their children’s special education journeys. The platform helps parents understand complex documents like IEPs, creates meeting talking points and tracks educational progress.



### **ABBY MACQUEEN '19** Sustainable Success

From her apartment in Towson to her brick-and-mortar store in Wildwood, New Jersey, Abby MacQueen has built her sustainable surf company from the ground up.

As a kid, MacQueen spent her summers at the Jersey shore. Passionate about protecting the environment and being creative, she participated in beach clean-ups and could always be found crafting or upcycling clothing.

She established her brand, Guppi Sustainable Surf Company while she was a sophomore at TU. Born from her love of the ocean, surfing and her passion for environmental consciousness, Guppi is a surf company that produces apparel and accessories with sustainable materials such as bamboo, organic cotton and hemp. All screen printed and embroidered items are handmade by MacQueen.

“As convenient as fast fashion is, I wanted to create something that was sustainable and eco-friendly and that everybody could feel comfortable in,” she says. “I educated myself on sustainability issues, and I continue to do so to keep growing.”

Finding the confidence to pursue her own business venture took time, and the mentorship she received at TU was invaluable, she says.

She brought her idea of sustainably creating clothing to TU professor Jan Baum, director of the entrepreneurship minor in the College of Business & Economics, who encouraged her to add

a minor in entrepreneurship to her major in mass communication and media studies.

MacQueen’s entrepreneurship class had the biggest impact on her business plan. She had to produce a prototype of an item for her mock business, so she set up a crowdfund for screen printing equipment to get started.

While juggling her responsibilities as TU’s mascot, Doc, and participating in business competitions, MacQueen ran Guppi on the weekends at festivals and markets.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit soon after she entered the workforce in 2019. Like many creatives at the time, MacQueen was caught between choosing a corporate path to pay her bills and pursuing Guppi full time. But she stayed the course and followed her dream.

In 2022, MacQueen established Guppi’s first brick-and-mortar store in Wildwood. Now, for three seasons and counting, Guppi offers unique products that encourage sustainable and slow fashion consumption.

“If you have an idea, just do it,” she says. “I was losing sleep over my business for at least a year because I was focused on finding a stable corporate job. Instead, I realized I’d rather take the risk while I’m young and still have the opportunity to.”

Ultimately, she knows she caught the right wave.  
—By Grace Hoggarth





**ANDREW MARTINI '23**

## Hitting the Right Note

More than 700,000 autistic people will transition into adulthood in the U.S. in the next decade. And 85% of autistic college graduates are unemployed or underemployed.

Thanks in part to TU, Andrew Martini is not one of them.

Martini was part of the first cohort of the Autism Hiring Program in TU’s Hussman Center for Adults with Autism. The center partnered with the Autism Society of Maryland to help highly skilled and eager adults navigate the job search process and become a part of the workforce. The program comes at no cost to participants.

Martini graduated with a degree in music from the College of Fine Arts and Communication and saw the program as a path to supplementing his income and a way to learn additional skills that will also help him thrive in other aspects of his life.

“My main job right now is to be a professional vocalist on the weekend, but I wanted something more consistent,” says Martini, who has sung the national anthem before a TU basketball game. “Since graduating from the program, I’ve gotten a couple of job offers.”

One was a food prep chef position for Aramark’s Tiger Hospitality Catering Team, which Martini ultimately ended up accepting. Ebony Harris, Tiger Hospitality’s HR manager, was thrilled to have Martini join the team. “We want to continue to diversify the workplace, and by hiring neurodiverse candidates, our entire staff can begin to normalize interacting with autistic adults too,” she says.

As part of the 10-week schedule, participants meet weekly to discuss different topics of professionalism, such as communication, interview skills, networking and anxiety in the workplace. Guided by Kimberly Hubscher, Autism Hiring Program coordinator, the candidates share advice with each other, discuss hesitations they may have and determine solutions.

“We want to encourage and empower all the candidates to learn the skills in our program, find opportunities and make connections with potential employers that are eager to embrace neurodiversity,” she says.

Also weekly, the cohort members meet one-on-one with Hubscher to work on their professional goals. Departments across campus have been engaged in developing skills assistance for program participants. For example, the Department of Human Resources conducted mock interviews with candidates to help prepare for the real thing.

“I hadn’t ever applied to a ‘real job,’ so all the information helped quell my nerves,” Martini says. “The mock interviews were the most helpful, and I learned all about resume building.”

But the program was more for Martini than professional development. “I was able to network and share achievements that might go unappreciated to others,” he says. “If you’re struggling, other people are in the same boat as you. When you achieve things, you get to share in the successes.”

—By Jamie Abell

**GREGORY JANOS '05** recently was named director of alumni relations at his high school alma mater, The Harvey School in Westchester County, New York.

**JESSICA E. MCCLAIN '06** was accepted into the esteemed 2024–25 Obama Foundation Leaders USA program. McClain's selection from a highly competitive pool of over 6,000 applicants highlights her leadership



and dedication to fostering meaningful social change. She joins a group of 205 global leaders committed to inspiring, empowering and connecting with emerging changemakers across the world.

**KENDRA SMITH '08, '23,** a dance teacher at John F. Kennedy High School in Wheaton, Maryland, was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. She was one of 14 public school educators in the Washington, D.C. region to win grants of between \$2,500 and \$5,000, which are awarded annually to public high school teachers who bring new and exciting performing arts experiences to students.

## 2010s

**JULIA BIALESKI '12** published the book, “Leading with Grace: Cultivating Hope, Authenticity, and a Focus on People Throughout the Leadership Lifespan.”

The book combines personal stories from Bialeski’s time as an elementary school principal with actionable steps for all leaders, regardless of their experience or field.

**BILLY FANSHAWE '14** founded the vodka brand Lytos in 2019. The vodka, which is infused with electrolytes, received a patent for its innovative electrolyte-enhanced content and proprietary production process. Lytos is the first vodka brand to successfully infuse added electrolytes into spirits.

**ALESSANDRA CASCARANO '15** published her first children’s book, “There’s More to Me: A Story about Self-Discovery.”



It’s a picture book that inspires children to embrace their unique qualities, dream boldly and explore their limitless potential.

## 2020s

**NOELLE COOK '20** served as associate producer and researcher (and appeared on screen) for the feature documentary “The Conspiracists.” The



film, based on nearly four years of ethnographic research, explores the impact of conspiracy-fueled beliefs on individuals and democracy.

**GARRICK ROSS '20** joined Ogletree Deakins’ Baltimore office as an associate.

**JESSICA NICHOLS '20** was named a 2024 Howard County Teacher of the Year



for her work at River Hill High School. She also sits on the board of Columbia Community Care, a non-profit that services the needs of Howard County’s less fortunate, and is president of the Columbia Democratic Club.

**GRIFFIN BREIDENBAUGH '22** was promoted to sales and marketing director at ACS Industrial Services,

a leading provider of industrial electronic repair services. Griffin, son of owner Ellen Breidenbaugh and late founder Arnie Breidenbaugh, has been an integral part of the family-owned business since childhood, contributing in various capacities from shipping and receiving to marketing, management and accounting.

**JAMES CARLINE '23** won a 2024 Capital regional Emmy for “Solus



Country,” a film he made while a student at TU’s Department of Electronic Media & Film.

“I couldn’t have secured the patent for Lytos Vodka without the Towson University chemistry department. One of the challenges I faced was there had been other vodkas that had claimed to be adding electrolytes, but we needed scientific data showing the difference between mixing in spring water into a spirit and actually adding electrolytes into a spirit. The lab testing verified the substantial difference between the two.”

**BILLY FANSHAWE '14**

*Courtesy of Aisha Olemba*



**AISHA OLEMBA '21**

## The Stars Aren’t the Limit

Dance has always been a part of Aisha Olemba’s DNA. She was in her middle school dance company and on her high school pom team. When she came to TU, Olemba became a founding member of the VIBE dance team. As much as she loved the movement of dance, she never thought it was something she could pursue professionally.

Fast forward just a few years and Olemba (pictured left) already has an impressive resume under her belt. She danced for popstar SZA’s S.O.S Tour, has choreographed music videos for other artists and now teaches choreography classes for all ages in Los Angeles, where she lives.

Olemba attended TU through the Credit for Prior Learning, which offers an opportunity for TU students to receive college credit for abilities they may have acquired through life experience, personal study and/or military course work. She graduated with a degree in family and human services and planned to become a family and marriage therapist, but after attending a dance competition in New York City with VIBE for the third time, encouragement from a professional Broadway dancer changed the course of her life.

When she moved to California her goal was to be a dance educator. One day a friend needed a ride to a class hosted by SZA’s choreographer. Olemba was supposed to babysit that day, but when the family cancelled, she purchased the last ticket to the class.

In the middle of the class, SZA walked into the room and locked eyes with Olemba as she danced. Before Olemba knew it, she was added to a group chat called “S.O.S Tour Dancers.” For most professional dancers, it can take years if not an entire career to become a backup dancer for an artist as big as SZA.

“I’m doing something I would have never thought someone of my size would be doing,” Olemba says. “I had to remind myself, ‘You did not get this opportunity by mistake. Do what you need to do to get the job done.’ I have never worked so hard for something in my life.”

With what she learned at TU and the community she built, Olemba seeks to impart confidence and independence in her students, especially children. She plans to one day return to her academic roots and earn a master’s degree in family therapy to continue to inspire the next generation.

“I remind my students that the skies and the stars aren’t the limit,” she says. “You can do it all.”

—By Grace Hoggarth



**towson.edu/olemba** to watch her dance



# In Memoriam

## Alumni

**Paul P. Miller '36**  
Dec. 22, 2020

**Margaret V. (Dryden) Race '44**  
Aug. 3, 2024

**Ann L. France '45** Landis  
Oct. 5, 2024

**Ann L. Callan '49**  
Sept. 2, 2021

**Margaret M. (Morey) Eline '52**  
Aug. 21, 2022

**Margaret P. (Phillips) Lee '53**  
Feb. 27, 2024

**Sylvia S. (Shilmover) Schneider '53**  
Dec. 3, 2023

**Geraldine C. (Cosgrove) Ciotti '54**  
Jan. 11, 2020

**Reece Livingston '54 '56**  
Nov. 13, 2024

**Jean (McLearn )Lyng '54**  
Sept. 13, 2021

**Jacquelyn C. Wolfe '54**  
Oct. 13, 2023

**Alice L. (Lazarus) Haber '55**  
Feb. 24, 2025

**Edward L. Allridge '57**  
Feb. 15, 2025

**Rhoda G. (Gammerman) Bennett '57**  
Dec. 13, 2023

**Iris L. (Langdon) Drum '57**  
Nov. 20, 2024

**Wanda K. (Keller) Easterday '57**  
Dec. 10, 2024

**Madaline A. (Webster ) Robinson '57**  
Dec. 12, 2023

**Joseph P. Taymans '57**  
Dec. 12, 2024

**Sandra M. (Miller ) Ashkenas '58**  
Feb. 20, 2025

**Margaret W. (Walters ) Helfrich '58**  
Feb. 16, 2025

**Helen R. North '58**  
Oct. 15, 2024

**Georgeann F. (Fondulis) Fagas '59**  
Dec. 21, 2024

**Myra A. Harris '59**  
Feb. 1, 2025

**Harold N. Hough '59**  
May 10, 2023

**Marcia S. (Storm) Lang '59**  
Dec. 29, 2023

**Frederick W. Levin '59**  
Oct. 23, 2024

**Margaret L. (Gross) Truszkowski '59**  
Feb. 24, 2025

**Clark R. Hunt '60**  
April 19, 2024

**Elizabeth J. Barger '61**  
Dec. 22, 2024

**Nancy A. (Thomas) Berry '61**  
Oct. 21, 2024

**Marian A. (Stairs) Fischer '61**  
Oct. 2, 2024

**Henry I. Foxman '62**  
Dec. 24, 2024

**Arlene C. (Cohen) Fishkind '63**  
Dec. 6, 2024

**Barbara O. (Orr) Singleton '63**  
Oct. 25, 2023

**Nancy G. (Greene) Brewer '64**  
March 9, 2022

**Gregory J. Honchar '64**  
Sept. 10, 2023

**Victor R. Petrosino Jr. '64 '73**  
Nov. 5, 2024

**Norma B. (Bond) McCormack '65**  
Nov. 17, 2023

**Frank A. Sansone '65**  
Jan. 24, 2025

**Louis N. Kamm '66**  
Sept. 18, 2022

**Dorothy B. Watters '66**  
2025

**Evelyn J. (Badalamenti) Zimmerman '66**  
Dec. 12, 2024

**Christine M. Bost '67**  
Feb. 15, 2025

**Laura L. V. (Vulgaris) Coleman '67**  
Sept. 22, 2024

**George Gary McLain '67**  
May 1, 2024

**Jerry D. Ayers '68 '73**  
June 12, 2024

**Maureen B. Barber '68**  
Aug. 27, 2024

**Leroy E. Barrick '68**  
Nov. 13, 2024

**Judith H. (Hammond) Guffey '68**  
Jan. 30, 2021

**Judith (Hatch) Phillips '68**  
Jan. 24, 2025

**Ethel G. Rothe '68**  
Dec. 9, 2024

**Gary M. Backof '69**  
Dec. 10, 2021

**Adele A. (Ritzel) Barker '69**  
July 9, 2024

**Marjorie L. Davis '69**  
Dec. 28, 2024

**Paula R. Gerding '69**  
Dec. 2023

**Harvey B. Goren '69**  
Oct. 6, 2024

**Carl E. Herbert '69**  
Nov. 2024

**Virginia G. (Gorges) King '69**  
Feb. 29, 2024

**James Stanley Lee Jr. '69**  
Dec. 14, 2024

**Linda M. (Sloan) Madden '69**  
Nov. 6, 2023

**Margaret A. Reitz '69**  
Oct. 17, 2023

**Catherine I. Riley '69**  
Sept. 30, 2024

**John W. Thomas '69**  
Dec. 8, 2024

**Eileen F. Cooper '70**  
Feb. 4, 2024

**Priscilla Jean (Crovo) Dempster '70**  
Dec. 20, 2024

**Eric W. Donoho '70**  
Jan. 5, 2025

**Janice Ann (Latchford) Kaplan '70**  
Nov. 28, 2024

**Samuel J. Scalzi Jr. '70**  
July 22, 2024

**Michelle Joyce (Filkins) Stupak '70**  
Dec. 5, 2024

**Carol L. Taylor '70**  
Feb. 16, 2025

**Bruce T. Bradshaw '71**  
Sept. 18, 2022

**Mary Ann (Kellar) Bradshaw '71**  
Jan. 8, 2025

**Harvey E. Cottle '71**  
Dec. 5, 2023

**Duane E. Eaton '71**  
July 3, 2024

**Sharon D. (Debonis) Hodges '71**  
Dec. 4, 2023

**Cynthia A. Huesman '71**  
April 23, 2024

**Elizabeth A. (Maher) Mikkelson '71**  
Oct. 7, 2024

**Donna M. Rongione '71**  
Jan. 30, 2025

**John J. Youngblood '71**  
Nov. 22, 2024

**Lois B. (Brown) Bonner '72**  
June 1, 2024

**Mary E. (Fotiadis) Buck '72**  
Nov. 27, 2024

**Elizabeth B. Cawkwell '72 '74**  
Oct. 12, 2024

**Michael Ciuchta '72**  
Oct. 4, 2023

**Durward H. Farley '72**  
Sept. 17, 2024

**Hugh J. Gallagher III '72**  
Sept. 18, 2024

**Richard Nelson Garner Jr. '72**  
Feb. 1, 2025

**Marsha L. (Muser) Lurie '72**  
Oct. 21, 2024

**Kaye I. Merrey '72**  
Jan. 24, 2025

**Robert R. Scheer '72**  
Dec. 16, 2024

**Rhea Piperberg Weinbrom '72**  
Nov. 3, 2024

**Sharon A. (Bayly) Wisniewski '72**  
Jan. 7, 2025

**Arlene E. (Keys) Ditty '73**  
Oct. 10, 2023

**Shirley E. (Green) Gavlin '73**  
Oct. 21, 2023

**Bruce O. King '73**  
Dec. 11, 2024

**Anthony P. Lombardi '73**  
Nov. 13, 2023

**James Alvin Massey '73**  
Oct. 8, 2024

**Eileen A. Mikolayunas '73**  
Sept. 23, 2024

**Randal T. Shaffer '73**  
Aug. 12, 2020

**George G. Weinberg '73**  
March 17, 2020

**Jeffrey C. Ayers '74**  
Jan. 25, 2021

**Ronald G. Browning '74**  
Dec. 12, 2024

**Robert Bruce Cave '74**  
April 25, 2024

**Sarah E. Halberstadt '74**  
Dec. 11, 2023

**Richard Jozwiak '74**  
Oct. 18, 2024

**Betsy B. (Beasley) Kowalchek '74**  
Oct. 7, 2024

**Eleanor A. McShea '74**  
Dec. 18, 2024

**Joan M. (Harlow) Morgan '74**  
2024

**Richard L. Sparenberg '74**  
April 3, 2024

**Melvin I. Starkey Jr. '74**  
Dec. 1, 2024

**Wayne William Wolff '74**  
Sept. 4, 2023

**Jeffrey I. Amdur '75**  
Sept. 27, 2024

**Robert Finn Jr. '75**  
Jan. 9, 2025

**Evelyn J. Grudza '75**  
Feb. 25, 2025

**James Warren Halbert '75**  
June 23, 2022

**Gerald A. Halpern '75**  
May 3, 2020

**Janet S. Helme '75**  
Dec. 19, 2024

**David J. Hoeckel '75**  
Jan. 5, 2025

**Joan R. Mansfield '75**  
March 24, 2022

**Susan L. Noonan '75**  
March 3, 2024

**Marilyn M. (Johnson) Owens '75**  
Jan. 25, 2025

**David W. Shrodes '75**  
Jan. 6, 2025

**Louise (Hicks) Smith '75**  
April 14, 2024

**Louis W. Steinwedel '76**  
Nov. 1, 2024

**Naomi K. (Kyte) Binko '76**  
Sept. 25, 2024

**William E. Glassman '76**  
Dec. 14, 2023

**Deborah J. (Turner) Huey '76**  
2024

**David M. Lucantoni '76**  
Feb. 28, 2024

**Michael J. Panchision '76**  
Jan. 27, 2025

**Linda M. Schmidt '76**  
Feb. 4, 2025

**William M. Uebel '76**  
March 20, 2024

**Bruce K. Barnes '77**  
2022

**Louisa (Heppner) Bowman '77**  
Sept. 10, 2024

**Robert P. Fagan '77**  
Sept. 15, 2024

**Sue A. (Borrelli) Foster '77**  
Oct. 15, 2024

**Norma L. Gaunt '77**  
Dec. 26, 2022

**Joseph Heidelmaier '77**  
May 21, 2024

**Robert A. Kolb '77**  
July 28, 2024

**Karen M. Lindemann '77**  
Feb. 16, 2025

**Louis C. Moseley Jr. '77**  
Feb. 23, 2023

**Carolyn M. Mugno '77**  
Feb. 7, 2024

**Myrta G. Olivera '77**  
Oct. 29, 2024

**Bradley E. Stafford '77**  
Nov. 8, 2023

**June E. (Nosedo) Bonney '78**  
Nov. 5, 2024

**Susan D. (Ridenovr) Dooley '78**  
Nov. 4, 2024

**Constance Fenwick '78**  
Dec. 25, 2023

**Marjorie L. (Pederson) Lieske '78**  
Dec. 25, 2024

**Malcolm R. Parker '78**  
Jan. 24, 2021

**Leslie B. (Brooks) Steirer '78**  
Dec. 29, 2023

**James Luther Wilson '78**  
April 15, 2024

**Martin C. Best '79**  
Oct. 17, 2021

**Lynda M. Bowman '79**  
Sept. 14, 2024

**Margaret R. Cushing-Knox '79**  
Nov. 23, 2023

**Dennis E. Schehl '79**  
Feb. 9, 2020

**Lynn M. McTigue '80**  
Nov. 20, 2024

**Kenneth Edward Beatty '81**  
Dec. 28, 2023

**John A. Cook '81**  
Nov. 2023

**Carolyn M. (Metcalf) Mollenkopf '81**  
Dec. 2, 2023

**Barbara W. (Woolf) Carson '82**  
Feb. 4, 2024

**Kevin W. Underdown '82**  
March 7, 2024

**Alan A. Soble '83**  
2024

**Carolyn Watson '83**  
Sept. 11, 2024

**Rosemarie T. Homberg '84**  
Feb. 9, 2025

**Richard J. Knauer Jr. '84**  
Aug. 25, 2024

**Robert J. Caswell Jr. '85**  
Nov. 16, 2024

**Patricia L. (Drescher) Gartrell '85**  
Dec. 12, 2024

**Joseph Franklin Platania '85**  
Jan. 18, 2024

**Paul V. Dresler '86**  
Jan. 14, 2024

**Leo J. King '86**  
Nov. 24, 2023

**Don Rodney Washington '86**  
2025

**Dawn Marie Reynolds '87**  
Oct. 28, 2024

**Sandra B. Vogel '87**  
Feb. 4, 2025

**Patti H. Wilson '87**  
Feb. 19, 2024

**Paula Cockerham '88**  
Aug. 14, 2024

**Kelly (Crockett) Wagner '88**  
Sept. 9, 2024

**William Keith Edwards '88**  
Nov. 9, 2023

**Harry E. Fisher '88**  
Nov. 6, 2024

**Miriam J. Hines '88**  
Jan. 20, 2025

**Richard S. McDonnell '88**  
Nov. 25, 2024

**Myles Norin '88**  
Sept. 28, 2024

**Mary T. (Tunncliff) Schaub '88**  
Oct. 31, 2023

**Christopher J. Strauch '88**  
Sept. 23, 2024

**Christian Jean De Gail '89**  
Dec. 6, 2024

**Steven Stanley Kivinski '89**  
April 5, 2024

**Joanne Keene O'Meara '89**  
Sept. 2024

**Richard H. Rosario '89**  
Jan. 16, 2025

**Michael A. Schilling '89**  
Feb. 3, 2025

**Cheryl Kay (Aronhalt) Smith '90**  
Feb. 4, 2025

**Elizabeth Mcclung Anzalone '91**  
Nov. 27, 2024

**Mark A. Facciani '91**  
Dec. 16, 2024

**Charles H. Gatten '91**  
Sept. 16, 2024

**Christina E. (Esser) Harper '91**  
Dec. 20, 2023

**John Howard Borleis III '92**  
May 14, 2024

**James Alan Botelle '92**  
Dec. 20, 2024

**Claiborne J. Christian III '92**  
May 29, 2024

**Mary Edith Sack '92**  
June 6, 2024

**Sandra S. Smith '93**  
Aug. 30, 2024

**Jim F. Young '93**  
March 15, 2024

**Curtis G. McCabe III '94**  
Feb. 4, 2025

**Jeanine Marie Reyes '94**  
2024

**Cathy A. Gansert '95**  
Jan. 16, 2025

**Eric J. Helfrich '95**  
July 8, 2024

**Timothy K. Knapp '95**  
Nov. 5, 2023

**George Bernard Tredway '96**  
Jan. 5, 2025

**Scott D. Guhse '96**  
Nov. 7, 2024

**Michael J. Ercolani '97**  
Jan. 15, 2024

**Sean C. Haile '97**  
April 17, 2024

**Adam Dennis Wolff '97**  
Sept. 21, 2024

**Michael C. Rumsey '98**  
April 15, 2024

**Brendan K. Gieron '98 '08**  
Sept. 2024

**Theresa M. Strakna '98**  
Dec. 29, 2024

**Maciej Powojski '99**  
Nov. 1, 2023

**Susan M. Turnbull '99**  
Oct. 29, 2024

**Cassandra L. Jones '00**  
June 22, 2023

**Bethany Ann Petr '00 '07**  
Feb. 7, 2022

**Nancy R. (Suter) Curry '01**  
Oct. 4, 2024

**Stephen F. Emm '01**  
Oct. 1, 2023

**Marjorie G. Ariff '02**  
April 4, 2024

**Steven A. French '02**  
July 15, 2021

**Beth A. Horgan '02**  
Nov. 8, 2023

**Joshua R. Jamison '03 '08**  
July 5, 2021

**Angela M. Snyder '03**  
Nov. 17, 2024

**Jarod Brett Herbert '05**  
Nov. 18, 2023

**Bryan T. Crawford '06**  
Oct. 27, 2024

**Katharine Jyotsna Greener-Hage '06 '13**  
Dec. 2, 2024

**Susan Rose Dodwell '07**  
Dec. 8, 2024

**Sarah R. (Carter) Boone '08**  
Nov. 6, 2023

**Bradley R. Freitas '08**  
Dec. 12, 2023

**Johnna Jane Alexander '09**  
Oct. 21, 2024

**Linda J. Carrick '09**  
Dec. 23, 2023

**Christopher D. Tomlinson '10**  
Oct. 29, 2024

**Julianna Elizabeth Watson '12**  
Oct. 27, 2024

**Victoria R. Anastasi '15**  
Jan. 12, 2025

**Janna K. Murr '17**  
Feb. 26, 2024

**David A. Ficca '24**  
Jan. 17, 2025

## Faculty & Staff

**James B. Binko '59**  
Aug. 12, 2024

**John F. Cuddy**  
Jan. 10, 2024

**Lorine T. Cummings**  
Aug. 8, 2024

**Marcelin W. Diagne**  
Jan. 20, 2024

**Charles A. Field Jr.**  
March 9, 2024

**Alexander C. Jaffurs**  
July 18, 2024

**Joseph E. Kelleher Jr. '72**  
Feb. 5, 2024

**Judith (Simpson) McGowan '63, '03, '06**  
March 10, 2024

**Aneil K. Mishra**  
Aug. 4, 2024

**Shari Lynn Preston**  
June 25, 2024

**Joseph Suhorsky**  
July 18, 2024

**Deitra Wengert '76**  
Jan. 16, 2025



# Rearview Mirror

FROM THE DESK OF FELICITY KNOX '94, Assistant University Archivist



ASK AN ARCHIVIST

## Hey Felicity...

**Q: How old is the Glen?**  
**A:** To many of us, the Glen looks like a primeval forest, standing in the middle of campus for time immemorial. Amidst all the changes on campus, the Glen remains mostly the same, a touchpoint for alumni for the last 100-plus years.

However, when the school moved to Towson in 1915, the Glen was just a small stretch of trees on formerly cleared farmland.

This photo from 1914 shows teams of horses clearing the land to begin construction of the building that would become Stephens Hall. This was taken from York Road, likely near where the Science Complex is today. The Glen, at this point, exists as the faint line of trees beyond the hill running along a small stream.

TU was the beneficiary of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in the 1930s, which is when the area was transitioned into a kind of nature preserve and classroom. The WPA created many of the structures we still see in the Glen, including the stone cottages, trails and the pavilion.

Have a question for Felicity? Email her at [fknox@towson.edu](mailto:fknox@towson.edu).

WHAT'S NEW

## Sen. Catherine I. Riley Papers

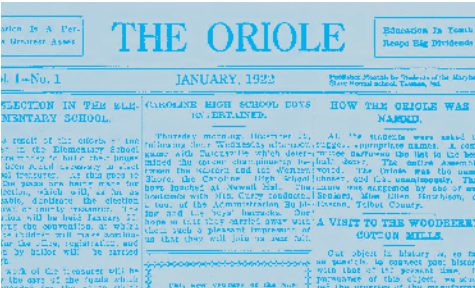
Special Collections and University Archives is honored to be the caregivers for the papers of the late state Sen. Catherine I. Riley '69, also a member of the Maryland House of Delegates from 1974 to 1982.

Sen. Riley's work in the State House included crafting legislation to help protect the Chesapeake Bay—inspired, no doubt, by her time at TU as a biology major. After her stint in the House of Delegates, she served in the Maryland Senate from 1983 to 1990.

Her papers will serve as a valuable resource for researchers exploring various topics such as politics, the environment and women's studies.



PAST



### 1922

The first student newspaper is published. What began as The Oriole became The Tower Light in 1926. The Towerlight is now available exclusively online.



### 1971

A campus radio station began broadcasting. It had many names, including WVTS, WCVT and WTMD. The current student-run station is XTSR and is available online.



### 1992

A student-run television station began. It was first called TSTV but is now WMJF-TV and posts updates on social media sites like Facebook and X.

CNN's Brian Stelter was editor of the Towerlight from 2005–07. Read his story on page 28.

PRESENT

# On My Bookshelf

## EVE GOLDEN, CLASS OF 1979

Growing up, Eve Golden's parents and grandparents surrounded her with books. Although she always loved reading, she was a theater major at TU and started her career working as a receptionist at an advertising agency in New York.

"I managed to work my way up into a copywriting position, and, from there, I went on to write for magazines and newspapers and then books," she says.

Golden has penned eight biographies on figures from Hollywood's Golden Age, like Jayne Mansfield and silent film star John Gilbert. On her website, Eve's Obits, she recounts the lives of recently deceased people with sharpness and wit, captured by the site's tagline: "People are dying who never died before!"

[towson.edu/golden](http://towson.edu/golden) for bonus picks



## In 1979...

Golden worked in TU's Historic Clothing Collection, which was among the many positive experiences she had as a student. "I made lots of great friends and took courses that I learned important things from." Here's some of what she was reading back then.



### "Vile Bodies" by Evelyn Waugh

My little group and I patterned our lives after the people in that book. They were scatterbrained and enthusiastic and misguided and very colorful. We just fell in love with them.



### "It" by Elinor Glyn

It's like the book version of the films they make fun of on "Mystery Science Theater." It's hilariously badly written in a good way.



### "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" by Anita Loos

It's absolutely hilarious in an intentionally good way. I still find myself using phrases from that book without even realizing it. It's just great comedy writing. It's still fresh after almost 100 years.



### "Bulfinch's Mythology" by Thomas Bulfinch

I was assigned this for a class at Towson. It's another one I can reread constantly. It's a book written in the late 19th century about the ancient Greek, Roman, Norse and Germanic gods.

## In 2025...

A resident of Lyndhurst, New Jersey, Golden remains an avid reader. Her latest biography, "Strictly Dynamite: The Sensational Life of Lupe Velez," was released by the University of Kentucky Press in 2023. These are the books she's loved lately.



### "Say Nothing" by Patrick Radden Keefe

It's a wonderful, terrifying, depressing book about the Troubles in Ireland in the late '60s and '70s.



### "The Bishop and the Butterfly" by Michael Wolraich

I was hoping somebody would write a book about Vivian Gordon and thank goodness they did. She was a very sketchy character in New York in the teens and '20s, and she was blackmailing the wrong people.



### "Rainbow's End: The Judy Garland Show" by Coyne Sanders

I watched "The Judy Garland Show" when I was a little kid with my parents. This is a history of why that show was a disaster. The author takes no prisoners.



### "The Unwomanly Face of War" by Svetlana Alexievich

It's a series of interviews of women who served on the front lines in World War II from Russia. And it's just harrowing. It's so upsetting that I had to put it down several times while reading it.



# From Towson, With Love

At TU, thousands of romances have blossomed in dorm rooms, dining halls and at dance parties—no swiping right necessary. Tell us about yours by emailing [munger@towson.edu](mailto:munger@towson.edu).



## Darrick Sesker

CLASS OF 2008, SPORTS MANAGEMENT MAJOR

I was a senior in high school, and she was in the ninth grade, and both of us were playing sports. When I transferred to TU, I came from a junior college before the basketball season. I was initially ineligible to play, and that's when our time together picked up a lot because I was a normal student at that point.

Our birthdays are around the holidays, so when we went home for Christmas break and spent a lot of time together, we decided to make it official.

We spent a lot of time in the student union, getting salads and smoothies at After Hours and PAWS a lot. I remember I came to her apartment and was like, "I think I'm done with basketball." From that point on, we spent every minute together.

A friend of mine was married young. And then one time, he asked, "So when are you going to get married?" I was like, "You know what? That's a valid question." I started ring shopping. And then one day, I asked if she wanted to go out to dinner. I was super nervous. I didn't eat my food. It seemed like a normal Friday to her, but I had it all planned out.

The wedding was a good time. It was a Friday night wedding, so a lot of people had just gotten off work. It started with a happy hour vibe. We had an open bar. It was right on the water, so it wasn't too hot outside. All our friends and family came. To be honest with you, it was a big party, and we just happened to get married there.

It's been awesome. We got into our careers with our TU degrees, putting them to work. I'm an assistant athletic director for a local community college. We started a family, and now we're into sports every weekend—basketball, baseball, football. It's been good, just growing and watching our kids grow.



[towson.edu/seskers](http://towson.edu/seskers) for more photos of the happy couple

## Kristen (Proctor) Sesker

CLASS OF 2009, CRIMINAL JUSTICE

We met at Gwynn Park High School in Prince George's County. We both played basketball. It was not until he transferred to TU to play basketball that anything changed.

We were together a lot. When we would come home on breaks, we would spend a lot of time together. The summer of 2006 my mom and a couple of our friends were like, "You guys like each other." But it was not until we came back to school for that fall semester I said, "Hey, people think that we like each other." He's like, "Duh."

I feel like we've been together every day since. We had been dating for a while before we were engaged. One day, we went to one of our favorite restaurants—Stoney River in Annapolis. There was an older couple with a younger couple having dinner, and you could tell they had made some type of announcement. I said to Darrick, "I'm pretty sure they told them they're having a baby or engaged or something." Less than 20 minutes later, the waitress is holding his phone and he's getting down on one knee. And now everybody's clapping for us.

The wedding was at Herrington on the Bay on a Friday night—June 27, 2014. We had a 300-person

get-together. And we danced and partied all night. We're true Marylanders. The recovery day everybody ate bushels and bushels of crabs before we caught a plane to go to Hawaii. We had a very, very good time.

It went fast from there. Our house was finished in 2015. And then our first son, little Darrick, was born November 2015. We had another son in July 2018—Kruz. And we are full-on sports parents. We have been making a lot of progress in our careers. I started out in the mental health field, and now I am a psychotherapist.

Our longevity is because we were best friends first. We still are best friends. Growing with somebody that has the same understanding and foundation is what kept us together, it sounds crazy to say, almost 20 years later.



# Philanthropy



## Weis Markets Partners in Fighting Food Insecurity at TU

In early December, TU senior Umu Bah Jalloh dashed down the aisles of Weis Markets in Towson, gathering more than \$500 worth of groceries. Moving through the store, she targeted essential items like laundry detergent, pasta and frozen foods.

The promotion was part of Weis Markets' connection to TU. The grocery store generously tripled Jalloh's grocery value with a \$1,500 donation to TU's Basic Needs Hub. "This underscores the power of community partnerships in helping students thrive," says Dan Wildt, Weis' general manager.

The Basic Needs Hub, in the Division of Student Affairs, connects the TU community to vital resources, including food, housing, clothing and access to academic tools. "With Weis tripling Umu's haul during the dash, we were able to buy even more healthy and essential items, including frozen foods, which are in high demand," says Faith Borrás, Basic Needs Hub coordinator.

Events like the Grocery Dash not only raise awareness and funds for critical student resources but also make giving back fun for students. "Introducing students to activities like these fosters a culture of giving back and helps build stronger connections within our community," says Brittny Brown '19, manager, TU fundraising events and sponsorships.

## Tigers Thrive with a Second Chance



Some students are just one minor setback away—a car accident, illness or just bad luck—from failing a class and not completing their degree, says Seth Gitter, professor of economics and assistant director of undergraduate research.

"All they need is the encouragement and some motivation to get up again," he says.

That's where Glenn Stearns '87 comes in.

He established the Stearns Second Chance Scholarship Program in 2023. It offers students the opportunity to retake

a class they were unsuccessful in passing. In 2023, the scholarship encouraged 50% more students to pass on their second try. In fall 2024, 75% of the students who retook a macroeconomics class passed the course and 22 received the Stearns Second Chance Scholarship, which gives students \$1,000 if they pass with a C or better. Students are also steered to new tutoring resources that aid in bolstering their success.

"There aren't many scholarships, that I know of, that encourage and reward resiliency," says Alexa Prettyman, assistant professor in the Department of Economics and a member of the TU Economics Scholarship Committee. "The path to success is different for everyone—and that's okay."

### Stearns Scholar: Mark Ramsey



#### Major: Sport Management

*Orientation Leader. Former vice president of TU's NAACP and TU's Brotherhood*

#### Future Academic Plans

*Master's degree in athletic training and doctorate in physical therapy (supporting undergraduate minority students)*

#### Mark's message to Glenn Stearns

"Thank you for sticking with me and giving me the opportunity to continue my education here at Towson University. Life throws challenges at all of us. You have given me the chance to show the world, and myself, that I am capable of succeeding as a second-generation college graduate and continuing the legacy my parents started."





—“Coach’s immense impact on Towson Lacrosse spans generations, and we want to ensure his legacy lives on.”

—Shawn Nadelén  
MEN’S LACROSSE HEAD COACH

## ♥ GIVING

# Honoring Coach Runk: A Lacrosse Legacy

Carl Runk became head coach of the TU men's lacrosse program in 1968 and directed the program to a place among the sport's college elite over a 31-year career. The Tiger legend died on Nov. 24, 2024. He was 88. Referred to as “Big Man,” by his players for his strong, imposing physique and his larger-than-life personality, he cared deeply for them and demanded their best.

To honor Runk and his legacy at the university, TU Athletics held a celebration of life in TU Arena on April 18 and unveiled a bust of Runk the following day. At the unveiling, a special fundraising

campaign was announced to name the men's lacrosse coaches suite in honor of him. The campaign is part of athletics' larger \$12 million Campaign for Excellence (see page 12).

“Having the lacrosse coaches suite named in his honor will be a constant reminder of who got us here and will honor the tradition of success established by Coach Runk,” says Shawn Nadelén, men's lacrosse head coach. “He will forever live in the Towson lacrosse family, as it will always embody his spirit, passion and love.”



You can join the momentum of honoring Carl Runk. Go to [towson.edu/givingrunk](https://towson.edu/givingrunk) or scan QR code



## ♥ DONOR PROFILE

### Ronald and Mildred '82 Burkman

Ron and Millie '82 Burkman, from Ann Arbor, Michigan, established the first endowed professorship in the College of Health Professions in late 2024. It will be awarded in fall 2025. Millie completed her Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at TU in three years while her husband was on the faculty at Johns Hopkins University.

#### YOU CREATED A SCHOLARSHIP FOR NURSING STUDENTS—WHAT MOVED YOU TO DO SO?

In short, the COVID pandemic. Health care professionals faced huge challenges, and a significant number of nurses either burned out or retired. For many students, education costs are prohibitive and providing scholarship support helps address the problem of nursing shortages.

#### YOUR GIVING HAS EXPANDED TO FUND THE FIRST ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP IN TU'S COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS AT \$1 MILLION. WHY ENDOW A PROFESSORSHIP?

Endowed faculty positions help attract high-quality teachers and researchers, which improves the academic environment and attracts well-qualified students. Coupled with the recent opening of the state-of-the-art Health Professions Building, it seemed like a unique opportunity to make a difference.

#### HOW DO YOU HOPE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE THROUGH YOUR PHILANTHROPY?

Clearly, quality health care is essential. Improving the student experience and conducting needed research are the goals for our gift.



[towson.edu/burkmans](https://towson.edu/burkmans) for more about this generous couple

📷 Roger Hart







OUR TOWN

## World Trade Center Institute

From his office in the tallest pentagonal building in the world, **Eddie Resende '05** looks out over the Inner Harbor to the world beyond. As CEO of the World Trade Center Institute, he's responsible for helping bring business "from the world to Maryland and Maryland to the world." Resende began working at the Baltimore-based institute, one of the biggest in the World Trade Centers Association of more than 320 around the globe, as an intern when he was an undergraduate at TU. After graduating with a business administration degree, he joined full time and has never looked back. "Trade touches everyone," he says. "I love working with companies that are facing different challenges and determining how we as an organization can help them solve those problems."



[towson.edu/resende](http://towson.edu/resende) for more  
on TU's connection with the institute