Google’s Chief Health Officer
KAREN DESALVO
BA ’88
on The Way Forward

INSPIRING SUPPORT
Richard and Barbara Rosenberg’s $3 Million Gift Is a Call to Action

SUFFOLK’S 10 UNDER 10 ALUMNI HONOREES
Saluting Some of Our Best, Brightest, and Boldest

COMMENCEMENT AT FENWAY
The Classes of 2020 & 2021 Hit It Out of the Park
When it came time to celebrate the Classes of 2020 and 2021, Suffolk hit it out of the park—and not just any park. On May 22-23, Boston’s quintessential downtown university held its six Commencement ceremonies in one of Boston’s most iconic landmarks, Fenway Park, awarding more than 4,000 undergraduate and advanced degrees (including to College of Arts & Sciences student marshals Vanessa Mondre, left, and Alexandria Rivard). For more Commencement coverage, see page 64. Photograph by Michael J. Clarke

Graduation Never Seemed So Good

When it came time to celebrate the Classes of 2020 and 2021, Suffolk hit it out of the park—and not just any park. On May 22-23, Boston’s quintessential downtown university held its six Commencement ceremonies in one of Boston’s most iconic landmarks, Fenway Park, awarding more than 4,000 undergraduate and advanced degrees (including to College of Arts & Sciences student marshals Vanessa Mondre, left, and Alexandria Rivard). For more Commencement coverage, see page 64. Photograph by Michael J. Clarke
Covid-19 exposed deep health disparities in the U.S. and around the world. As Google’s chief health officer, Dr. Karen DeSalvo, BA ’88, HDHL ’10, HDCS ’21, is working to close them.
As the chief health officer of Google, Dr. Karen DeSalvo, BA ’88, HDHL ’10, HDCS ’21, knows a thing or two about crisis. DeSalvo—who is featured on the cover of this issue—has spent the past 18 months leading Google’s response to the pandemic. Previously, as New Orleans’ commissioner of health, she helped that city rethink its approach to public health following Hurricane Katrina.

“I love the challenge of taking a crisis moment and turning it into a lasting movement for change,” DeSalvo said last May, when she spoke at our Sawyer Business School Commencement. At such moments, she said, “Everyone comes together to solve big problems. The pace of innovation quickens, and people, communities, and businesses work together with a shared vision and mutual resolve.”

For the past year and a half, I have watched the Suffolk community—our alumni, our students, our employees, and our friends—do just that. Confronted by crisis and uncertainty, you have worked collaboratively to find the way forward and foster lasting positive change in many areas.

In this issue, we share some of those stories. Karen DeSalvo takes us inside Google Health, and shows how the tech company is using its considerable resources to address the deep health disparities the pandemic has exposed. Psychology Professor Jessica Graham-LoPresti, an authority on racial trauma, examines how racism impacts the mental health of communities of color. Tim Phillips, BS ’83, HDHL ’18, founder of Beyond Conflict, the internationally respected conflict resolution organization, points to lessons from abroad that could help ease our own political polarization. And all of the 10 Under 10 alumni honorees profiled here are making a difference across a variety of fields through innovative and important work.

“I have been struck by the joy that our students bring to campus, even in the midst of challenging times.”

As students returned to Suffolk this fall, I have been struck by the joy that they bring to campus, even in the midst of challenging times. Their energy and optimism inspire and reinvigorate our entire campus community. I also see the genuine appreciation our students have for the support they get from our alumni, who are engaging with Suffolk as mentors, as networkers, and as donors at higher and higher levels.

Over the past year, your support for Suffolk has been remarkable. Membership in our Deans’ Cabinets for all three schools continues to grow, with generous alumni making commitments of $50,000 and more to the University. Several of you have created major named scholarship funds. Not only are you supporting deserving students across the University, but you are also honoring distinguished members of our faculty, beloved family members, your graduating class or your own legacy here at Suffolk. Support for our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategic goals is stronger than ever, with funding from corporations and foundations as well as from individuals.

Our Summa Society, for donors who give $5,000 and above, continues to build momentum. More of you contributed at this level last year than at any time in the past 25 years. Together, our alumni and friends generously donated almost $11 million to Suffolk—donations that directly impact our students, most of whom receive some form of financial assistance during their time at Suffolk.

“I want to especially highlight one of these gifts, which you can read about on the following pages: a transformational donation from Richard Rosenberg, BSJ ’52, HDCS ’91, the former chairman and CEO of Bank of America, and his wife, Barbara. The Rosenbergs’ $3 million gift supports an important Suffolk 2025 priority, our STEP program—an on-campus apprenticeship program in technology and similar fields that leads to outstanding career outcomes for our students.

We are profoundly grateful to the Rosenbergs, and to the entire Suffolk community, for your support for our students and your unwavering belief in our mission. Our way forward is together.
Call It a Call to Action

RICHARD ROSENBERG, BSJ ’52, HDCS ’91, HOPES HIS $3 MILLION GIFT TO ENDOW A TECHNOLOGY APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM WILL SPUR OTHER ALUMNI TO FIND THEIR OWN WAYS TO GIVE BACK

Story by Greg Gatlin

A t a point in life when most people might lean back and take it easy, Richard Rosenberg, BSJ ’52, HDCS ’91, continues to push institutions to be better.

It is an ethic that drove Rosenberg, a child of the Great Depression from Fall River, Massachusetts, to the pinnacle of success in the financial world. During the 1990s, he led Bank of America as its chairman and chief executive.

At 91, Dick Rosenberg, as he is known, is still walking the walk. He concedes from his home in San Francisco that walking itself isn’t quite as easy these days, particularly after a fall limited his mobility. And yet he continues to make sure institutions that he values are supported, improved, and delivering on their promise. It is simply what he does—and he wants to inspire others to do the same.

In June, Rosenberg and his wife, Barbara, made a $3 million gift to Suffolk University. The transformational gift, one of the largest in the university’s history, supports on-campus student apprenticeship programs in technology and similar fields through the endowment of the Rosenberg Student Training Employment Program (STEP). It follows another major gift the Rosenbergs made to Suffolk in 2007, which established the Rosenberg Institute for East Asian Studies.

Rosenberg STEP funds on-campus information technology jobs for students, who work alongside IT professionals at Suffolk. Students take full advantage of mentoring opportunities and gain valuable experience that prepares them for information technology and other science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers upon graduation.

Both Dick Rosenberg and Suffolk University President Marisa Kelly see Rosenberg STEP as having the potential to expand into other fields and University programs. (In fact, says Rosenberg in his characteristically candid manner, “If it doesn’t, then it’s a failure.”)

Having spent much of his career in California’s Bay Area and Silicon Valley, he understands the massive demand for employees in technology fields and for graduates with proven STEM skills. And he believes that the STEP program’s practical, hands-on approach is an empowering way to learn.

But Rosenberg says what most drove his latest Suffolk philanthropy was the desire to inspire others to give back as well. Call it a call to action.

“I hope it’s not only important for what it is, but for what it may inspire,” Rosenberg says. “I hope it inspires greater philanthropy.”

A responsibility to give back

He recognizes that not all alumni have the means to make large financial gifts. But, he says, they do have a responsibility, an accountability even, to give back in whatever way they can. “If you received an education from Suffolk that enabled you to lead a better life, then you’ve got a responsibility to Suffolk,” Rosenberg says.

“Alumni ought to get engaged in everything from philanthropy to recruitment. Those are two areas where they can clearly play a role.”

These days, Rosenberg has stepped back from working with for-profit companies. But he continues to serve on a number of nonprofit boards, including the University of California San Francisco Foundation and the Executive Council of the University of California Medical Center. “Ironically, Zoom has made it easier to go to those board meetings,” he says with a laugh.

“He has a tremendous reputation in the not-for-profit world,” says Christine Garvey, JD ’72, a Suffolk University trustee who ran Bank of America’s global real estate operations in 60 countries while Rosenberg was CEO. He has worked on big issues in California, from water rights to healthcare. He has served on hospital boards, and, with his wife, Barbara, has been a strong supporter of higher education and the arts. Over the course of his career, he has pushed other senior leaders, including Garvey, to serve on boards.

“He has a deep regard for good governance,” Garvey says, adding Rosenberg brings qualities that make organizations better.

“He’s so forthright, for one,” she says with a laugh. “Dick always went to the heart of the matter with an organization. He wanted to know how it served the public, what it does for the community, what does it do with the money. If things were getting screwed up, he would say so and address it. Dick is not someone who complains. He points out what the faults are and works to get them fixed.”

Garvey says Rosenberg was “a great CEO—principled but tough.” He was knowledgeable on almost everything, knew the importance of interacting with people, and was admired by senior officers. But, she adds, he was not shy about putting you through your paces. Garvey remembers her husband, who was executive director of an orchestra in San Francisco at the time, meeting with Rosenberg to make a pitch for his support. Her husband came out of that meeting and told Garvey, “I’ve never been grilled like that before.” She responded, “That’s what it’s like to work for Dick.”

Lessons in leadership

Rosenberg landed as a student at Suffolk University in the late 1940s fairly accidentally. He happened to walk by the University’s building located on Derne Street on Beacon Hill at the time. “I walked in, and they said, ‘Fill out these papers.’”

“I couldn’t have gone without that kind of flexibility,” he says. “I think I got a superb education at the school, and as a result, I got a very lucky career.”

That break came in the form of a suggestion from a colleague at the Massachusetts Heart Association, where Rosenberg worked part time while studying at Suffolk. He was about to graduate, and the draft was on. His boss asked him when he planned to join the Navy. “I hadn’t even thought about joining the Navy,” Rosenberg says. But he did join, and the Navy instilled leadership principles that guided and propelled his career.

“There were so many good things out of the Navy,” he says. “One of them was respect. Whether someone was a machinist mate and you were lieutenant, junior grade, you had respect for that person and their skill and dedication.”

He sees respect as the most critical aspect of leadership. “If you don’t have respect for the other person’s work, then you don’t have any cohesion,” he says. “It’s really important to have a coordinated, cohesive group working for a similar objective.”

“That’s something that Rosenberg says he sees in President Kelly’s leadership. “I’ve been impressed,” he says.

He’s also impressed with what he’s seeing from Suffolk these days, and this has not always been the case. Today, he sees a university on an upward trajectory. That, he says, is reflected in an increase in alumni giving, including Suffolk’s best fundraising year ever in the past fiscal year.

Kelly says she is incredibly grateful to the Rosenbergs for the gift, but also for Dick’s willingness to always push the University to greater heights. “I wouldn’t want it any other way,” she says. ■

Photography courtesy of the Office of Advancement
Making Equity Job No. 1

DAVE MERRY ON HOW SUFFOLK IS RE-ENVISIONING ITS CAREER SERVICES PROGRAM TO BUILD MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

Interview by Greg Gelin

ccess and opportunity are at the heart of Suffolk’s mission. Dave Merry, associate provost and executive director of the Center for Career Equity, Development & Success, explains how the University is making them a core part of career education.

Tell us why this focus on career equity is so important.

“College career centers have been doing a lot to try to address inequity, but what’s often looked like is creating targeted resources for people who are marginalized in the workforce. That’s absolutely necessary, but it ends up creating more work for students, professionals, and mentors who are underrepresented themselves to mitigate those inequities. Black alumni are called on to help Black students who face injustices in the workplace. Students who are disabled are asked to utilize different resources, come to one-on-one advising conversations, our events and workshops, and throughout the Suffolk curriculum. When we talk about being a leader in your professional life, we are also talking about the responsibility we all share to create a more equitable and inclusive workplace.”

What kind of tools can the center provide to help make these changes?

“Because our faculty are often the front line in talking with students about career education, we want to give them tools to help begin the conversation on how social identity impacts your career path. As students start to hear that message, they will be more receptive to learning about it in other content-specific courses, as well as during internships and capstone classes.

“We have also created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion toolkit on our website as a resource that can help employers recruit, hire, support, retain, and promote—what we want the whole pipeline. We have hired a director of Career Equity and Access, Ade Igbineweka, who speaks with employers to help them generate ideas.”

What are some concrete things that you would like to see change in career services?

“We are really fortunate that there is a pretty equal rate of Suffolk graduates getting a job, going to graduate school, and rejecting their race and gender. What’s the same are their salaries, the support they receive on the job, or the amount of inclusion they feel. We need to do better at collecting that data, and looking at their trajectories after graduation.

“That is a historic, measurable imbalance in how people who are white and how people who are not white are educated and how they prosper in our economy. That is inarguable. So when we talk about systemic bias, it’s not that people are racist and don’t want to hire people of color. It’s that we’ve created a system where we talk about cultural fit, and we look for people who look like us or who share our similar experiences. And we say, Oh, that person wasn’t a good fit for our organization, without saying, Maybe that’s good. Maybe we need somebody who can help our organization change.’”

Job No. 1

Merry, associate provost and executive director of the Center for Career Equity, Development & Success, explains how Suffolk is making them a core part of career education.

A

n Instagram image of a hand-embroidered coronavirus. A screenshot from a virtual Biden/Harris presidential campaign event held via the video game Animal Crossing. Crossing text message alerts from viral hot spots, heartfelt journal entries, and social media posts about everything from snarky mask signs to parenting support groups.

These are the new artifacts in a “born digital” archive that Suffolk historians are collecting to document the COVID-19 pandemic in Boston as part of an international project. A Journal of the Plague Year.

So how do you change that?

“We have always asked people who have been left on the outside to find a way in. What we need is for people who are on the inside to realize that they’re there, and open the door.

“That’s the kind of education that we’re working to infuse in our one-on-one advising conversations, our events and workshops, and throughout the Suffolk curriculum. When we talk about being a leader in your professional life, we are also talking about the responsibility we all share to create a more equitable and inclusive workplace.”

A REAL-WORLD RECORD OF OUR LIVES DURING COVID-19

SUFFOLK ARCHIVISTS AND HISTORIANS ARE CAPTURING A REAL-WORLD RECORD OF OUR LIVES DURING COVID-19

Suffolk University—founded to create greater access to higher education—is getting recognition for its efforts to improve the experiences and outcomes of students who are the first in their families to attend a four-year college or graduate school. The University has been named a First Generation Student Success.

Merry, associate provost and executive director of the Center for Career Equity, Development & Success, explains how Suffolk is making them a core part of career education.

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LIVING THROUGH HISTORY

Noteworthy | Fall 2021
Conflicting Two Interconnected Epidemics

SOCIOLoGY PROFESSOR REBECCA STONE IS PIONEERING NEW WAYS TO HELP WOMEN IN RURAL VERMONT WITH BOTH OPIOID ADDICTION AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Story by Tony Ferullo

Nearly two years before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Rebecca Stone began researching a pair of different epidemics plaguing rural Vermont: opioid use disorder and domestic violence.

"I wanted to make a difference," says Stone, assistant professor of sociology and director of the Crime and Justice Studies program.

So did the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The foundation, which focuses on healthcare issues, including substance-use disorders, named Stone a fellow in its Interdisciplinary RiseLeaders program and awarded her team a $350,000 research grant.

In early 2019, Stone and two colleagues set out to identify the barriers that were keeping Vermont women from seeking treatment. Last fall, they published their findings in the United States.

The CDC also reports that 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced some form of violence or stalking by an intimate partner. The numbers associated with those issues are alarming. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 81,000 people died from drug overdoses in the United States in June 2020. That’s a 20% increase from the previous year, and the highest annual number of fatal overdoses ever recorded in the United States.

Four in 10 people who work with people experiencing substance use disorder and those who work with partner violence survivors could be trained in each other’s field of expertise. That idea became a reality in February 2021, when Stone and her team welcomed 20 peer recovery coaches and 20 survivor advocates for a one-day cross-training program.

"I heard that many of them are staying in touch and continuing to work together," Stone says.

Stone plans to share the results of her research in an open-access report with community partners and participants so they can use the information to improve their services. She is also pursuing other funding opportunities to speak up training and conduct more research.

"There is still so much more work to be done," Stone says.

The CDC also reports that 1 in 4 women and nearly 1 in 10 men have experienced some form of violence or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime.

The impact of isolation

Stone and her team began their research by conducting in-depth interviews with 33 rural residents who experienced both opioid use disorder and intimate partner violence. The goal was to hear directly about the challenges they faced and to identify steps that could be taken to improve health and safety outcomes in rural communities.

As the team analyzed the data, the barriers to treatment became clear: geographic isolation and transportation difficulties; services that were difficult to access or didn’t coordinate substance use treatment with domestic violence support; social isolation; and stigma.

The next step was to bring this information back to the community and try to identify possible interventions. In October 2019, Stone and her research team hosted an all-day brainstorming event for about three dozen human services professionals in Montpelier, the state capital.

That session produced a breakthrough idea: develop a cross-training event of which providers who work with people experiencing substance use disorder and those who work with partner violence survivors could be trained in each other’s field of expertise. That idea became a reality in February 2021, when Stone and her team hosted 20 peer recovery coaches and 20 survivor advocates for a one-day cross-training program.

"It was wonderful to work with people who are so passionate and care so deeply about their fellow Vermonters," Stone says.

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The Pandemic’s Effects on Women Around the World

SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL MARKETING STUDENTS UNCOVER COVID-19’S GLOBAL TOLL ON WOMEN’S MENTAL HEALTH

Story by Ben Hall

In addition to the pandemic’s devastating physical toll, women around the world have experienced real harm to their mental health, according to a study by a group of students in the Sawyer Business School’s marketing program.

The project, undertaken on behalf of the international humanitarian agency CARE, held extra resonance because the students in the capstone course collected data from their home regions: the United States, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Vietnam, and India.

“What was interesting is that the cause of these mental struggles varied from country to country,” Marketing Program Chair and Professor Phil Risen says. In the U.S. and Puerto Rico, the stressor was financial issues. In India, it was relationships. Lack of child-care options was a pressure point in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, the stressor was financial issues. In India, it was relationships. Lack of child-care options was a pressure point in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Vietnam, and India.

“Food insecurity is an ongoing issue on the island, which imports 95% of its food. This was exacerbated by the pandemic, making it the largest stressor among women. One of Näter-Navarro’s interviewees shared how she was unable to buy food one day because the grocery store wouldn’t let her bring in her two young children. Her only other option was to leave them in the car alone.

Stories like this gave students extra motivation, says Näter-Navarro. “We were so passionate about this project,” she says. “I would want to work on it all week.”

That passion was evident to the students’ clients at CARE, who received presentations about the results virtually. CARE CMO John Aylward says it was clear the students “all connected to the work in some personal way, either through their home country or their heritage.”

In some cases, the pandemic opened up new possibilities for helping families. “One thing that did not vary across countries was that the more help women received from their environment—family, friends, relatives, partners—the higher the satisfaction they had with their lives,” Becon says.

Close to home

Nicole Näter-Navarro, MBA ‘21, MSMKT ‘21, chose to research her home of Puerto Rico, which was still reeling from the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria when the pandemic hit.

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So rather than bring people to the vaccine, Panola resident and general store owner Dorothy Oliver took it upon herself to bring the vaccine to Panola. If she could convince 40 residents—about 10 percent of the population—to take the vaccine, a local hospital agreed to bring a pop-up site to town.

Watching Oliver work her persuasive magic on fellow residents through batterly, teasing, and a special urgency is the subject of The Panola Project, a documentary directed and produced by Rachael DeCruz and Jeremy S. Levine, a new Communication, Journalism & Media professor in Suffolk University’s College of Arts & Sciences. The documentary was recently featured on MSNBC and in The New Yorker documentary series, which showcases innovative short films from around the world.

“There’s often a lot of blame put on folks who haven’t gotten the vaccine,” Levine says. “But what does it mean when a community doesn’t have the resources to actually get their shots?”

Indeed, The Panola Project isn’t a story about anti-vaxxers; it’s a glimpse into the public health realities of rural communities. Some Panola residents don’t have cars. Some didn’t know where to go for their shots. But Oliver specializes in the film that the biggest reason for Panola’s low vaccination rates is its status as a majority-Black community. That, she says with a rueful smile, “kind of puts you on the back burner.”

Levine, a native of Boston’s North Shore, arrives at Suffolk after a year at the University of Alabama. His documentaries have won an Emmy award, been screened at more than 100 film festivals, and streamed on Netflix, Amazon, and Sundance Now, among other channels. Social justice is a persistent theme of his work.

“I have always had a passion for filmmaking and the art form of visual storytelling,” he says. “And I’ve also been very passionate about social justice issues and casting a light on stories that often go unnoticed. Documentary was a way to bring these two passions of mine together into my life’s work.”

Levine is eager to bring that perspective to Suffolk. He quickly learned that the University’s mission of access and opportunity is a natural fit for his social justice approach to filmmaking.

“So far, I’m blown away and inspired by Suffolk’s commitment to social justice issues,” he says. “I’m definitely excited to work with students to find the stories that speak to the changes they want to see in the world.”

The Panola Project will screen at GlobeDocs this fall.
THOSE DARN SQUIRRELS
Humans aren’t the only ones who have learned to social distance
Story by Andrea Grant

Professor Lauren Nolfo-Clements and her biology students have long tracked the behavior of the Boston Public Garden’s highly social squirrels. When Valentino Kapa, BS ’22, compared data from 2019 and 2020, he discovered that the normally vocal and inquisitive critters had grown reserved, with far fewer foraging or interacting. His hypothesis? The extroverted antics of the inquisitive critters had grown reserved, and that was probably due to social distancing. When he and his colleagues performed a statistical test, it was clear that the squirrels had become more reserved. The results were published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. The study was a collaboration with the National Audubon Society and the Boston Public Garden.

A Wave of Enthusiasm
SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY RETIRED FRIENDS—BETTER KNOWN AS SURF—KEEP CONNECTION STRONG BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND RETIRED FACULTY AND STAFF

When she retired in 2016, Dean of Students Emerita Nancy Stoll felt like she had “tallen off a cliff.” During her 29 years at Suffolk, she had been involved in such key developments as the creation of student residence halls and the growth of student support programs. “Before I retired, I had a title, the office, staff,” she says. “Then I didn’t have any of that. It was a sense of dropping off.” Recognizing that Suffolk retirees could be valuable resources to the University, Stoll approached President Martha Kelly. “There were no structures for retirees to contribute their talents or energy to the University,” she says. President Kelly’s support, Stoll hosted a brainstorming lunch for former staff and faculty. The result: Suffolk University Retired Friends (SURF). A group of former employees who stayed connected to the University and each other through programs and events. The group, whose on-campus partner is Human Resources, now has 200 “Coach” Jim Nelson says the group provides the opportunity to remain connected to the University. Being able to share “our institutional knowledge and support” the success of those now in roles we once cherished is very rewarding, and it is also appreciated by today’s University leadership,” he says. Nelson continues to be actively involved with Suffolk Athletics, and the newly established giving club, the Coach Nelson Club, honors his 50 plus-year legacy at Suffolk by encouraging financial support for current and future Suffolk Rams. Relationships and collaboration are fundamental to SURF, which was established in 2018. A volunteer committee organizes programs and service opportunities based on feedback from members. Events range from annual “state of the University” updates from President Kelly to participation in the Suffolk University Oral History Project. A valuable resource
Professor of Government Emeritus John Berg, who retired in 2016 after 42 years at the University, has been a member of SURF since its inception, serving on its organizing committee. He also has supported the University financially, creating a scholarship to assist student interns. “I have seen so many times how internships transform students’ lives, but spending a semester away from campus also represents an extra expense for them,” he says. “I am happy that I have been able to establish a fund to help support them.”

Turning Good Intentions into Good Deeds
STUDENT EMMIE DASWANI LAUNCHED THE CONCEPT PROJECT TO RAISE MONEY AND AWARENESS FOR SOCIAL CAUSES

As a child traveling the globe with her parents, Emmie Daswani was struck by “seeing so much sadness and hurt in the world.” She vowed that one day she would find a way to help people in need. Now, Daswani, Class of 2024, and two longtime friends, Garrett Roberts of UMass Lowell and Adrien Deli Coli of Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, have created the Concept Project to challenge people to do good by taking part in mental and physical challenges while raising awareness and funds for social causes. “Essentially, our goal is to become a platform company that can be used for doing good,” says Daswani, an entrepreneurship major. “Almost like an Uber for ideas.” Their first project was a four-day, 150-kilometer walk through Nova Scotia last year. Led by Deli Coli, the three raised $1,000 for a scholarship fund for families of the victims of the 2016 mosque shooting. Daswani and her team—which now includes a number of Suffolk students—have organized the 150-mile High and Lowes Walk to raise funds for the New Hampshire chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and plunged into freezing Boston Harbor this March as part of a unique charity drive called Jump, Wash, Donate. “We raised more awareness than we ever thought we could!” Daswani says. “We believe that everyone wants to do good. And when you make it a challenge and give them the opportunity, they will.”

Diving more deeply into public opinion than national and statewide polling allows, Suffolk has teamed with USA Today to launch CityView, a new series of city-level polls. “American cities have been the battleground for some of the most important issues of our time, especially in the last few years,” says David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. CityView has already polled residents of Milwaukee and Detroit, examining attitudes toward policing, public safety, race relations, COVID-19, education, and affordable housing.

OF NOTE
He’s our favorite furry ambassador, and now Newsweek has ranked Rammy in the top 5 of the country’s most unique college mascots.
Leading the Way in Public Service

Sawyer Business School’s Certificate Programs Strengthen Communities and Give Public Service Professionals New Access to a Master’s Degree

Story by Ben Hall

Professor Sandy Matava, MPA, RI, believes in the power of public service: “Growing up as a commissionaire of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services, she spent more than two decades in state government. And as director of the Sawyer Business School’s Moakley Center for Public Management, she has made it her mission to develop the next generation of public servants—work that won her national recognition earlier this year when she received the National Public Service Award from the American Society for Public Administration.”

Over the past 20-plus years, the Moakley Center, under Matava’s leadership, has established partnerships with local and regional agencies and nonprofit organizations and, through its certificate program, offered training for public service professionals throughout Massachusetts and beyond. One of those partners is the Municipal Association (MMA), which represents the state’s 351 cities and towns and the municipal management certificate program, offered training for public service professionals throughout Massachusetts and beyond.

Pandemic Pedagogy

How Sawyer Business School Faculty Are Turning COVID-19 Challenges Into New Teaching Strategies

Story by Ben Hall

The pandemic is yielding valuable insights into how to make the most of online and hybrid instruction. Last spring, Amy Zeng, dean of the Sawyer Business School, hosted a teaching forum “to give faculty a way to share their best practices and wonderful stories. It was also a way to start the conversation about the next generation of teaching and learning as we continue developing our strengths and competitiveness.”

Katrina Graham
Assistant Professor, Management and Entrepreneurship

Graham explored the challenge of managing peer-to-peer dynamics in virtual breakout rooms. While content retention is sometimes challenging during remote learning, breakout rooms are a great way for students to practice and retain content. Graham required students to complete peer evaluations after each group discussion to encourage engagement and increase participation.

Laurie Levesque
Assistant Professor, Management and Entrepreneurship

Directing “First 100 Days,” the Sawyer Business School’s signature course, this year when she received the National Public Service Award from the National Public Service Award from the Sawyer Business School’s Moakley Center for Public Management. She found that by assigning questions during remote learning, breakout rooms are a great way for students to practice and retain content. Graham required students to complete peer evaluations after each group discussion to encourage engagement and increase participation.

Kimberley Ring
Associate Professor, Management

Ring introduced gamification into her online classes. Her goal? Get pandemic-weary students excited about what they were studying. Using virtual scavenger hunts, game shows, and escape rooms, she was able to engage students and reinforce the real-life marketing situations they were studying.

TO GATHER APART

In a time of unparalleled isolation, Suffolk theatre students and writer-director Nael Nacer, BA ’06, collaborated on an award-winning play about the power of connection

The Suffolk Theatre Department’s Zoom production of To Gather Apart, a comic-drama about creating relationships in a virtual world, earned a Citizen Artist Award as well as special achievement honors for a company-generated work at the 2021 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in May.

Suffolk actors Anastasia “Tazo” Bollodee, Class of 2022, and Vincent Douglas, Class of 2023, were recognized for special achievement in performance, and Samantha Noto, BA ’23, earned third place for excellence in sound design. Stage manager Ross Gray, BA ’21, received a merit award, as did the entire stage management team.

“It’s amazing what we accomplished in such a short period of time,” says Nael Nacer, BA ’06, a highly regarded member of the Boston theater community who directed the play, which was performed entirely via Zoom. “The students were so receptive to a new idea, and they gave 100% to make this happen.”

To Gather Apart captures the humor, hardship, and human connections, including sometimes difficult discussions, of a Zoom theater group as they work through social and academic challenges.

“Not only was the play an artistic and technological triumph, but more importantly the students reported how closely their experience of the pandemic aligned with the heart of the show—the need for connection,” she says. “I believe that the show became a lifeline for many of them.”

Claire Cronin, JD ’85, the No. 2 Democrat in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, is poised to become the United States ambassador to Ireland, following her nomination by President Joe Biden.
JUDY AND WARREN LEVENBAUM, JD ’72, COMMIT $1 MILLION TO HELP PREPARE SUFFOLK LAW STUDENTS TO LAUNCH THEIR OWN FIRMS

Story by Beth Brennan

Even as a boy, it was clear that Warren Levenbaum, JD ’72, was going places. Literally.

At age 11, Levenbaum went door-to-door in his Dorchester neighborhood, selling cushioned toilet seats he’d bought in bulk, and turned a tidy profit. By age 16, he was driving through the streets of Boston, selling ice cream from the truck he’d bought and paid for by himself.

From age 18 to 26, he rose early every day to catch first the bus, then the trolley and train to attend Boston University and then (after a year of military service) Suffolk University Law School—while working multiple jobs to pay his way through both.

At age 27, law degree in hand, he drove cross-country to begin a new life in Phoenix, Arizona. By age 30, he had opened his own law firm there.

Ten years later, that one-man practice had grown to 25. Today, the firm employs 60 people.

“Driven—that’s the word I use to describe Warren. There is something in him that never stops,” says his wife, Judy Levenbaum, who shares her husband’s entrepreneurial spark.

Now, the Levenbaums are helping similarly driven Suffolk law students go places of their own.

They have pledged $1 million to endow the Law School’s Accelerator-to-Practice Program, which prepares law students to run their own firms—while also increasing access to justice for underserved clients.

“The education I received at Suffolk has been an integral part of my journey,” says Warren. “Judy and I are thrilled to support a program that teaches law students what they would otherwise have to learn by trial and error. Not only do they receive a strong legal foundation, but they get a really good head start on the business side of practicing law.”

Founded in 2014, the Accelerator-to-Practice Program provides law students with specialized instruction in the management, marketing, and technology skills necessary to run the kind of cost-efficient law practices that serve average-income clients who may otherwise be able to afford to hire an attorney. According to the American Bar Association, eight out of 10 people of modest means lack legal representation in civil cases that can impact the rest of their lives.

“When 40 percent of lawyers work in solo practices or small firms at some point in their careers,” says Andrew Perlman, dean of Suffolk Law School. “Warren and Judy are helping to prepare our graduates to join or start those kinds of practices. This kind of training is rare in law schools, but it is increasingly essential in a rapidly changing legal industry.”

Suffolk University President Marissa Kelly says the Levenbaums embody the program’s entrepreneurial philosophy.

“Warren and Judy both know exactly what it takes to build a successful business,” says Kelly. “They are also extraordinarily warm and generous people. We are profoundly grateful that they are creating opportunities for a new generation of Suffolk Law students.”

Born Entrepreneurs

If the Levenbaums are born entrepreneurs, perhaps that’s because they had to be.

Both grew up in modest circumstances. Warren’s dad—a telephone lineman who left school after sixth grade—was a tough man and a distant father. “My siblings and I knew from an early age that we had to fend for ourselves,” says Warren, who began working at age 10 and never looked back.

A strong student as well as a hard worker, he earned a place at Boston Latin School, then at BU, where he studied economics. Following a year of training with an Army reserve unit, he enrolled at Suffolk Law because it offered “a program of education you would get at an Ivy League school, but for an affordable price.”

Judy grew up in the Denver projects, one of three kids raised by a single mother, a waitress who couldn’t afford to send Judy to college but who instilled in her a belief that “we all bring something to the table.”

She went to work straight out of high school, and eventually opened a successful high-end designer clothing store in Colorado—even though her attorney told her that all odds were against her. “For me, those were the magic words,” says Judy, who raised $1 million in six months to launch her business. “The odds have been against me all my life, and I’ve done very well that way. You have to dream big to make big things happen.”

Go West, Young Man

Warren Levenbaum also knows how to dream big. He just does it in a very methodical way.

After law school, he was determined to see the world—so naturally, he began his journey at the Boston Public Library, researching the best place to build his legal career. “I looked at Florida, California, and Arizona, researching socioeconomic conditions and a checklist of other factors,” he says. Phoenix came out on top.

Initially, he worked as a prosecutor for several years in the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office, learning the ins and outs of the Arizona legal system and getting to know local attorneys and judges. But like his future wife, he knew he wanted to run his own shop. “Working for a firm didn’t fit into my background or persona. I was used to making my own way without depending on anyone else, and I figured I had what it took to be successful,” he says. He founded his own law firm in 1977.

The Boston boy who was always on the go found his biggest success while riding a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, a hobby he took up to unwind on weekends. “I’ve met lawyers who play golf,” he observes. “I can’t stay put long enough for that.” On his long rides through the Arizona desert he often encountered other motorcycleists, who would all greet him with the same low, left-handed wave.

“I thought, where else does that happen, that complete strangers wave at you? Certainly not on the MTA,” he says with a laugh. “There was this immediate camaraderie, and it made me realize there was an entire subculture here,” as well as a potential market for legal services.

In 2001, Warren founded the American Association of Motorcycle Injury Lawyers, better known as Law Tigers. Since then, he has built Law Tigers into a nationally recognized brand that provides expert legal services to injured motorcycleists across the country, with Law Tigers franchises in 35 states. And in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, he launched a new nationwide venture, Law Leaders, which provides a broad array of services to personal injury lawyers.

“You have to dream big to make big things happen.”

The Levenbaums say they hope their support for the Accelerator-to-Practice Program will enable Suffolk law students to take their own best ideas and run with them.

“You’re never supposed to forget your roots, and I haven’t,” says Warren, who still reads The Boston Globe every Sunday. “Boston is part of me. I cherish my memories of growing up there, and of Suffolk.”

Addy Judy. “The students we’ve met were very well prepared, and so confident that they have something to contribute. We are proud to support them in their journey.”

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How everything we’ve lived through is changing how we live

Over the past 18 months, we have all lived lifetimes. The pandemic has tested us in ways we couldn’t have imagined. And our country has been tested as well—by deep political divisions and persistent societal inequities and injustices. The costs have been steep for most; for far too many, they’ve been incalculable. Talk with members of the Suffolk community who’ve been in the thick of these challenges, and you’ll find they are absolutely determined to take everything that the past year and a half taught them and use it to make something better. As Gabriella Priest, BS ‘06, MSCJ ‘09, puts it: “Change is hard. But this past year has made people recognize that change is needed now.” And change is already happening. On the following pages, you’ll meet Suffolk alumni, faculty members, and students who are working in healthcare, in racial justice, in politics, and in hot restaurant kitchens. They are charting the way forward. They are working to build a safer, more equitable future for all.
LASTING HEALTH

CONVERTING CRISIS INTO

CHANGE

COVID-19 exposed deep health disparities in the U.S. and around the world. As Google’s chief health officer, Dr. Karen DeSalvo, BA ’88, HDHL ’10, HDCS ’21, is working to close them.

After three decades, Karen DeSalvo, BA ’88, HDHL ’10, HDCS ’21, had developed an exceptionally well-rounded résumé working in healthcare and medicine—in the field, as a professor, and in policy. She served as New Orleans health commissioner in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. She’d be a faculty member at the Tulane School of Medicine, where she had earned her M.D., and at Dell Medical School at the University of Texas, Austin. She’d worked as acting assistant secretary for health and as the national coordinator for health information technology at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the Obama administration.

DeSalvo knew about healthcare delivery and information distribution from all sides. But nothing, not even Hurricane Katrina, could have prepared her for the storm that broke in March 2020.

DeSalvo was barely three months into her role as Google’s inaugural chief health officer when COVID-19 struck. She had been hired to advise the company as it expanded its efforts into health information. Now, she was charged with helping to shape one of the most important messaging tools of the pandemic, determining how its users got their information—and what information they got.

Google was already a lifeline for people looking for health information—whether through its search engine, Google Maps, or YouTube—but COVID-19 multiplied those queries exponentially. Information had to be easy to access, up to date, and accurate—a tall order in an online world chock-full of misinformation. “I knew right away that it wasn’t enough to have an amplified message,” says DeSalvo. To really tackle COVID-19, the company needed “a unified message.”

The first thing you build is trust

As DeSalvo and her team considered how to respond to the pandemic, she knew that all the digital tools in the world wouldn’t matter if they didn’t have the trust of the people they most wanted to use them. Understanding what people needed from its health technology division, Google Health, first required recognizing that “people’s lives are complicated and not everyone wants or needs to receive a message from the same person or in the same way,” says DeSalvo. “It required acknowledging that trust is earned.”

That meant exploring partnerships with channels, brands, and organizations to broaden the pathways for messaging. Crucially, it also meant being transparent with users about how their data was being used, hosting listening sessions to learn how they thought tech could be helpful on their health journeys; and helping them feel in control of how and from whom they get their information. Google invested nearly a billion dollars to help achieve that goal.

Out of the more than 200 products and features DeSalvo and the Google team developed, one was a contact tracing collaboration with Apple, using Bluetooth technology and exposure notification apps to alert users if they’d had contact with someone who tested positive for the coronavirus.

The teams leveraged Google’s tech with a data project called Community Mobility Reports, which provides insights to scientists and medical and public health officials to help them understand the link between symptom-related searches and the spread of COVID. They also worked with the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control to make information like symptoms, prevention, treatments, and testing centers readily accessible on Search, Maps, and YouTube.

To slow the pandemic’s spread in a way that communities could see, they used a mix of $250 million in ad grants and direct funding to community-based organizations such as Stop the Spread, Team Rubicon, and Partners in Health to help high-risk populations get vaccinated. Google Health also partnered with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to fund vaccinations for 250,000 people in low- and middle-income countries and provided Gavi with pro bono technical assistance to accelerate global distribution.

“When we’re building products and tools, we always want to think—it’s not just about health information,” DeSalvo says. “It’s about whether it’s going to make a difference in people’s lives.” After all, she says, just because you can make cool things doesn’t mean that you should. “We wanted to make things that were really going to matter,” she says. “That’s how you build trust.”

Growing up an underdog

DeSalvo is no stranger to crisis. She lived in New Orleans in 2005 when Katrina hit, and working on the front lines of disaster relief gave her insight into both the social determinants of health and existing inequities. While she loved being a doctor, she saw that many other factors went into the kind of healthcare people received—and that the best systems were created with a community, not for a community.

Six years later, as New Orleans’ health commissioner, one of her first efforts to help rebuild the city and whittle away at those inequities was a project to digitize the city’s health IT infrastructure. Under DeSalvo, New Orleans became one of the country’s earliest adopters of using electronic health records in community health.

DeSalvo’s commitment to addressing inequity started early. At Commencement in May, when she was awarded her second honorary degree from Suffolk, she told graduates of the Sawyer Business School that she’d grown up “an underdog” and that she identified personally with the struggle New Orleans faced. She grew up poor in Austin, “literally on a dirt road,” she says, the daughter of a single mom who instilled in her and her two sisters the importance of education, healthcare, and giving back, because, even as disadvantaged as they were, there was always someone who needed help.

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“My childhood taught me there are a lot of single moms out there trying to make ends meet,” DeSalvo says. “And so, in my work, I always ask about them and other vulnerable populations: How can we make it easier?”

That includes continuing to provide direct funding for vaccines and vaccine messaging to low- and middle-income countries. To ensure there are no gaps in the supply chain, Google is leveraging Cloud solutions to help pharmaceutical companies track discrepancies between searches for vaccines and vaccine availability; they also provide geospatial data and travel times to identify “vaccine deserts.”

DeSalvo’s role is to ensure rural and community health centers show up on Maps and to create new search tools for accessing care that include telehealth and in-person options, as well as various levels of coverage. “Each day, we work to make sure that we’re helping smaller organizations know how to put up the right information and do it with equity in mind,” she says.

In a world so eerily similar to the one divided by the day, DeSalvo has faith that, by working together, companies like Google can empower individuals and communities to do the same, banding together to defeat COVID-19 and keep each other safe. “To make change, you have to equip people with the right information and you have to ensure that they have the tools to act on it,” she says. “And everybody has to have a hand. And examine their own cultural baggage.”

She’s encouraging her team to do that every day. “I tell them, when you’re sitting in a meeting, you have to ask, is that partner or tool or device going to help eliminate health disparities, or is it going to aggravate them? We want to use digital technology to eliminate health disparities in the U.S. and then eventually everywhere. That’s a lot of people, but it’s a key part of our values. And I think we can do it.”

The pandemic is not over, of course, and DeSalvo’s role continues to evolve. It’s not all outward-facing work: either. As part of Google’s new global crisis response team, she is now helping to ensure the health and well-being of Google’s employees and extended workforce, whether they are working from the office or remotely. “I’ve learned that as the community goes, we go,” she says. And she’s continuing to take lessons from experience. Post-Katrina, she worked to put the family back together. At the same time, she recognized the opportunity to entirely reframe how things worked and who they worked for. That same understanding—this crisis can create opportunities for lasting change—will drive her work at Google as the world moves through the next phases of the pandemic. COVID-19, like Katrina before it, helped her clearly see the change that needed to happen.

Much of that change centers around reducing health inequities in the U.S. and abroad. The world view she learned from her mother means it’s “not only what we can do for ourselves that matters, but what we do for the world in which we work and operate,” she says. “That sounds so Pollyanna, but COVID-19 heightened my appreciation for the need to build responsibility around creating equity for our information, our products, and our community work.”

That awareness has led to a commitment by Google to invest in vaccine distribution for low-income communities and other marginalized populations. Google is leveraging its Cloud solutions to help provide accurate information on vaccines and vaccination availability in vulnerable areas. The “vaccine deserts” identified through these efforts are one of the keys to the company’s success in reaching marginalized communities.

DeSalvo’s work has taken her to new places and enabled her to see things from new perspectives. “I think that’s been a part of my life forever, if you think about it,” she says. “You learn things, if we use our resources in the correct way.”

While pursuing her master’s degree in public administration at Suffolk, she’s also been working full time for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as an emergency management specialist. She spent the summer coordinating staffing at federally run vaccination sites across the country, in 50 states and about 100 tribal nations.

Vaccine distribution is an enormously complex operation—particularly in the thick of an active hurricane season, another major FEMA challenge—but DeSalvo didn’t shy away from the challenges her job presents.

“It’s having that mindset, ‘This is a problem, and we’re going to do something about it.’ That’s where I thrive,” she says. DeSalvo regularly draws on her courses in emergency preparedness and leadership, taught by Professors Brenda Bond-Furtier and Brendan Burke. “The theory and the way that you apply it, and the tech and the trial and error, are wonderful and super-engaging,” she says. “But remote learning is not a complete replacement of in-person learning for younger kids. And they’re certainly not able to go through assignments independently!”

As students return to in-person learning this fall, focusing on mental health should not be neglected and should be as important as academics, says Langer.

“Both children and adolescents have had a very hard time of it.”

Because concerns affect everyone differently, it can be difficult to identify the needs of children and get them appropriate care, especially in families with limited resources. Langer emphasizes that schools are responsible for ensuring that every child can fully access the curriculum—and that includes children who are experiencing emotional, social, or behavioral issues.

“I hope that, though there’s significant work to do, we can expand access to high-quality mental healthcare for all our nation’s youth,” he says. “The increased recognition of the importance of mental health that the pandemic has brought can help us devise the needed resources to move forward in addressing their needs.”

DeSalvo completed her master’s degree in public administration at Suffolk University in 2013. After high school, she set her sights on becoming a doctor but wasn’t quite sure of the path to get there. “All I had for reference was a medical TV show called St. Elsewhere,” she says. “I remember thinking, ‘Well, I’m going to go to Boston because that is where doctors are made.’ I was quite naive, but it turns out my instincts were spot on.”

She got her start in job working in Boston’s McCormack Building, across the street from Suffolk, where she eventually enrolled for her undergraduate studies because it allowed her to earn a degree while the money she needed to pay for it. At Suffolk, a number of professors told her she showed real promise, which helped her believe that, in fact, maybe she could do it. She created an independent study that combined biology and government affairs with her undergraduate studies because it allowed her to get a path to get there. “All I had for reference was a medical TV show called St. Elsewhere,” she told Sawyer Business School in an interview.

In a world that seems ever more divided by the day, DeSalvo has faith that, by working together, companies like Google can empower individuals and communities to do the same, banding together to defeat COVID-19 and keep each other safe. “To make change, you have to equip people with the right information and you have to ensure that they have the tools to act on it,” she says. “And everybody has to have a hand. And examine their own cultural baggage.”

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‘NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO LET DOWN OUR GUARD’

Longtime healthcare CEO Jeanette Clough, MHA ’96, HDBA ’11, says to put COVID-19 behind us, we must first learn the lessons it is teaching us

Interview by Beth Brosnan
Photograph by Adam Detour

Jeanette Clough, MHA ’96, HDBA ’11, understands how ready everyone is to be done with COVID-19. The only problem, she says, is that COVID isn’t done with us. "COVID took hold rapidly, and we will continue to deal with its repercussions for a long time to come," says Clough, a Massachusetts healthcare leader and CEO for 26 years until her retirement in June.

Clough began her career as a staff nurse at Massachusetts General Hospital, then moved to Waltham Weston Hospital & Medical Center, where she became vice president of patient services. Three years later, when she took the helm at Mount Auburn Hospital, she became the first nurse to ever lead a Harvard-affiliated teaching hospital. She served two five-year terms as a Suffolk Hospital, she became the first nurse to ever lead a Harvard-affiliated teaching hospital. As a past chair of both the Massachusetts Hospital Association and the Health Forum Board of the American Hospital Association, Clough has a broad perspective on how hospitals are navigating the pandemic. "As we move forward," she says, "we need to continuously prepare, improve, reassess, and train for the next coronavirus or emergency.

Hospitals have faced the threat of pandemics before, including SARS and Ebola. What made COVID-19 different?

"Put simply, the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented. Before we could get testing in place, the virus was out in front, threatening and infecting those with comorbidities as well as the general population. As we know now, the elderly and those living in extended-care facilities were squarely in harm’s way."

"Next, while there was a lot of discussion about various approaches to care, there was really no go-to medication or treatment to offer the general population until the vaccines became available. This is a heart-wrenching place for caregivers to be, to have no effective medication or clear treatment to offer those who are sick and suffering.

"Finally, even with the vaccines, COVID’s disruptions continue to surprise and challenge us. Now is not the time to let down our guard."

What were some of the biggest challenges that hospitals in Massachusetts and around the country faced in the early days of the pandemic, before there was a clear understanding of what the virus was and how it was transmitted?

"Testing was a major challenge. Everything from how and where to test to learning how to actually do an effective nasal swab were early questions. Hospitals had to establish testing sites that would offer protection for both providers and patients, while also bypassing emergency departments so they could continue to only treat the sickest patients and provide general emergency care. Many hospitals set up drive-through testing sites so that both asymptomatic and symptomatic patients could be tested in a safe manner. Initially, getting test results could take as long as eight to 10 days, but over time the processing improved. Yet testing supplies remained a challenge for many hospitals."

"Providing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), which is so essential to the overall logistics of care, was another early challenge. Masks, eye shields or glasses, protective gowns to cover clothing, hair and shoe covers, and gloves—all needed to be available to providers 24/7. Supply chain leaders throughout the country worked diligently to provide access to all of these items."

You began your career as a nurse. Can you talk a little about the role of nurses and other frontline care workers during the pandemic—the pressures they’ve faced, the impact they’ve had?

"I have always felt that it was a special privilege to be a nurse. It’s almost impossible for me to put into words how proud I am of my nursing colleagues, and hope they can take as long as eight to 10 days, but over time the processing improved. Yet testing supplies remained a challenge for many hospitals.

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"They’ve also shown leadership from the bedside to the board room, helping to steer plans and logistics essential for protecting patients, care providers, and the general public. I send my personal thanks to all of those nurses and other care workers during the pandemic—the pressures they’ve faced, the impact they’ve had."

Hospitals are dealing not only with the pandemic but also with the partisan politics and disinformation that surrounds it. How do we move forward from this and focus on science?

"As health professionals, our goal is to prevent disease and foster good health. With more than 4.5 million deaths worldwide, we can’t fall prey to distortions that threaten those goals. We must stay focused on scientific facts and data. Compromised data is worse than no data at all, while studies that are done according to objective, valid, and reliable methods are priceless."

"Hospitals and health professionals must provide clear information about the risks and often-devastating outcomes of COVID-19. Where there is mistrust and misunderstanding, we must seek to understand and educate."

"And until the death toll stops rising, prevention and diligence through vaccination, distancing, hand washing, and masks should be routine and not optional."

HEALTH

Photograph by Adam Detour
Psychology Professor Jessica Graham-LoPresti says that, in some ways, her journey to understand the systemic nature of racism began right after college. She'd been hired to work as a research assistant at a local hospital, supporting injection-drug users who'd been diagnosed with HIV and were experiencing depression. “I saw the people of color in the methadone clinics being treated much differently than the white people were,” she says. She noticed the subtle shifts in the staff’s demeanor and tone of voice, and the way that Black patients were often viewed with suspicion while white patients were given the benefit of the doubt. “It made me think, ‘This is not working for us.’ It didn’t feel like a safe space.”

Yet in other ways, Graham-LoPresti says, her journey began the day she was born. She grew up in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, a majority Black community outside of Pittsburgh that was impoverished but nurturing. The larger world didn’t see it that way. Where she saw her parents’ and neighbors’ determination and self-sufficiency—despite the systemic removal of resources from their community—the world saw poverty and internal failings.

At the methadone clinic, she recognized this familiar pattern. The refusal to see individuals of color in the complexities of their needs and identities reflected an investment in upholding systems of power—and a disinvestment in communities and individuals of color.

Today, as an assistant professor of psychology at Suffolk and in her own private practice, Graham-LoPresti is working to change that pattern. She researches the broad disparities that Black Americans face, the toll these disparities take on their physical and mental health, and effective strategies for treatment. Her Suffolk colleague, Psychology Professor Amy Marks, puts it this way: “Racism is doing important, hard leadership work at the national level on racial trauma healing.”

Many discussions of racial trauma focus on overt examples of racial terrorism, like the 1921 Tulsa race massacre or the murder of George Floyd. Graham-LoPresti says everyday experiences with discrimination are equally impactful.

“There’s an abundance of research suggesting that the pervasiveness of racial microaggressions—at school, work, and other public settings—‘leads to a sort of hypervigilance,’” she says. “We don’t know when or where they will happen, whether they will be acknowledged, and how we’ll manage our emotions.” And when regular exposure to microaggressions and interpersonal racism intersects with institutional discrimination, the result, she says, is toxic stress.

Graham-LoPresti was reminded of this during the birth of her second child, when her treatment echoed what she had seen in the methadone clinics. “Racism doesn’t discriminate by socioeconomic status,” she says. “I’m an upper-middle-class Black woman with a white husband, but that didn’t afford me the opportunity to escape this sort of experience.”

Remedying racial trauma, she says, requires confronting white supremacy—“not the white supremacist movement represented by the Proud Boys or the Klan, but all the ways our society centers whiteness at the expense of all intersecting marginalized identities.”

So when 2020 brought this issue to the forefront like never before, Graham-LoPresti was ready to respond.

Black Advocacy, Resistance, and Empowerment

Before the concurrent tragedies of the pandemic and the murders of unarmed Black people, before the national reckoning on institutionalized racism, Graham-LoPresti was already running a doctoral research lab exploring the multi-level impact of institutional, systemic, and interpersonal racism on the mental health of people and communities of color.

She was also developing her own mental health and wellness consulting business. Together with Takahirah Abdullah-Swain, an associate professor of psychology at UMass Boston, she founded Black Advocacy, Resistance, and Empowerment Mental Health and Wellness (BAREMHW) to “actually provide the resources that our communities don’t have access to,” including clear information about mental health diagnoses and access to quality care.

BAREMHW works to address the disparities in access to high-quality, effective mental healthcare as well as mental health and wellness more broadly. In her research, Graham-LoPresti identified these disparities as a lack of information about mental health, stigma, mistrust due to the legacy of institutional racism in the medical and mental health communities; the difficulty of finding culturally competent providers; and access barriers like cost, transportation, and paid time off from work.

‘We’re resilient because we have to be, not because we should be. We should be able to live our lives based on safety.’
REFORMING CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Gabriella Priest, BS ’06, MSCJ ’09, is amplifying the voices of people impacted by the criminal justice system. In addition to being an activist, Gabriella Priest is an actively engaged Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree. She studied sociology and criminal justice at Suffolk. A professor in the Sawyer Business School’s Institute for Public Service, recruited graduate students to conduct research and provide recommendations. Gabriella Priest, was named a Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree. Now, at the Harvard Kennedy School, Priest is bringing experts from diverse fields together to find novel ways to reduce incarceration, treat the root causes of social problems—and address the stark racial disparities revealed in a 2020 Harvard Law School report.

Priest’s team has convened a roundtable on racial disparities in the Massachusetts Criminal Courts, a high-level working group of 28 leading practitioners, policymakers, grassroots organizers, individuals with lived experience, and academics who will prioritize action items to reform policy and practice. They’re also holding a series of events called Reimagining Community Safety, bringing together police, prosecutors, public defenders, mayors, people impacted by the system, and other public figures to discuss reform and reinvestment in communities.

At the center of their work is a dedication to amplifying the voices of those directly affected by the criminal justice system. “That’s been a shift and gives us a different perspective and a more humane approach to the table wanting to be involved,” she says. “If the future of the public sector is moving toward anti-racism, we need to review past projects and current policies with outside help to learn more and hold ourselves accountable.”

“Anti-racism isn’t just for policy makers,” says Priest. “It’s time for an uncomfortable conversation. People were afraid to be honest about the reality of where we’re at. Now, at the Harvard Kennedy School, Priest is bringing experts from diverse fields together to find novel ways to reduce incarceration, treat the root causes of social problems—and address the stark racial disparities revealed in a 2020 Harvard Law School report.”

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HOW TO BUILD AN ANTI-RACIST GOVERNMENT

Suffolk students help one of Boston’s most innovative offices address the challenge

Story by Andrea Grant
Photograph by Michael J. Clarke

Neighbors and partners

Jaclyn Youngblood, MONUM’s chief of staff, knew the office would need to review past projects and current policies with outside help to learn more and hold themselves accountable.

“The mission statement at the core of our department is about looking at how intersections—not just race, but also class, gender, geography, religion, and sexual orientation—influence people’s relationships with others, and we can use that knowledge to become a more open and inclusive society,” says Gebo. “There is a significant need to address that bias that exists within the system.”

If the future of the public sector is moving toward anti-racism, we need to review past projects and current policies with outside help to learn more and hold ourselves accountable.”

“Anti-racism isn’t just for policy makers,” says Priest. “It’s time for an uncomfortable conversation. People were afraid to be honest about the reality of where we’re at. Now, at the Harvard Kennedy School, Priest is bringing experts from diverse fields together to find novel ways to reduce incarceration, treat the root causes of social problems—and address the stark racial disparities revealed in a 2020 Harvard Law School report.”

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Alexandria Onuoha is a PhD student in applied developmental psychology at Suffolk. Her work in the Youth Equity and Sexuality Lab explores the impact of far-right ideologies on Black women college students. It’s a topic close to her heart.

Onuoha shared how coming of age in a divisive political climate and amid the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement helped shape how she thinks about the college experience—and healthy adolescent development.

How did you get started in your research?

“I first noticed what I feel is a lack of protection for Black women college students as an undergraduate majoring in dance and psychology at a small liberal arts college. I wrote an article called ‘Dancing Around White Supremacy’ about [inclusion] issues in my program. That piece sparked a lot of conversation and led to institutional change that promoted the well-being of students of color. “Then, leading up to the 2020 presidential election, people's true colors came out. I saw a lot of disgusting things directed toward Black women online. We would get more pushback than others for our comments, and that pushback would often include stereotypes. “Feminist scholar Moya Bailey coined the term ‘misogynoir’ to explain the blend of racist misogyny directed toward Black women. I eventually realized I was seeing far-right misogynoir—which I define as a direct hate and prejudice toward Black women from far-right groups and individuals who want to eradicate a multiracial democracy, and will do so through violence, digitally and in person.”

What are some of the harmful effects far-right attacks can have on Black women as they pursue higher education?

“Everybody deserves an education free from hate and harm. College is a time to learn, have fun, and make lifelong friends. “But if institutions don’t take far-right ideologies seriously, Black women will always feel marginalized. If hate speech, violence, and online harassment are not punished, incidents will be reported less often. It’s also important to look at the attitudes and opinions that are amplified throughout campus. If more ‘palatable’ forms of far-right speech that make marginalized students feel less safe are the norm, that’s harmful, too. “There are a lot of studies that show the academic success of Black women, and that’s great. But there are also studies that show that their experiences with exclusion and microaggressions impact their sense of belonging. If institutions aren’t checking racist and misogynist behavior–in person and online–it makes it much harder for students to grow and learn. That’s why I’m doing a qualitative study in Suffolk’s Youth Equity and Sexuality Lab, looking at how far-right ideologies impact Black women college students and their mental health.”

You mentioned protection. Why is that a key component of campus diversity and inclusion efforts?

“Diversity, inclusion, and equity are great social justice buzzwords, but protection is the action component. “Institutions must have policies and provide support for all students of color. It’s great to want diversity on campus, but what happens when something adverse transpires? Is there support for students of color and LGBTQIA+ individuals within your institution? What is going to make every student feel safe?”

What do you see as the biggest challenges and opportunities for higher-ed institutions in truly carrying out their missions to create inclusive campuses?

“Unlearning a racist system takes more than reading a book. But real changes are possible. We need to have compassion, listen to youth, and acknowledge anti-Blackness and the other axes of domination embedded in the system. We must create tangible things—events, programming, and policies—and involve students in that process.”

Do you have advice for students who want to engage in anti-racist work on their campuses?

“Pay attention to your emails! And get in touch with the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion—they have a plethora of opportunities for students to get involved. “Find your niche. Maybe you’re not the best speaker—maybe you’re an artist and you can be the person who designs an event flyer. Find what you can contribute and find your voice at Suffolk and beyond.”
In an Us vs. Them era, Tim Phillips, BS ‘83, HDHL ’18, remains an uncompromising believer in our capacity for change.

*Photography by Adam DeTour

**Story by Beth Brosnan**
Kelleher credits two educators with awakening her own passion: that both education and elections have the power to change lives.

That’s why she spent most of 2020 working to provide over 700,000 poll workers with the up-to-date information they needed to oversee the elections and ensure that every vote would be counted.

As a research manager with the Fair Elections Center, a nonpartisan voting rights and election reform organization, Kelleher contacted state and local officials around the country and compiled a comprehensive database of election regulations in more than 5,000 voting jurisdictions nationwide. In areas where the pandemic threatened to reduce the number of available poll workers, she helped with recruitment efforts. She also updated student voting guides with new COVID-19-related guidelines.

The best response to more restrictions, she adds, is more voter education and outreach, says Elizabeth Kelleher, BA ’13, and her record of success is self-evident: that both education and elections have the power to change lives.

“There are two truths that Elizabeth Kelleher, BA ’13, holds to be self-evident: that both education and elections have the power to change lives,” says Katherine A. Cobb, chair of the Political Science & Legal Studies Department, who took a topic that “could have been all theory and made it real. She is such an advocate for students to participate in the political process.”

As part of her Elections and Voting course, Cobb encouraged students to volunteer as poll workers during the 2020 elections. Kelleher was hooked. She wrote a paper on state laws governing poll workers, and followed that up with an ambitious research project for InterFuture, the respected intercultural studies program, on voting patterns and attitudes among college students in both the U.S. and Costa Rica. In 2018, as a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, she helped lead Harvard’s student voter registration drive.

Kelleher, who recently joined the global student exchange program World Learning as a program officer, says she was thrilled by the record turnout during the 2020 elections. However, she also was not completely surprised by the wave of restrictive state voting laws that followed, nor by ongoing attempts to discredit the election results and the officials who oversaw them. “It’s unfortunate that we’re at a point where some people feel they need to limit voting in order to win,” she says.

The best response to more restrictions, she adds, is more voter education and outreach, as well as legislation that expands voting rights, which some states have passed. In states like Maryland and Colorado, she says, voting will be easier moving forward.

“If we want a representative democracy,” she says, “we need people to vote. And 2020 taught us that if we make it accessible, people will vote. If we make it clear and easy to understand, people will vote. We saw that happen, and across party lines. As a country, I think we can do hard things when we put in the effort. And that leaves me with hope.”

And Miller says that reform is possible, if we can face the challenges head-on, “Larry” Calderone, MPA ’18, Marsha V. Kazarouz, JD ’82, and Kimberly F. West, JD ’95, will help create rules for police officer certification, decertification, and training.
Professor Brian Conley examines the impact of “propaganda feedback loops” in the 2020 election

Story by Beth Brosnan
Photograph by Michael J. Clarke

Professor Brian Conley has studied plenty of GOP politicians. But former President Donald Trump is, he says, a case study unto himself—a leader who defined traditional principles of governance without paying a penalty among his supporters. While Trump lost his reelection bid to Joe Biden, Conley points out that “his popularity among Republicans never dipped below 90% during the fall election.”

To better understand this resilience, Conley—an expert on political marketing who published a well-regarded 2018 study of Trump’s first presidential campaign—examined how the 2020 campaign relied on “inverted populism” to galvanize his base.

Unlike in traditional populism, which challenges those with more economic or political power, Trump targeted groups with less power, Conley says, a case study unto himself—a leader who “defied traditional principles of governance without paying a penalty among his supporters.”

By contrast, in a propaganda feedback loop, “it doesn’t matter if your claim is accurate as long as it conforms to your audience’s ideologies.” Ideologically inconsistent information “is either ignored or punished.”

Conley used the open-source platform Media Cloud to analyze more than 190,000 print and online news stories in order to explore how Trump’s statements about two relatively powerless (if politically charged) groups—antifa and socialists—were covered in the media and how that coverage influenced public opinion.

Following the May 2020 murder of George Floyd and the start of nationwide protests against police brutality, Trump began an escalating series of attacks on antifa, the decentralized movement of far-left groups who oppose white supremacy and neo-Nazis. By the November election, Conley documented, Trump issued 23 White House statements, 30 campaign statements, 38 press releases, 11 emails, eight texts, and 49 tweets. He also made 230 false claims and issued 23 White House statements, 30 campaign statements, 38 press releases, 11 emails, eight texts, and 49 tweets.
Greg Garrison, chef-owner of Prohibition in Charleston, South Carolina, realized something was wrong when his business partner called him in for a lunchtime meeting, then offered him a drink.

Over a bottle of Doc’s Cider, he learned their company would be closing indefinitely. Garrison, BA ’09, also oversees the kitchen at the group’s second restaurant in Savannah, Georgia. He sipped the cider while he planned how to tell his staff their jobs were gone for the foreseeable future.

Garrison recalls thinking of the 100-plus employees he needed to furlough, “How is each one of these people going to respond? How am I going to let them know that I care about them, and that this is not an easy decision to make?”

For Eric Papachristos, BSBA ’98, MBA ’99, the quieting of footsteps clued him into the looming crisis. The streets of Boston’s Financial District, home to the restaurateur’s flagship, Trade, were near-empty. Papachristos ended up laying off more than 550 employees across nine restaurants he owns or co-owns with luminary chef Jody Adams.

Ania Zaroda, BS ’08, was just about to open a second location of her breakfast and lunch spot, Mike & Patty’s, at a brand-new food hall in downtown Boston. Two weeks before High Street Place was slated to open in March 2020, the governor announced that Massachusetts restaurants had to temporarily close to stem the spread of a novel coronavirus.

More than a year later, the state of emergency is finally lifted. Things look very different for these entrepreneurs, but their restaurants are all still standing. They are among the survivors: More than 110,000 establishments permanently closed in 2020, the National Restaurant Association reported in December.

Business, however, is not the same, and it remains to be seen how the industry itself will settle. All three of these Suffolk alumni are using lessons learned in 2020 to guide the future of their companies.

Garrison’s establishments were closed for roughly six months. He and his business partners used the time to renovate and rebrand their Savannah restaurant. Replacing a second location of Prohibition after a pandemic-disrupted two years in business, Repeal 33 debuted in August 2020. With considerations like social distancing in mind, it’s a brighter and more open lounge than its dark and cozy predecessor.

“It was a way to reinvigorate ourselves while we had all this downtime, and also be excited to reopen again,” Garrison says.

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“The name plays off the original concept—‘like, repealing Prohibition,’” Garrison says—but there’s a contemporary parallel, too. “A lot of people are saying that this could be another Roaring ’20s,” he notes.

This past summer was certainly lively at Prohibition and Repeal 33. Foot traffic at restaurants throughout the country has been

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steady rising since January 2021, and while much of Garrison’s pre-pandemic staff have returned to work, it hasn’t been enough. “We’re turning [customers] away every single day,” the chef says.

The industry lost 3.1 million employees in 2020, according to the National Restaurant Association, and many don’t seem to be coming back, according to restaurant owners struggling to hire across the country. “Our industry’s having an enormously difficult time finding staff,” Papachristos says.

Myriad factors contribute, from employees’ health concerns and childcare needs to the availability, until recently, of government benefits and a desire by many employees to move on from low-paying, often onerous jobs. As he is able to hire and train enough people, Papachristos has reopened his restaurants one by one. Meanwhile, he’s embracing new technology, such as online ordering and waitlist availability, until recently, of government benefits. “It’s probably not the day,” the chef says.

“We’re turning customers away every single day,” the chef says. After “going through the wringer” of the shutdown and restrictions, restaurateurs face continued rising costs. He notes that the cost of beef, for example, is up more than 30% from 2020. That means higher prices on the menu. For his part, he’s moving ahead purposefully—and authoritatively. “It’s probably not the day,” the chef says.

“Probably not the answer that one would think,” Papachristos acknowledges, but today’s business needs to leave less room for democratic decision-making, he says.

Coming out of the pandemic, Garrison’s company has raised wages by $2 to $3 across the board. That cost is being passed onto consumers, but it hasn’t been an issue so far, he says. He is optimistic the “transparent” workforce will eventually return, but says that restaurateurs need to get real about the exodus of experienced employees.

“One of the biggest takeaways out of all this is that when you have good employees, you need to take care of them before it’s too late,” Garrison says.

That’s a lesson Zaroda has learned as well. Her restaurants, which also include a Somerville pizzeria called Hot Box, employ about a dozen people. Unlike many restaurateurs, she was able to keep them all on payroll throughout 2020. Mike & Patty’s and Hot Box were both takeout-focused before the pandemic and were already set up for third-party delivery apps, doing 95% of their business through apps like Caviar and UberEats. Zaroda has since begun providing paid vacation time, as well as cash and gift card bonuses. She also reconfigured her company’s leadership, adding director of operations and assistant roles to oversee training, menu development, and employees. “We wanted to make sure our staff has a job where they want to stay,” she says.

Not closing meant adapting her business model to meet the moment. For example, Mike & Patty’s began bottling its house mayo and baking its own English muffins. These ready-made products were a convenient option in Mike & Patty’s location, an urban-residential area about a half-mile from a full-service grocery store. In May 2021, consumer spending at restaurants eclipsed grocery store sales for the first time since March 2020. That’s welcome news for food service operators, but it remains to be seen how much the public’s dining-out habits really have changed.

That’s why innovations inspired by the pandemic are informing the future. This fall, along with the long-awaited opening of High Street Place, Mike & Patty’s will add a cafe and bakery in Newton, where it will produce bread for sandwiches across the company’s menus. Zaroda is also planning a new sit-down location of Mike & Patty’s in Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood.

Papachristos, too, is in expansion mode. He hopes to open a few smaller locations this year of Saloniki, a fast-casual Greek concept. After a year of only providing takeout and delivery, Papachristos has realized that counter-service restaurants don’t need a large physical space. Growing the company helps to retain employees, Garrison notes. Repeal 33 was funded with money his partners had saved and earmarked for new restaurants. Expansion plans that were in motion pre-pandemic are currently on hold, but if the recovery is sustainable, those conversations could start again, he says.

“Didn’t have a job as a part-owner of two restaurants by staying at the first restaurant I ever worked at,” says Garrison, who moved south after ascending to the role of sous chef at Boston’s famed L’Espalier. He knows that people who work for him now are just as ambitious.

“If I’m able to buy a house and own my own car,” Garrison says, “then the next step is, how can I pass on the success to people that work for me?”
Shaun Stimpson

Leaves no stone unturned in his search to buy a business

Story by Greg Gatlin | Photograph by Adam DeTour

Shaun Stimpson has a list of 29,000 owners of industrial equipment and machinery distribution companies around the country—and a plan to call every one of them.

Stimpson, BSBA ’05, is looking to buy a business, and he’s not averse to doing a little legwork to find the right one.

In his case, “a little” means 200-plus already completed Zoom meetings with business brokers, investment bankers, private equity executives, certified public accountants, attorneys, and other industry execs. He’s developed a multi-pronged plan that provides for a two-year search; financial, legal, and operational due diligence; and a leadership transition. He’s put together a team of trusted advisors and brought in an investment partner to help fund a purchase.

He’s read books and white papers on the increasingly popular entrepreneurship-through-acquisition niche. He’s spoken with about 100 people who have searched for and acquired (or failed to acquire) a business. And, of course, there are those 29,000 phone calls to business owners, which he methodically started making in June.

“My wife and I joke that I could find the right business on the first day, so all this other stuff I’m doing could be all for nothing,” says Stimpson, a former managing director at Bank of America Private Bank who left a successful career in wealth management to pursue this dream.

“But at the same time, I’m not going to take any chances. I’m looking for one company, and who knows where that company is going to be. I’m certainly not going to leave any stone unturned.”

Stimpson, 43, a 2013 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree, built his career by turning over every stone.

Champion of the cold call

About a month after graduating with a finance degree from Suffolk’s Sawyer Business School, Stimpson landed a job as a financial advisor with Merrill Lynch’s Global Private Client Group in Rockland, Massachusetts.

“They gave me a computer, a phone, a desk, and said, ‘Go build your business,’” Stimpson remembers.

He set a goal of securing two meetings a week with potential clients. To do it, he made 200 calls a day, every day. “I would literally make 1,000 phone calls a week,” Stimpson says. “About 100 people would listen to my spiel. And then they’d tell me to go (expletive).”

None of this came easy.

“I was always a pretty shy kid growing up,” he says. “Not to get too personal, but for me it was very uncomfortable to cold-email or to cold-call people.”

And then to get rejected 998 times out of 1,000 every week?

“One thing I knew when I first got into that business is that I had to learn from the people that did it before me,” Stimpson says. “Every person who was successful built their business around cold-calling. I knew people would hang up on me, scream at me. I knew if I endured that pain, endured that discomfort, I was one of those guys that could become really successful.”

He credits his Suffolk University experience with teaching him the value of pushing past his discomfort and building a network. “I just figured out that if I was going to be successful, it would be from getting out and meeting people,” he says.

Stimpson recalls meeting alumni in the Sawyer Business School’s honors programs, classes, panel discussions, and networking events: “I would see a lot of the same faces, but also new faces, and it got me comfortable with networking and meeting new people. For me, those things were invaluable.”

In his first three years at Merrill, he built a successful practice, with more than $37 million in assets under management. In 2008, he moved to Morgan Stanley.
Chanel-Faiteau
Public servant by day, fashion influencer by night

Y day, Chanelline Chanel-Faiteau, BS ’12, is the resource development manager for the City of Boston’s Centers for Youth and Families, providing development support, resources, and social media planning for 36 community centers in the city. By night, she’s an effusive, body-positive, online fashion influencer, sharing her favorite places to shop for plus-sized clothing, offering fitness advice, and writing candidly about self-image.

“I’m someone who always loves to see fashion, who loves to see style, but I did not see a lot of girls who looked like me on the runway—if any,” she says. “I just remember never seeing a girl above a size eight. There was always a specific type of girl walking in shows.”

Using her professional skills and connections through her popular website, www.chardline.com, Chanel-Faiteau has presented plus-sized fashion shows throughout Boston. “I never thought we would see someone like us on a runway,” she says. “I never thought people would call me beautiful.”

Chanel-Faiteau, a 2020/2021 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alum honoree, was inspired by her mentor, the late Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, for whom she worked as a project assistant and intern organizer. Menino rose from humble beginnings to become Boston’s first Italian-American mayor and prided himself on championing the underdog. She can relate.

“He taught me a lot about leadership,” she says. “Working with him allowed me to understand that it wasn’t really about politics. He was really a people’s mayor, and he liked people would call me beautiful.”

Suffolk changed her perspective on what was possible. As an undergrad, Chanel-Faiteau stage fashion shows, was a founding member of Suffolk’s First Gospel Choir, Voices of Zion, and helped implement youth cultural programs at the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Roxbury.

Chanel-Faiteau says Suffolk changed her perspective on possibilities. “At Suffolk, I met Black doctors, I met Black lawyers, I had Black professors, and I also was a Black studies minor… Sufflik helped ground me and understand not just my worth but my potential to really soar as a Black woman,” she says.

What’s next? Maybe law school. Maybe community organizing. Whatever she does, she plans to work to put Black youth, women, and all body types at the forefront.

“I feel like I have a duty to give back to the city of Boston,” she says. “Once, my parents were afraid for me to leave the house. I finally moved from that place of being afraid and trying to get to a place where everyone could feel empowered as I do.”

Jibrann Malek
The marketing professional who is disrupting cat cuisine

Jibrann Malek is intent on disrupting what he calls “the pet food industrial complex.”

“We want to go toe-to-toe with Purina and Meow Mix,” says Malek, the director of partnerships at Smalls, a direct-to-consumer e-commerce cat food startup. “We specialize in human grade, fresh food, the closest thing to nature a cat can eat. We believe pets have a consciousness and a humanity that is on par with us, and we want to make sure people treat cats on that equal level.”

Smalls makes and sells all-natural, preservative-free—and delicious, if Malek does say—so-feline cuisine. It offers fuller-free food such as lean ground beef with cow heart, turkey, and chicken liver. The food is available in smooth or ground mouthfeels, depending on a cat’s finicky preferences. It’s flash-frozen to lock in protein and shipped to customers on a subscription basis, much like Blue Apron or HelloFresh for humans.

Malek, BS ’14, a 2015 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree, was initially headed for law school. But he detoured into startups after Suffolk’s career counselors connected him with an internship at the Progressive Business Leaders Network (now the Alliance for Business Leadership), a coalition of leaders focused on economic inequality and social mobility. An internship with MassChallenge began with policy research, but quickly morphed into handling their social media and marketing full-time, a role he balanced with his studies.

“This opened up my entire career in innovation and in startups, all basically because Suffolk University gave me a push,” he says. “Going to a school in the middle of the city really helped me in terms of being available to break into Boston innovation.”

As his internship grew into a full-time position, professors were accommodating, understanding how much the career path meant to him. His ambition hasn’t faltered, although now he’s focused on four-legged clients.

Malek and his company recently spearheaded a rescue partnership program with 15 nonprofits to provide free cat food to new pet owners. The partnership was especially important during the pandemic, when adoptions among shelter pets increased. He built relationships with animal adoption agencies, ensuring adopters had access to healthy food.

For Malek, the kind of animal aficionado who rescues cats off the streets and of beaches, it’s not just.

“I just feel really close to animals, and I’ve always cared about animal welfare,” he says. “I can talk about cats, work with really incredible people, and build really cool relationships with nonprofits and expand that vision. It’s been really empowering.”
Shannon Murphy

When the U.S. Air Force kicked Turkey out of the F-35 fighter jet purchase program two years ago, Shannon Murphy, BBA '08, had her work cut out for her.

Murphy oversees finances for the $8 billion international sales program for the latest-generation stealth aircraft, and taking Turkey out of the equation—punishment for purchasing the S-400 Russian-made air defense system—left a large hole in the customer list.

“They were removed from the F-35, and I was solely responsible for handling the financial aspects of the $3.6 billion that went into their removal from the program,” she says. “So that involves a lot of work with the White House and Congress, making sure that all of our ducks were in a row from the finance end. Every debit and credit had to be accounted for over [Turkey’s] entire span with the program. It was a U.S.-only initiative. It wasn’t something I could ask my team for help with. So I had to handle that on my own.”

That’s the sort of high-pressure, high-profile challenge that comes with her job as chief financial officer for the Air Force’s F-35 program office. She works closely with the Navy and Marine Corps and with international partners, including the United Kingdom and Norway, to help manage the program.

Murphy, a 2017 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumna honoree, sees her role as part of an important overall mission.

“In this case, it’s protecting the United States and our allies,” she says. “I always have to have a job that works for a greater mission.”

At Suffolk, she took advantage of the school’s urban location as president of the local fundraising chapter for the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. As a Beacon Hill Civic Association scholar and award recipient, she worked with the elderly; she also was a service leader for AmeriCorps. After graduation, she became a finance manager at Boston Children’s Hospital. As a Beacon Hill Civic Association scholar and award recipient, she worked with the elderly; she also was a service leader for AmeriCorps. After graduation, she became a finance manager at Boston Children’s Hospital.

“My passion is always for the greater good,” she says. “That’s something [the Air Force] exhibits on a daily basis. We’re trying to make sure that we’re protecting the U.S. and keeping these allies strong in the best way possible, with the most advanced technology possible.”

Colleagues sometimes ask Murphy why she doesn’t work in the private sector, where she could make more money.

“Right now, I have a great work-life balance. I have an 11-month-old son, I have another little boy on the way, and I’m still doing a job that I absolutely love and feel fully confident in and proud of,” Murphy says. “When they grow up and ask, ‘What does Mommy do?’ it’s going to be awesome to tell them.”

Chandler

Crystal Chandler, BA '15, knew from an early age she wanted to be a journalist.

“Growing up, I was super-obsessed with the news,” she says. “I recall being glued to the television during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, watching as Diane Sawyer and Anderson Cooper reported from the wreckage and ‘wishing I could be on the other side of the camera.’”

That desire led Chandler to Suffolk and the University’s Studio 73, where she received hands-on experience in broadcast reporting and video production work.

But another part of her Suffolk experience has proved to be just as valuable in her life and career: learning how to care for her own mental health.

“As a youth, Chandler experienced both physical and emotional abuse, but it wasn’t until her time at Suffolk that she sought therapy, at the University’s Counseling, Health & Wellness Center—a brave step for someone who outwardly appeared to be successful and serene.”

“She knew her turbulent history or the fact that she commuted from West Medford by train and bus. There were nights when she missed the last bus and had to walk home well past midnight. Therapy helped her process her trauma, and it gave a new sense of purpose to her work. Chandler, a 2019 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumna honoree, launched her own media company, The Crystal Lens Productions, to share information about mental health and racial justice through workshops and discussions. Her most recognized production, the Dear Little Project, uses poetry to empower and inspire Black children. She filmed more than 150 Black men, women, and children reading positive poems and affirmations. Her goal, she says, is to use the power of storytelling to give Black children a foundation ‘before society can break their spirit and tell them ‘no.’’”

For Chandler, the production solidified her desire to cover Black mental health and laid the foundation for The Crystal Lens Project.

“I wish I had recorded the whole process because it was really awesome,” she says of what she learned from the Dear Little Project. Now she’s thinking about how to replicate it in different ways to convey different messages. “What we’re delivering to people are unique experiences to help them update and change their perceptions and clear their lens. Your view of the world has a crystal lens, you know?”

During the pandemic, Chandler focused on virtual storytelling and affirmation workshops, including a Suffolk-sponsored panel discussion with Upward Bound, and a two-day storytelling and affirmation workshop, Ancestral Change in Real Time, brought together students of color at Suffolk to address campus issues and stress during the pandemic, with discussions, videos, breakout rooms, and facilitators.

Eradicating broader stigma around mental health for Black youth remains a central focus of Chandler’s work. In recognition of that work, Chandler received a Racial Equity Champion Award in October 2020 as part of Suffolk’s annual Celebration of Black Excellence.

“It’s just about normalizing mental health,” she says. “You don’t need a diagnosis in order to tackle addressing your mental health.”
Advocating for pregnant women before, during, and after a pandemic

As a professor of maternal and reproductive health at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, Lenka Benova, BSBA ’02, is accustomed to long odds. For decades, the 2020 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree has worked to improve care for women during pregnancy and childbirth in low-resource communities and in countries that lack reliable healthcare systems. She has worked to upgrade facilities, provide more training, and increase outreach and support. If progress was slower than she liked, and not always steady, at least it was being made. Then came COVID-19.

For the past year, Benova watched as the pandemic decimated decades of progress on maternal health. Pregnant women with already-limited access to healthcare were told not to come to facilities because even when pregnant women were able to get care it often came too late, especially for pregnant and giving birth, she says. “People keep pushing to provide good care.”

Benova’s introduction to public health came not long after graduating from Suffolk, when she joined Doctors Without Borders (MSF) as a financial coordinator in Nigeria. After earning a master’s degree in Middle East studies at the American University of Cairo, she continued her work with MSF in South Sudan and the Palestinian territories. She later moved to London to pursue her master’s degree in demography and a PhD in population studies, focusing on how people seek healthcare—and how their socioeconomic status impacts the kind of care they can access and receive.

After seeing the fallout from 2020, Benova believes the way forward is to focus on organizing at the local level. When issues around pregnancy and the pandemic began to arise, she says, it was women’s groups, nongovernmental organizations, and human rights coalitions that advocated for maternal healthcare.

Benova sees the potential for all women, pregnant or not, as well as their partners, to engage in local organizing. In the U.S., advocates could be patient groups affiliated with a hospital or provider. “Those are very powerful ways to affect the provision and quality of care,” she says.

I n his work as a trial attorney with the federal Department of Justice, Huy M. Le, CRT ’12, BS ’12, draws inspiration from his parents’ struggles fleeing the Vietnam War. “They escaped with just a gallon of water … while my mother was pregnant with my sister,” says Le. “I didn’t think things were going to fall apart as much as they did,” she says. “But you can’t work in this field and be pessimistic.” She points to a facility in Nigeria where a patient, struggling with both COVID-19 and asthma, spent close to two weeks on oxygen following a cesarean section. To make sure the new mother didn’t run out of oxygen, which had to be manually administered, a technician slept next to her for 11 days. “There’s a lot of resilience,” Benova says. “People keep pushing to provide good care.”

Le, who grew up in Dorchester, says his family’s experiences left him with a strong commitment to racial justice, especially in light of the recent rise in bias incidents and violent attacks on Asian Americans. “Being a person of color myself, racial issues have always been in the back of my mind, but nowadays they are at the forefront,” he says.

Family was also an important component of Le’s Suffolk experience. His older sister attended Suffolk, and encouraged him and his younger brother to do the same. While at Suffolk, he found his first professional role model: Legal Studies Professor Allan Tow, an Asian-American immigration attorney. “Having no lawyers in my family, Allan became the mentor I surely needed,” Le says. Tow was easy to talk to and had a similar background and upbringing, something that helped Le commit to a legal career. “Having him in my corner certainly made me more confident about the career path that I was about to embark on,” says Le, who went on to attend law school.

With the Department of Justice, Le is based in Washington, D.C., where he represents the United States in federal court. Galvanized by his family’s history, in 2017 he joined the U.S. Army Reserve Judge Advocate General’s Corps, where he serves as first lieutenant for the 8th Legal Operations Detachment. Le was most recently on active duty orders in Des Moines, Iowa.

The Vietnam war looms large in his family, and this is his way of giving back: “My grandparents and my great-uncles (told) me war stories, how they fought next to American soldiers, not knowing how to speak the same language but willing to die for each other. That struck me,” Le says. “It’s always something that’s been in the back of my mind, so when there was an opportunity to join the JAG Corps, where I can refine my lawyering skills as well as fulfill this decade-long desire to serve, it was a no-brainer.”
I may be intended to reduce pollution, but there’s no doubt that the Clean Air Act can seem a bit murky. It falls to Corey Mocka, BS ’88, a physical scientist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, to decipher the act for Washington, D.C., policymakers.

“At the most basic level, my job involves providing EPA management and decision makers [such as political appointees] with various options for them to make policy decisions,” says Mocka, a 2018 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree. “Aside from the specific technical questions surrounding a project, most questions are often related to risk: What are the potential outcomes if we make this decision? Are we being consistent? What outcome does the state prefer? What is the precedent?”

Air pollution law is complicated, he concedes—but he finds the EPA’s aims to be refreshingly straightforward and motivating. The agency’s mission is simple: to protect human health and the environment—a statement that also describes Mocka’s role.

“One of the most difficult parts of air quality policy often is distilling complex scientific information to its simplest form so that those unfamiliar with the subject can make the necessary policy decisions,” he says.

Earlier this year, Mocka served as the keynote speaker at the College of Arts & Sciences 2021 STEAM virtual reception. He discussed air quality basics, the regulatory process, and things that he wished he’d known before graduating.

“Just because you have a degree in chemistry doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to be a bench chemist,” he says. “I have a degree in chemistry, but I’m doing environmental policy. Looking outside of the traditional fields of your major can definitely help.”

Mocka served as a resident assistant at 150 Tremont—now Smith Hall—and majored in chemistry, where he loved the tight-knit classes. But he urged his student audience not to be restrained by specialization. His first job at the EPA was as an on-site consultant for the Office of Research and Development, where he was responsible for operating various air sampling equipment and laboratory instrumentation.

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He believes the EPA is the best place for him to put his degree to use, given that the environment is on top of many people’s minds. “Whether we’re talking about persistent chemicals in the environment or climate change, I do feel like at this critical juncture, we are getting a lot more engagement—and, to me, that’s very exciting.”

Corey
Mocka
Decoding
the Clean
Air Act for
lawmakers

Story by Kara Baskin
Photograph by Cyn Kain Photography

Pursuing public health in an unprecedented time

François
François
COVID-19 brought home issues she hopes to deal with in her future career in public health. “We throw around the term ‘social determinants of health,’ she says. “Everybody knows those buzzwords; we don’t really take the time to know what they mean. But the pandemic showed us the inequities that we have in our healthcare system.”

Those social determinants include racial inequity in healthcare, and François thinks it’s vital that medical students’ training covers that. “Just like you learn about pharmacology, anatomy, and physiology, it’s also important to teach students about how social factors can impact health,” says the 2017 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree.

François, BS ’12, was simultaneously pursuing a MD and a PhD in the epidemiology of infectious disease when the pandemic hit. “It had been obviously unfortunate seeing everything happening, but it’s been amazing from a public health point of view, and also from a science point of view, seeing how fast we were able to come up with vaccines and how fast we were able to mobilize resources to make sure that public health needs are met,” she says.

As a young girl growing up in Haiti, François says she was encouraged to focus on a career in law, engineering, or medicine. “I enjoyed biology and science in school,” she says, so her choice of medicine was easy. She came to the United States in 2009 bound for Suffolk.

After graduation, she earned her master’s in international health from the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins.

François started her MD and PhD program at the University of North Carolina in July 2019, when no one had heard of COVID-19. By the time she was ready to begin hospital rounds as a medical student, pandemic protocols were in place.

“In March 2021, we were able to go to the clinic, take care of patients,” she says. “It was exactly what I wanted to do.”

François hopes to eventually bring her training home to Haiti to have an impact on the quality of medical care there.

“The recent earthquake in Haiti only reinforces my desire to be trained in infectious disease epidemiology,” says François, who has chosen to study malaria for her PhD. “I believe that it’s crucial to keep in mind infections such as malaria and diarrheal diseases, which often surge after natural disasters. Understanding their distribution and factors influencing their spread will inform both acute and long-term control interventions, so that populations who are already dealing with significant losses do not face compounding challenges from infectious diseases. ■
A recent Los Angeles transplant, Ki Williams is reacquainting himself with the hustle of Hollywood as he was recently named the director of talent and partnerships at the entertainment agency Special Projects. While the California sun may be new to Williams, managing celebrities is not.

Just a month prior Williams was in his midtown Manhattan apartment, identifying keynote speakers and talent for Hubspot’s INBOUND conference. The conference is an annual multisay event, featuring industry leaders and celebrities who share their inspiration and insights on brand marketing for the customer relations management software company’s 68,000-plus customers and supporters.

When 2020 shut down in-person gatherings and saw the rise of the racial justice movement, Williams’ role in recruiting talent became even more important.

“What I’m seeing now in the industry is the commitment to diversity,” he says as he put together the program for this year’s conference, scheduled for Boston in October. “The commitment to showcasing different viewpoints, different perspectives of the world, and just different people.”

Williams, BS ’11, began his career as an entertainment manager at the fashion magazine Marie Claire, where he quickly realized that the publication lacked diversity.

“When I started at Marie Claire, I was in charge of helping with features, and looking through the pages, I’m like, ‘This is another white woman,’ just over and over,” he says. That’s why Williams, a 2018 Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree, made a strong commitment to champion diversity. He increased diversity among Marie Claire’s editorial content by 30%, and at INBOUND he increased the representation of Latino, Asian, and transgender speakers over several years.

He plans to apply the same vision at Special Projects, where he is currently working on E! magazine’s Women in Hollywood event scheduled for October.

“I’m a big proponent of making sure that whatever story I’m telling is representative of the people that are out there,” Williams says.

While INBOUND stressed content and politics, Williams has pressed the organization to recognize that not all sensitive topics are political, and that doing the right thing can have a greater impact.

“This has just been such a hard year in the Black community. I understand that we are a tech company, we do need to talk about business, but this is a year that everyone is experiencing the wrong thing. I think if you are on the right side of history, you really shouldn’t be afraid of saying the right thing.”

Suffolk University launched its 10 Under 10 program in 2012 to recognize and celebrate recent graduates who are already making their mark in their careers, their communities, and through their ongoing support for and service to Suffolk. Every year the University honors 10 alumni who have graduated with an undergraduate degree within the past 10 years, from a variety of different fields and geographical regions. The Office of Advancement runs the program and seeks nominations from members of the Suffolk community, with final selections made by the Graduates of the Last Decade (GOLD) Council.

We are proud to share an honor roll of our past 10 Under 10 alumni honorees, and look forward to welcoming our next class in spring 2022.
The cousins are founders of Candy.com, the online mega-candy store they started at Suffolk, and Green Rabbit, which provides fulfillment and delivery of temperature-sensitive and perishable goods. Balestrieri and Melville credit the enthusiasm and advice of Sawyer Business School and Suffolk Law presenting their pitches to a panel of judges, all Suffolk alumni. They are also among the newest members of the Sawyer Business School Donors’ Cabiaret, which recognizes loyal benefactors to the school. Balestrieri and Melville hope that their example will encourage other alumni to support the next generation of Suffolk entrepreneurs, whether through financial support, visiting a class, or hiring students for internships and jobs.

“Suffolk was a huge part of the success that we both had,” says Melville, “and we hope that what we do inspires others.”

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Although not yet 40, the cousins qualify as elder statesmen of entrepreneurship, and they want to set a positive example for today’s budding businesspeople. “Showing student entrepreneurs that you can have success coming out of Suffolk is important,” says Balestrieri. “It’s really rewarding to see others taking that path.”

Most recently, the pair served as judges for the $30K Idea Pitch Competition. Sponsored by Suffolk’s Center for Entrepreneurship, the event featured 10 finalists from the College of Arts & Sciences, the Sawyer Business School, and Suffolk Law presenting their pitches to a panel of judges, all Suffolk alumni. They are also among the newest members of the Sawyer Business School Donors’ Cabiaret, which recognizes loyal benefactors to the school.

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**Supporting the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs**

Story by Ben Hall

At Suffolk, Habbach was an active member and e-board member of the Black Student Union, the Muslim Student Association, the Cape Verdean Student Association, and the Caribbean Student Network, giving her exposure to a variety of viewpoints and cultures in the University’s affinity groups. That’s why she’s particularly excited to serve as co-chair of SUBAN alongside co-chair Tamela Bailey, JD ’04, and to work with the network’s founder, Suffolk Trustee Ernst Guerrier, BS ’91, JD ’94. With support from SUBAN’s committee, Guerrier established the SUBAN Scholarship Fund, providing scholarships to students in each of Suffolk’s three schools.

“I’m thrilled to see the SUBAN scholarship come to fruition,” she says, noting that it launched in the wake of recent heightened conversation about racial and social justice. Of the SUBAN committee she says, “They’re active leaders, they know what they’re doing, they’re there for the students, and also there for the community.”

**Young Alumni Donors**

**Paying It Forward With an Endowed Scholarship**

Story by Mark Potts

Hind Habbach, BA ’99, knows how much scholarships meant to her academic career. So now she’s giving back.

“I said, as soon as I save a little bit of money, I’m going to start a scholarship, no matter how small,” she says. “And I did!”

After creating a scholarship program at her alma mater, Revere High School, she now has launched the Hind Habbach Term Scholarship at Suffolk University, aimed at helping students majoring in political science with a concentration in international relations.

She’s also a member of the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network (SUBAN), which plans the annual Black Excellence Award Celebration and is a key partner in the University’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals. In 2009, Habbach was named a Suffolk 10 Under 10 alumni honoree. “I’m a product of a scholarship and a product of financial aid,” Habbach says. Her family emigrated to the U.S. from Morocco in the mid-1980s, settling in East Boston before moving to Revere, Massachusetts. “We were probably one of the first Moroccan families in East Boston,” she says, recalling the community’s small, tight-knit Moroccan diaspora.

Today, Habbach is a global commercial real estate investment manager for Axiom, a global real estate investment management firm, and more recently at TBI, overseeing the Middle East and North Africa, having done so for nearly 10 years in senior investor relations positions at Sentinel Real Estate in New York, a global real estate investment management firm, and more recently at TBI, overseeing the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey region before joining Axiom in 2021.

Habbach says attending Suffolk was an obvious choice. “I wanted to go to a school that was in my backyard, and Suffolk being right on Beacon Hill and being one of the best schools in Boston, with a strong legal community—it was a no-brainer.”

An internship in Dubai and a study-abroad program at Suffolk Madrid fueled Habbach’s interest in international law. She currently sits on the governance committee of the Arab American Bar Association and hopes to set up a chapter of the group at Suffolk Law.

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With an Endowed Scholarship

Story by Mark Potts
The Sawyer Business School Dean’s Cabinet consists of a distinguished community of loyal benefactors who are dedicated to supporting and advancing our school’s mission through philanthropy and strategic consultation. “I’m deeply grateful to the cabinet members whose generosity is helping hundreds of Suffolk students continue their educational journey at Suffolk, and whose insights, passion for Suffolk education, and vast networks are enriching the school’s academic offerings and broadening the students’ horizons,” says Dean Amy Zeng.

Members generously commit a minimum of $50,000, and their gift commitments can be completed through five annual contributions.

Greg Balesstri, BSBA ’09
Co-founder & CEO
GreenBabbit

Anne Marie Conway, MHA ’00
VP of Clinical Operations
Fouk Therapeutics Group

Andrew Demakes, MBA ’72
Director of Food Service Sales
Old Neighborhood Foods

Kevin Donahue, EMBA ’84
Former CEO and Chairman
VistaJet

Bruno Drummond, BSBA ’92, MBA ’95, MST ’20
Founder & Partner
Drummond Advisors

Tom Flannery, P ’72
Co-founder
Americas Wealth and Asset Management
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Dan Florian, BSBA ’01
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Randy Richard, EMBA ’96
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Erich Smith, MBA ’02
Executive VP and CIO
PNC Wealth Management

Shaun Stimpson,
BSBA ’05
Founder & Managing Partner
North Iron Holdings, LLC

Ken Taubes, MBA ’84
EVP, Chief Investment Officer
U.S. Investment Management
Ambanti Partners
Trustee
Suffolk University

The Honorable David A. Wiseman, BSBA ’65, JD ’68, recently marked five years of retirement as a Superior Court judge of the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. He is chair of the Hawaii County Board of Ethics and is a former president and board member of Project Expedita Justice, an NGO that trains prosecutors and investigators in countries such as Sudan, Congo, and Cambodia to bring legal action against those committing human atrocities and human trafficking.

Brendan C. Doherty, BA ’69, has retired from the Wolfram, Massachusetts, school system after a 51-year teaching career.

Frank Farina, BSBA ’73, joined the faculty at Suffolk University in Selmgrove, Pennsylvania, teaching federal taxation and business law in the Simmons West School of Business. In addition to maintaining his law and CPA licenses, Frank plays euphonium in the university’s wind ensemble and symphonic band.

Mary Mahoney DiGuardia, BA ’74, MED ’75, CAG ’85, has been appointed director of special education at Nahant Public Schools.

Anthony J. Magliero, BS ’75, retired after a 36-plus-year career consulting in psychology and computer science in the Washington, D.C., area.

Edward W. Collupy, Jr., BA ’72, has been inducted into the Conexxion Technology Hall of Fame. Conexxion is a member-driven technology organization dedicated to the development and implementation of standards, innovation, and advocacy for the convenience of retail and fueling market.

Richard A. Africkan, BS ’78, attended graduate school in Soviet Armenia. After coming home, he became an entrepreneur, and then worked as a safety engineer for 34 years.

Steven R. Press, BS ’78, has retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs after 40 years as a mental health therapist.

Robert D. DiGuardia, BS ’82, MSB ’88, retired from Suffolk University in 2019 after 46 years as the director of ERP applications. He teaches at the Sawyer Business Schools an adjunct and works with a small startup, AMSA Consulting.

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updated to meet culturally responsive state standards. She also has advocated for an Asian American Pacific Islander (AAP) history course in the district.

James P. Dever III, BSBA ’93, works at Northern Bank helping business clients. He also serves as the secretary for the Suffolk University Sawyer Business School Alumni Board.

Paul R. Schierenbeck, BA ’94, married his boyfriend of seven years, David Mann, on August 15, 2020, in an intimate backyard ceremony.

Daniel J. Picard, BSBA ‘95, married Erin Uelegren on New Year’s Eve 2019. He is the NCAA coordinator of women’s basketball officials for five New England conferences, including the Commonwealth Coast Conference, to which Suffolk University Athletics belongs.

Shahid Hussain, MBA ’98, has worked with one of Pakistan’s largest banks for the past three years, overseeing risk analysis and approvals.

Mariano Bautista Linan, MBA ’02, is proud to announce that his eldest son is a third-generation Ram, attending Suffolk University in the honors program. Mariano’s mother, Suzanne Ollivier, earned her MBA in 1991.

For more information about how to become a member of your school’s Dean’s Cabinet, please contact Jeff Foss, senior director of philanthropic partnerships, at jfoss@suffolk.edu.
IS RISING

SUFFOLK

you!

We look forward to hearing from you!

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Todd D. Krohne, MBA '02, is director of development at the Mass General Research Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Kashish Parikh-Chopra, BSBA '04, MBA '08, expanded her coaching practice for female entrepreneurs in 2021, launching Hack Your Schedule, a time management method for professional women.

Timothy M. Looney, MBA ’05, is the president of Northeast Homedale, a medical device product development and contract manufacturing company he founded in 2011.

Nathan R. Shreader, MSPS ’07, was reelected as board secretary of the Municipal Executive Committee in Jackson, Mississippi, in April 2021. The committee oversees and manages primary elections within the city. Shreader also serves as associate professor of government and politics and director of the American Studies program at Millsaps College.

Alex L. Mellon, BSJ ’12, is a facilities coordinator at New York University Steinhardt.

Jillian P. Chueka, BA ’13, married fellow alumna Stephen Chueka, BA ’14, in fall 2020.

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Jose Ramon Riestra, BSBA ’14, a 2021 Suffolk D11 Under 10 alumni honoree, was named one of central Florida’s top CEOs in 2020 by the Orlando Business Journal. He participated as Advisor on Season 2 of the television series 4 Days to Save the World, supporting experts, CEOs, and youth in creating viable companies to tackle major societal issues.

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Sam H. Wolotsky, BA ’20, has returned to Boston from the Pacific Northwest as the global director of customer experience and engagement at Analog Devices.

William H. Schmidt, MA ’10, has completed his fifth year on the Suffolk College of Arts & Sciences Alumni Association Board of Directors. He serves as chair of the Winthrop Board of Health, aiding in the COVID-19 response for his community, and is an Advisory Council member for Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a Boston nonprofit that supports homeless, runaway, and at-risk youth.

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Jesse J. Messmer, BA ’17, will attend Boston University Law School in 2022. He spent the last four years as an educator in Lawrence, Massachusetts, sharing his Caribbean background with students.

Taylor J. King, MA ’19, has been working at the Jewish community in Boston since November 2020. She connects school in New England with Israeli speakers, events, and social opportunities.

Marah L. Adams, BSBA ’20, was promoted to account manager at Standish, a design agency based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Sam H. Wolotsky, BA ’20, has earned his master’s in finance from MIT’s Sloan School of Management. He says, “I am so grateful for all the Suffolk faculty that helped me along the way!”

Cheyenne Beckedorff, BA ‘21, works as a paralegal at an immigration law office and is a legal assistant at a criminal defense and immigration law firm. She also volunteers with Project Citizenship.

Emma M. Conway, BA ’21, works as a Paralegal at an immigration law office and is a legal assistant at a criminal defense and immigration law firm. She also volunteers with Project Citizenship.

Teresa Ogbe, MSCS ’21, works as a community-based counselor at Winchester Community Mental Health Center in Winwood, West Virginia. She helps clients with mental health skills building.

The Suffolk University Summa Society honors philanthropic leaders who play a vital role in supporting the University’s educational mission for this and future generations of students. Members set an example of generosity for others to follow and understand that an annual investment in Suffolk University is an investment in transforming students’ lives.

**Membership Levels**

- **President’s Circle:** $25,000+
- **Deans’ Circle:** $10,000+
- **Gleason Archer Circle:** $5,000+
- **Members:** $1,000+

*For more information or to become a member, contact our Summa Society Director, Kathy Tricca, BSBA ‘82, at 617-557-1526 or visit bit.ly/suffolksumma.*
RACIAL EQUITY

Focusing on communities of color is essential, she says, yet it can also “send the message that there’s something wrong with our communities.” The more Graham-LoPresti and Abdullah-Swain talked, she says, the more they realized they also needed to “effect systemic change in white spaces.”

As a result, BAREWH’s work is twofold. In addition to supporting mental health and wellness efforts in communities of color, Graham-LoPresti and her team run workshops and consult with education and healthcare institutions as well as businesses, law firms, and community-based organizations to help them develop equitable, just, and inclusive environments and anti-racist recruitment, hiring, and retention policies, as well as increasing access to and persistence in healthcare engagement for patients and clients of color.

She relishes the “conversations that we’ve been having across difference about racism—teaching people about it, having them ask questions to understand it, developing long-term consultation plans for systemic change.” Graham-LoPresti says, “I’m so proud of what Tahari and I have built as two Black women in this field of psychology.” She’s also proud that her Suffolk graduate students participate in the firm’s work, and not only learn from it but are paid for their expertise as well: “The level of freedom that BARE gives us to do the work that needs to be done, that we really want to do, is the most rejuvenating, hopeful thing.”

Change, she says, will require people to see themselves in more collective ways and to understand their role in the collaborative story of racism. Conversations about the disparities that communities of color face must be strength-based and centered on culture, contributions, and resistance—rather than on resilience.

“We’re resilient because we have to be, not because we should be. I don’t want the word resilience to be a good thing,” she says. “We shouldn’t have to be as resilient as we are. We should be able to live our lives based on safety.”

Her work at BAREWH is a prime example of these conversations and the strong impact they have for Black people. She credits the love and intergenerational labor of people of color like her parents for being the light that illuminates the way forward.

And she is working hard to pass this light on to her two young children.

“First and foremost, she says, “I’m motivated to make this road better for my multiracial kids. Trying to make this world a place where they feel safer, where they can feel seen, heard, and valued—that’s what keeps me plugging along. And if we want to make this world better, we need to do the work and not stop.”

\[Continued from Page 20\]
When the Class of 2020 and the Class of 2021 graduated on May 22-23, they took with them not only their well-earned Suffolk degrees but also what Commencement graduate student speaker Robert Osgood, EMBA ’20, called “an extraordinary education in personal strength.”

Fenway Park—home to so many other hard-won victories—proved to be the perfect place to celebrate that strength.

Over the course of six separate, sometimes sweltering, ceremonies for the College of Arts & Sciences, Sawyer Business School, and the Law School, Suffolk awarded a total of 4,017 undergraduate and advanced degrees. Harder to measure were the powerful emotions that filled Fenway, from the hot, happy graduates arrayed across the outfield to their beaming family members socially distanced throughout Fenway’s stands and the proud Suffolk leaders, faculty, and trustees seated onstage near the Green Monster.

Unofficial estimates put the joy index just shy of the 2004 World Series.

President Marisa Kelly lauded graduates for their adaptability, drive, and activism. “As we continue to work toward a more just and equitable society, and as we emerge from the pandemic, our communities need you more than ever,” said Kelly. “I have every confidence that you will be an important part of the solution, because when tested with enormous challenges, you have stepped up and succeeded.”

Legendary newspaper editor and honorary degree recipient Marty Baron echoed that charge in his address to the CAS Class of 2021, in what The Washington Post called “the college commencement speech for our times.” He urged graduates to rebuild American institutions “at a time when the temptation has been to tear them down.”

Baron, who led The Boston Globe for 11 years and recently retired as executive editor of the Post, acknowledged that “many institutions have failed the public, and those failings are fresh in our minds.” Yet without strong, vibrant institutions, he said, “our democracy [has been] pushed to the brink.

“We can either give up on institutions that betray our values, or we can seek to repair them. I urge you to take the latter course. Repair them,” he said. “Choose your own institution. Make it more responsive. Make it more just. Make it more equitable. Make it more inclusive. Make it more creative. Make it better. Build it up.”

The weekend’s other honorary degree recipients and speakers were Dr. Karen DeSalvo, BA ’88, HDHL ’10, Google’s chief health officer; the Hon. Serge Georges, Jr., JD ’96, an associate justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court; Carmen Ortiz, the former U.S. district attorney for Massachusetts who oversaw the prosecution of the Boston Marathon bomber; and Dorothy Savarese, MBA ’04, chair and CEO of Cape Cod 5. —Beth Brosnan

Commencement!

Suffolk took over Fenway Park for a joyful Commencement weekend, celebrating all that the Classes of 2020 and 2021 endured and achieved on their road to graduation.
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“Where there’s a will, there’s a way”

Do you have questions about including Suffolk in your estate plans?
Please contact Matthew Borello
estateplanning@suffolk.edu or 617-725-4116.