IMPACT

How Suffolk is developing tomorrow’s community leaders and change agents today

DEBATE AT SUFFOLK: TEACHING STUDENTS THEIR VOICES MATTER

THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

BUSINESS WITH PURPOSE: CHARTING A BOLD NEW COURSE FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION
Burning up the track

Sprinters Shannon Groom, Class of 2026 (far left), Joelyn Triscik, Class of 2024, and the rest of Suffolk’s Indoor Track and Field team now train and compete at one of the fastest tracks in the world—New Balance’s brand-new athletic complex in Brighton. “I’ve been to some of the top indoor facilities in the United States,” says Head Coach Will Feldman, BS ’12, “and this place blows them all out of the water. It’s one of the best facilities in the world.”

—Photograph by Michael J. Clarke
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**On the Cover**

Student leaders with Suffolk’s Center for Community Engagement (from left): Andrew Gomes, Dawson Mendik, Gloria Bouquet, Reegan O’Brien, and Matthew Lopes. Photograph by Michael J. Clarke.
This spring we mark the 25th anniversary of Suffolk University’s Center for Community Engagement. Many of our alumni remember it as S.O.U.L.S., or Suffolk’s Organization for Uplifting Lives Through Service. During its quarter-century of existence, thousands of Suffolk students have devoted hundreds of thousands of hours of service to community organizations in Boston, across the country, and around the world. Those numbers are impressive, but they do not begin to measure the impact of that service. It simply cannot be quantified.

As Beth Brosnan writes in our cover story, “One tree planted, one meal served, one child taught to read at a time, that service has changed those communities for the better.”

It has also changed our students for the better. These experiences heighten students’ sense of empathy, expand their view of the world, and instill hope, understanding, confidence, and a deep-rooted commitment to serve. Many have gone on to become nonprofit, community, civic, and business leaders who drive positive change locally and globally.

Community engagement has been central to this University’s mission since our founding in 1906. It is an ethos woven into the very fabric of the institution. We see it in Suffolk’s partnership with the Boston Debate League, which brings middle and high school students to campus for debate coaching and competitions. Students learn their voices matter and gain respect for other points of view. The same is true for Suffolk students: After a three-decade hiatus, I’m thrilled to report that the University has reestablished its competitive debate team, which has already traveled to California for tournaments.

Positive impact is also central to the Sawyer Business School. Dean Amy Zeng and the School’s innovative faculty and staff have re-envisioned what is most crucial in business education today—namely, the idea that profits matter, but so do people, policy, and the planet. Through real-world experience, Suffolk business students are learning how they can make a positive difference, whether they ultimately work in the private, public, or nonprofit sectors.

Our “Business with Purpose” feature brings this vision to life with stories of students consulting for nonprofit organizations and major corporations, advising them on sustainability and other social issues. In unique courses with names like Tackling Wicked Global Problems and Managing Across Differences, students learn how businesses can address seemingly intractable challenges, including discrimination, bias, and stereotyping in the workplace.

We also hear from SBS alumni who are taking a purposeful approach to their careers. They include Tony Richards, MPA ’21, a “positive disruptor” working to expand housing equity and home ownership in Massachusetts, and Dorothy Savarese, MBA ’04, HDCS ’21, one of the nation’s most powerful bankers who has championed economic and environmental resiliency for communities on Cape Cod.

Across campus, across Boston, and across the planet, Suffolk community members are working as a force for good. The pages of Suffolk University Magazine’s IMPACT edition are filled with some of those stories. I hope you will enjoy them immeasurably.
Multiyear relationship anchors new Sports Management Program

Starting this fall, students studying sports management in Suffolk University’s Sawyer Business School will learn from the 17-time NBA champion Boston Celtics, as part of a newly announced partnership between Suffolk and the team.

The partnership will give students in the Business School’s new interdisciplinary Sports Management Program the opportunity to work with Celtics management on growing the team’s reach with fans, potential business partners, and in the community. Students will immerse themselves in the sports, marketing, and analytics industry contacts, and make sense of their learning through immersive experiences with local sports teams and facilities.

Red Dalton, chief partnership officer for the Boston Celtics, says, “We’re honored to be able to team up with Suffolk University to support a comprehensive and contemporary program that helps develop the next generation of sports business leaders.”

Learning the business of sports

The Celtics partnership is only part of the new interdisciplinary Sports Management Program that, starting in fall 2023, will provide students with a diverse background that encompasses marketing, analytics, entrepreneurship, finance, economics, law, and ethics. Sawyer Business School is the only AACSB-accredited business school in Boston to offer such a program, which will allow students to learn from seasoned sports industry practitioners and academic scholars, benefit from their industry contacts, and make sense of their learning through immersive experiences with local sports teams and facilities.

Kaylie Groom, Class of 2026 and a member of the University’s indoor track and field team, says she always knew she wanted to do something with the business of sports in her career. She enrolled at the Business School last fall as a marketing major. But once the sports management major was announced, she immediately knew she was going to double major to develop more of the skills she needs to succeed in her career.

“This is kind of perfect for me,” she says. “More of my interests are going to be geared toward the major, and the experience I gain from it will be huge going into the workforce.” —Ben Hall

Suffolk has received a $3.1 million bequest from the estate of Francis “Frank” X. Ridge, Jr., BA ’71, JD ’75 (1944-2021). The second-largest bequest in University history, this remarkable gift is being used to support need-based financial aid—a strategic priority for Suffolk and a lifelong passion for Ridge, who often spoke of how much Suffolk challenged and inspired him.

“Suffolk obviously changed my life,” Ridge wrote in a 1993 letter. “God only knows where I would be if it were not for the education I received there. I will always be grateful.”

A Quincy, Massachusetts native, he first enrolled at Suffolk in 1961, only to see his undergrad education put on hold first by the death of his mother and then by a three-year tour of duty with the US Army.

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As his service in Vietnam was drawing to a close—service that earned him a Bronze Star—he reached out to Suffolk about re-enrolling, expecting to be told his time had passed. To his surprise, he was welcomed back warmly, and went on to earn both his undergraduate and law degrees.

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“This is kind of perfect for me,” she says. “More of my interests are going to be geared toward the major, and the experience I gain from it will be huge going into the workforce.” —Ben Hall
For Adam Skaggs, Suffolk’s new associate director of athletics, winning means something more than just a successful season. It also means working to enhance the overall experience of the more than 300 women and men who compete on Suffolk’s 19 Division III intercollegiate sports teams.

“I want to provide our student-athletes with the resources they need to function in a safe, healthy, and positive environment,” says Skaggs, who joined the University last fall after six years with the NCAA as an assistant director for Division III communications.

Skaggs’ top priorities include advocating for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and increasing awareness about mental health and wellness.

“We want to make this place as inclusive as possible in the areas of race, disability, LGBTQ, class, socioeconomic status, age, and more,” he says.

Together with Head Basketball Coach Jeff Juron, he helps lead the Suffolk Athletics Inclusion Coalition, which programs DEI workshops and socially inclusive events for student-athletes, with goals to track progress. “We also have a social media campaign to maintain awareness and spread positivity,” he adds. Skaggs also works with Suffolk’s Counseling, Health & Wellness Center to host workshops on topics such as managing stress and anxiety, and preventing sexual harassment and alcohol abuse. Suffolk will also participate in the NCAA’s fourth annual online mental health campaign.

“Adam has a really good skill set and he thinks outside the box,” says Suffolk Director of Athletics Cary McConnell, who consults with Skaggs on everything from marketing to management, hiring, and budget. “He figures out how to get things done, from the idea phase to the point that benefits student-athletes and everyone involved.”

—Tony Ferullo

Adam Skaggs focuses on the well-being of Suffolk’s student-athletes with new programs on diversity, equity, inclusion, and mental health and wellness

Governor Healey Is Ready To Take Her Shot

Suffolk was honored to host Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, the first all-women team to lead the state, when they swung by Suffolk’s Michael and Larry Smith Court to shoot some hoops together the day before their inauguration festivities.

Basketball and politics are passions for both women. Driscoll, a former Salem mayor, and Healey, who served as Massachusetts attorney general, both played college ball, with point guard Healey co-captaining her team as a Harvard senior and later playing professionally in Austria. “Kim and I feel like actual teammates. There is certainly crossover when it comes to politics,” Healey said.

The pair’s inaugural theme was “Moving the Ball Forward” and included a celebration at TD Garden, home of the Boston Celtics, following their time on the Suffolk campus. —Erica Noonan
They’ve Got Him Under Their Skin

Suffolk first-year students are discovering the genius of Frank Sinatra in a new seminar

Charlie St. Amand grew up in a family that revered Frank Sinatra, and today his Suffolk office is filled with Sinatra memorabilia, including books, posters, records, and his own cherished record player. When St. Amand’s eldest daughter got married, father and daughter danced to a version of Sinatra’s 1966 hit “Sommer Wind” sung by St. Amand himself.

So it’s no surprise that St. Amand is teaching a first-year seminar called Sinatra: Voice of the 20th Century. To St. Amand, it’s clear why Ol’ Blue Eyes continues to cast his spell over young listeners. “He left a wonderful body of work that spanned seven decades,” he says. “Along with the great arrangers and musicians who collaborated with him, he brought a fresh sound to the Great American Songbook.”

St. Amand’s hunch paid off: When 38 students signed up, he had to add a second section to accommodate them all. “I’m a big Sinatra fan,” St. Amand says. “I had to take it.”

Suffolk’s first-year seminars are designed to provide new students with the chance to study a single topic in-depth, in small classes that emphasize critical thinking, research, and lively discussion. St. Amand’s seminar is no exception. “Our students went to places and parts of the city they wouldn’t have, and listened to people’s stories,” Nichter says. “They have more empathy for what these people and small businesses have gone through, to survive and live in this area.”

The public art installation, which was on view from November through February, combined moving images with layers of print work, including wallpaper, poster designs, original typography, and custom vinyl graphics.

The space was the second public art opportunity in the neighborhood that Art & Design Professors Susan Nichter and Ilona Anderson have created for their students through collaboration with the Downtown Boston Business Improvement District.

In total, the undergraduates created more than 350 photos and 130 video interviews for the exhibit, which took the form of a four-channel video installation.

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—Andrea Grant

A Debt Repaid

Army veteran James Lockett, JD ’22, worked tirelessly to secure visas for the family of his Afghan translator

When Army Captain James Lockett, JD ’22, ended his first deployment in Afghanistan in 2014, a key partner remained behind: Ahmad, the Afghan native who served as a translator and intermediary for his unit (his name has been changed to protect his identity).

Ahmad lived on the US military base with the troops, “serving as a critical set of eyes and ears,” Lockett says. “He spent every day doing the same patrols that we were doing, unarmed, so arguably he was in more danger than we were.”

In 2015, Ahmad was permitted to immigrate alone to Atlanta, yet members of his family had to remain behind. Their plight worsened in 2021 after the US withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban began retaliating against those who had assisted American forces during the war.

Fearing that Ahmad’s family would be killed if no action were taken, Lockett—by now a student at Suffolk Law—worked with veterans groups to have Ahmad’s wife and four children, ages 7 to 12, transported to Pakistan. Last October, as the State Department prepared to fly the family to Albania, Lockett’s sister, who serves in the Navy, used her contacts to make sure they were on the flight manifest. There they interviewed for special immigrant visas and waited for final approval. In late December, they were reunited in Atlanta with Ahmad, who had received his US citizenship earlier in the year.

“We owed this to him and his family,” Lockett says. “The only reason their lives were at risk is because Ahmad was assisting the US military. We couldn’t leave them behind.”

At his graduation last May, Lockett received the Law School’s Public Citizenship Award. Now as an associate at Holland & Knight, he continues to work on pro bono immigration matters involving Afghans seeking special immigrant visas. —Sue Morris and Michael Hoch

Art & Design students transform an empty Downtown Crossing storefront into a public art installation

Steps from Suffolk’s campus, the constant bustle of people visiting Downtown Crossing’s shops, restaurants, theaters, and offices is a sign that the historic city is once again alive with activity. This winter, Art & Design students added to that vibrancy when they created a street-level exhibition called PRJCT WNDW – Living Images to showcase the diversity and resiliency of the people and businesses in Boston’s commercial hub.

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—Andrea Grant
Law School Dean Andrew Perlman says ChatGPT is an attorney’s friend, not foe

Suffolk University Law School Dean Andrew Perlman caused a minor media stir recently when he dashed off a dense academic paper in about an hour.

He didn’t do it alone. His co-author, ChatGPT, actually did most of the heavy lifting, so Perlman listed it as lead author on the paper.

Their 16-page article, “The Implications of ChatGPT for Legal Services and Society,” is one of the earliest high-profile academic demonstrations of the new chatbot tool’s ability to impact the legal profession.

The tool, created by California-based OpenAI, features a sophisticated language model that uses AI to interact with users in conversational ways and respond to questions. In the consumer space, AI is increasingly used to engage in a wide range of tasks, from creating original content for emails and documents to offering advice on how to negotiate an airline ticket refund.

Just a few days after ChatGPT was released in late 2022, Perlman—who admits to being an enthusiastic futurist—decided to experiment with feeding the program a series of legal questions and prompts. “I’ve always enjoyed technology and been interested in the role it can play in the delivery of legal services,” he told Reuters.

Perlman said he takes such concerns very seriously. “There are real risks that this technology can be used for malicious purposes,” he says. “But the technology is going to advance, it’s going to be used, so we need to find a balance between ensuring that students develop the knowledge and skills that they need, with also being able to use these tools to their advantage.”

Shortly after Perlman’s initial experiment, a group of University of Minnesota researchers tried out some law coursework and bar exam questions on ChatGPT. The bot’s performance was significantly worse than that of most human students.

Perlman’s perspective on this? Give the technology time. When he tried the new version of ChatGPT that Microsoft has incorporated into its Bing search engine, Perlman found it was able to answer 12 out of 15 challenging multiple-choice questions about legal ethics that he had drafted himself. “The analysis for each answer was surprisingly sophisticated,” he says, even for the questions that it answered incorrectly.

In his paper’s conclusion (which along with the abstract, outline, and prompts are the only human-created content), Perlman somewhat cheekily references the Borg, the evil, AI-like beings of Star Trek fame: “We need to find ways to adapt to these developments,” Perlman writes, “because resistance is futile.” – Erica Noonan

Suffolk Law continues to be recognized for its innovative approach, including its cutting-edge Legal Innovation & Technology Concentration. Experts at Bloomberg Law named Suffolk a “Top 10 Law School Innovator (2023).”
Suffolk MBA student and former Army SSG David Campisano has launched an organization to reduce suicide rates among veterans—and he’s enlisting therapy dogs to help.

After he lost two members of his Army regiment to suicide, David Campisano, BSBA '87, knew he had to do something.

“A leader always remembers his men and his team,” says Campisano. His friends, he says, were “brave, dedicated men who were proud to serve.” Yet when they return home, many vets face new battles: post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and physical disabilities, including brain injuries.

On average, Campisano says, 22 veterans commit suicide every day.

Determined to “fight for those who fought for our country,” Campisano launched a nonprofit called 22Mohawks to raise awareness about suicide prevention. The Massachusetts nonprofit runs suicide awareness and prevention classes for both active and reserve military. It also connects veterans with various nonprofit runs suicide awareness and prevention classes for both active and reserve military. It also connects veterans with various nonprofits that provide mental, physical, and financial support services—as well as joy.

Since it launched in fall 2021, 22Mohawks has matched more than 30 veterans with dogs—including Michael McGee, 31, a retired Marine Corps sergeant from Dennis, Massachusetts, who was paired with a terrier named Axel, now 18 months old.

Campisano “provided me with a best friend and reinvigorated my focus on the mission: to simply live a comfortable, happy, long life,” McGee says. “I never knew I’d find myself again. Thanks to 22Mohawks, I have.” —Tony Ferullo

‘Not a Roadblock, but a Strength’

Suffolk University honors first-generation graduate Stacy Mills for her philanthropy and mentorship of Sawyer Business School students

Suffolk President Marisa Kelly told Mills that the Mills Family Lounge will be “an enduring tribute to you and your family. We are so proud of you for your many accomplishments and so grateful for your generous spirit.”

For students who attended the ceremony, Mills conjured her humble roots: commuting with her electrician father to Suffolk from her home in Billerica each day; discovering her talent for accounting and pursuing it; and using her status as a first-generation college student to fuel her drive for success.

“Look at this very shy, introverted young woman who ended up the chief accounting officer at Marsh McLennan,” said Mills. “Don’t let being first-gen be a roadblock. Let it be your strength. It’s who you are.”

—Joe McGonegal

Learning on The Job

Sarah Lawton has spent her senior year as both a full-time student and a full-time assistant to Boston City Councilor Julia Mejia

For honors history major Sarah Lawton, Class of 2023, her full-time position in the office of at-large City Councilor Julia Mejia isn’t just a job, it’s an education. “It feels like a free university,” she says. “I am learning every single day.” Lawton serves as Mejia’s community partnerships liaison for Boston’s 23 different neighborhoods, assisting with outreach events and helping residents understand how to use the levers of local government to create change.

At Suffolk, Lawton has served as treasurer of the Black Student Union and as the founder and chair of the BSU Outreach Committee. She helped bring Yusef Salaam—a member of the Exonerated Five and one of the country’s most compelling champions for criminal justice reform—to campus to speak.

While she entered Suffolk as a law major, she had a conversion experience in a history class with Suffolk’s Black Studies program. “It was the first time I took a course that was dedicated to understanding myself and my ancestors,” says Lawton, who switched her major to history with a minor in Black Studies and was selected for the McNair Scholars program.

She’s continuing to learn now from Mejia, Boston’s first Afro-Latina council member. “Boston is like many worlds wrapped in one,” says Lawton, who grew up in Dorchester. “I want to learn everything I can to make things better for everyone.”

—Beth Brosnan
Salsa Es Familia

Now celebrating its tenth year, Suffolk’s Pasión Latina dance team offers its members a chance to celebrate Latin culture and to ‘move, have fun, and make art’ — to celebrate Latin culture, the university’s Pasión Latina dance team, salsa is much, much more.

It’s a food—the spicy tomato sauce people eat with chips. It’s a music—Latin music. It’s a social dance—salsa: It’s a five-letter word with a dozen different meanings.

It’s a place inside the body—a sanctuary—a place where she can shut the door on the cares of the day and just move, have fun with my friends, and make art.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, Restrepo-Ramirez and three other members of Pasión Latina—juniors Ashleigh Bautista and Owen Byrnes and sophomore Raymond Riel—became Suffolk’s official salsa ambassadors, performing at both Quincy Elementary and the Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester.

A sense of family runs deep in Pasión Latina, which was founded in 2013 by student-choreographer Clauder Aspilaire, BSBA ’16, with a “no experience required” philosophy. “We pride ourselves on our diversity, in showing people different cultures, different flavors,” Restrepo-Ramirez says.

This spring, Pasión Latina will hold a special tenth anniversary performance, followed by a social dance for the Suffolk community. “We want people to have fun and explore Latin culture with us,” she says. —Beth Brown

The ‘Times’ of Her Life

Freshman photographer Nancy Gonzales selected for a talent-pipeline program at The New York Times

Nancy Gonzales, Class of 2026, is taking significant steps toward her goal of becoming a photojournalist. Last fall she was selected for The New York Times Corps, a multiyear talent-pipeline program for college students from groups under-represented in journalism, including students of color and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Gonzales, a journalism major, was among 20 promising young journalists chosen from hundreds of nationwide applicants for the inaugural program.

“We looked for people like Nancy who showed enthusiasm, commitment to the craft of journalism, attention to detail, and who have overcome adversity,” says Times Deputy Director of Career Programs Carla Correa. “Nancy talked about wanting to share the truth in her photographs. That really stood out.”

Gonzales began taking cellphone photos when she was 13, and taught herself how to use a camera one year later. In 2021, Gonzales, who is half Puerto Rican, returned to the island for the first time in 11 years and shot a moving series of photos documenting the lingering impact of both Hurricane Maria and the pandemic, as well as Puerto Rico’s undiminished beauty.

For Gonzales, photography is not just a profession—it’s also a lifeline. “I can’t describe it in words,” Gonzales says. “It’s just a feeling inside me and something I have to do. You can take everything away from me, but not my camera.” —Tony Renullo

Sawyer Business School Opens First-of-Its-Kind Marketing Lab

New facility gives students cutting-edge tools to understand customer behavior

Marketing students at the Sawyer Business School have a powerful new way to understand how customers make decisions—the recently opened X-Lab.

It’s the first human behavior facility in Massachusetts to be integrated into a business school curriculum while also advancing academic research.

The on-campus space, featuring Boston-based iMotions’ leading biosensor research platform, will provide graduate students with unique opportunities to analyze consumer experiences. iMotions’ multimodal technology measures eye metrics, facial expressions, and electrodermal activity (aka finger sweat). As a participant looks at a picture or video, a computer integrates their bio-measurements to provide more objective insights into a person’s responses to, say, a Super Bowl ad or a package design.

“The X-Lab will not only equip Suffolk students with a front-line technique for user-experience analysis but also provide opportunities for Suffolk faculty in the ever-growing field of behavioral research,” said Dean Amy Zeng at the lab’s opening in November. —Ben Hall

HAPPY TENTH ANNIVERSARY to Suffolk’s Medical Dosimetry Program! Since 2013, the program has sent more than 50 HIGHLY SKILLED CLINICIANS in this critical cancer-fighting specialty to top academic medical centers in Boston and around the country.

NOTE OF ANNIVERSARY

Dosimetry Program! Since 2013, the program has sent more than 50 HIGHLY SKILLED CLINICIANS in this critical cancer-fighting specialty to top academic medical centers in Boston and around the country.
The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his wife, Coretta Scott King, first met as students in Boston in the 1950s. This winter, the city honored them with the official dedication of The Embrace, a towering bronze sculpture designed by artist Hank Willis Thomas. Located within sight of the Suffolk campus, the sculpture was inspired by a photo of the Kings taken after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize—and serves as a reminder of the Kings’ shared belief in the power of love to drive lasting change. Among the civil rights leaders honored alongside the monument is the late community activist and Suffolk Law alumnus Harry Hom Dow, JD ’29, the first Chinese American to be admitted to the Massachusetts Bar. — Photograph by Michael J. Clarke
As one of the University’s most engaged alumni leaders, volunteers, and philanthropic supporters, Ken Gear continues to pay it forward.

By Kara Baskin and Greg Gatlin

Ken Gear

Why I Give: Ken Gear

 photographed by Adam DeTour

Each time Ken Gear, BSBA ’89, JD ’95, returns to Suffolk and talks with students—and he returns more often than most—it is, he says, like looking in the mirror. “Because that was me just 30 years ago—or almost 40 years now, I guess,” he laughs.

Gear sees students energized by learning in the heart of the city. They’re “gritty,” he says, in the most positive sense of the word. He sees students who are working incredibly hard to better themselves. And he sees an institution that is helping them get there. “I think that’s what makes Suffolk special,” he says.

Gear is a champion for upward mobility—literally. He is chief executive of Leading Builders of America, a trade association representing many of the nation’s largest home builders and real estate developers, with a mission of preserving home affordability for families.

“Our most pressing issue is what I call attainable housing,” Gear explains. “It’s people at the lower- to middle-class level who simply cannot afford a house. Getting those people to experience the American dream of owning a home—it really does change lives.”

Gear brings that same focus on upward mobility to Suffolk, an institution with a mission that he describes as “unlike any other in higher education.” A first-generation graduate himself, he understands firsthand the life-changing impact of educational opportunity, particularly for students from working-class or less-privileged backgrounds.

A proud double Ram, Gear is one of the University’s most engaged alumni leaders, an active volunteer, and an unflagging philanthropic supporter. Since 2020, he has brought his considerable expertise to the University’s Board of Trustees and the Law School’s alumni trustee, a term he will complete this June. He’s a founding member of the Law Dean’s Cabinet, whose members provide strategic consultation to the dean and commit at least $50,000 to support Law School programs and students. Starting more than a decade ago, Gear helped to reinvigorate the Washington, DC Suffolk Law Alumni Group, galvanizing a network of attorneys across sectors.

And as a steadfast ambassador for Suffolk, Gear regularly attends admission events in Washington for students who have been accepted to Suffolk Law. At one such event, he got to talking with a young woman who told him that while her first choice was Suffolk, she couldn’t afford to go there, so she was bound for another school that had offered more financial aid.

“I just thought that was such a shame,” Gear says. “It got me thinking that we have to help Suffolk build its financial aid capacity through philanthropy. The school was very good to me. It led directly to the success I’ve had in my career. And I just thought, you know, it would be great to pass that along to the next generation of kids coming up.”

As a result, he was inspired to help establish the Suffolk Law DC Scholarship Fund.

Gear grew up in Braintree, Massachusetts, and from age 10 he worked at his father’s Brookline carpet store. He knew he wanted to go to college, but he didn’t know where. He remembers getting on the MBTA’s Red Line not long after graduating high school and taking it to the Park Street station. The energy and vibe of the city were captivating.

“Walking around the State House and by the Sawyer Building, it just felt right,” he says.

Gear didn’t know how to apply or fill out financial aid paperwork. But people at Suffolk helped. He received financial aid and worked two jobs as an undergraduate, including as an aide for then-State Rep. Suzanne Bump. When she encouraged him to apply to Suffolk Law, her alma mater, he hesitated. “I told her that I couldn’t afford it,” he remembers.

Bump hounded Gear until he applied, and then hired him full-time while he earned his degree at night.

Suffolk Law inspired him. He still remembers Jim Janda’s legal writing classes, where his early papers were usually awash in red ink.

“By the end of the semester, I’d win an award for best written brief, because he was relentless. He made me better. Even now, I won’t use the passive voice when writing something,” Gear says, laughing.

The joy that comes from helping others is something Gear learned from his mother, Annette Gleeson Gear, who passed away from leukemia in 2021. One of seven siblings, she arrived in the United States from Ireland at 15. She was a nanny, housekeeper, secretary, bookkeeper, and a true matriarch.

“She was the type of person who would always help other people. Growing up, she had a calendar where every day she had about 45 things in it, because it was somebody’s birthday, anniversary, or special occasion. She would just have a stack of cards, and she never forgot those special days,” Gear says.

Before passing, she urged her son to find joy in life each day—and to share it with others. Her advice inspired him to create the Annette Gleeson Gear Memorial Scholarship, which supports undergraduate students with financial need.

“This is my way of sharing a little joy, to help students afford school and make their own dreams,” Gear says. “That’s certainly what happened to me. Going to Suffolk allowed me to live that dream.”
“Going to college, I thought the worst thing that anyone could be was a politician. That was the age of Richard Nixon; it was a very cynical time. My last year, I began to ask, ‘Well, if I don’t get involved, then who else out there will be representing us?’”

—Charles Yancey

Weekes, Class of 2023. She praises Yancey for the open dialogue he fosters in his classroom.

As students learn about important figures and milestones in the city’s history, they talk about how the legacy of those events impacts life in the city today—from METCO, a school integration program Weekes participated in that enables students from Boston to attend well-funded suburban schools, to the recent unveiling of the Embrace statue commemorating the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King.

In the Footsteps of Boston’s Black Leaders

Charles Yancey, who was Boston’s longest-serving city councilor, brings students on a journey from abolitionism to today’s anti-racist movement

By Andrea Grant

As a college student during the height of the Watergate era, Charles Yancey thought the worst thing anyone could be was a politician.

“It was a very cynical time,” recalls Yancey, who grew up in Roxbury. But during his final year at Tufts, he began to reconsider. “I thought, ‘Well, if I don’t get involved, then who else out there will be representing us?’”

His original plan was to run for a single two-year term on Boston’s City Council to fight against discrimination in the city’s services and help bring attention to a spate of crimes in the community, including the unsolved murders of several Black women. But he soon realized that the deep inequities in public safety, education, housing, employment, and virtually every area of life in the city were centuries in the making—and that untangling the disparities caused by systemic racism could take generations.

With the support of his neighbors in Boston’s Fourth District, which includes Mattapan and Dorchester, as well as parts of Jamaica Plain and Roslindale, Yancey was ushered into office in 1983. He remained there until 2015, making him Boston’s longest-serving city councilor.

Now, Yancey is imparting lessons learned through more than three decades in government and a lifetime serving his community to Suffolk undergraduates in the Race, Economics & Politics course—this year focused exclusively on Black politics in Boston.

Politics, philosophy, and economics major Sydney Weekes, Class of 2023, grew up in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood. Taking courses like this one through Suffolk’s Black Studies minor has helped Weekes broaden her knowledge of the global Black experience, from the governmental structures of African countries to the complex history of her home city.

“I feel like people don’t realize how much Black history there is in Boston—or how much discrimination,” says Weekes. Class of 2023. She praises Yancey for the open dialogue he fosters in his classroom.

As students learn about important figures and milestones in the city’s history, they talk about how the legacy of those events impacts life in the city today—from METCO, a school integration program Weekes participated in that enables students from Boston to attend well-funded suburban schools, to the recent unveiling of the Embrace statue commemorating the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King.

A legacy of Black leadership

Yancey’s syllabus is packed with the stories and writings of centuries of Black leaders born, bred, or bolstered by their time in Boston.

“I want students to understand that legacy of leadership, which has had a disproportinate presence in promoting changes in this country,” he says. He points to national and international leaders with deep ties to Boston and Massachusetts like abolitionist David Walker, W.E.B. DuBois, Frederick Douglass, Reverend King, and even President Barack Obama, whose rousing speech at Boston’s 2004 Democratic National Convention catapulted him onto the national stage.

Yancey wants to show students that even though issues of racism and inequality may seem intractable, Boston’s history offers examples of transformative change. Sometimes the catalyst is a soaring oration or a protest march, but often it’s something much more prosaic: the city budget.

“My first piece of legislation in 1984 had to do with requiring the City of Boston to divest any assets that were supporting the Nazi-like apartheid regime in South Africa,” he recalls.

After Boston divested from South Africa, Massachusetts adopted similar legislation. Cities all across the country followed suit, and years later Congress finally acted. When apartheid ended, newly elected South African President Nelson Mandela made Boston one of his first international visits in recognition of the city’s support, says Yancey.

Yancey spent much of his tenure on the city council digging into the budget where, he says, racial and gender disparities were striking, specifically in the wage gap between city personnel of color and their white counterparts. So he wasn’t surprised when the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston produced a headline-making report in 2015 exposing the chasm between the median net worth of white and Black Boston households.

Yancey focused the last month of class on city policy and budget processes, preparing students to recognize disparities and showing them how to get involved with their voices, their votes, and their work after college.

When Weekes graduates in May, she plans to pursue a career in policy, advocacy, or law. “This course, in addition to my college experience, has shown me that college is not just an education that leads to making money. It’s a learning experience for your inner self. I feel like I am finding myself, my place, and what I want to do.”
Lisa Rivera, Suffolk’s new director of first-generation student initiatives, knows what it’s like to worry about finding your place on campus. Rivera vividly remembers crying to her mother at bedtime, fearing that she would never be accepted to college. She was in kindergarten at the time. Her mother, a preschool teacher, and father, who was always there to ferry Rivera to school, activities, and her part-time job, have always been her biggest supporters. “My father has always told me to go as far as I can,” Rivera says. But when the time came for her to finally apply to college, she knew that navigating the admission process—and then succeeding in her academic and professional careers—would be more difficult as a first-generation student forging a new path.

Luckily, she had help. Participating in her high school’s Advancement via Individual Determination program gave her practical skills like how to fill out college applications and create a résumé. It also connected Rivera with advisors who pushed her to broaden her horizons beyond her native Florida. Now she’s dedicated to ensuring every first-gen student at Suffolk feels that same sense of connection that helped her succeed. “The student population at Suffolk is so dynamic,” she says. “There are many part-time students, commuter students, international students, and there’s a significant veteran population that we serve. I love the fact that there are so many converging identities.”

A culture of support
First-gen students made up 41% of this year’s incoming class, and they make up about a third of the institution’s overall student population.

Abraham Peña, executive director of Suffolk’s Center for Academic Access & Opportunity (CAAO)—which manages the University’s federal TRIO programs Upward Bound, Veterans Upward Bound, and the McNair Scholars—is proud of the work his office and dedicated individuals and groups at the University have done to create programming and opportunities for first-gen students. To push that work even further, Peña proposed creating a leadership position focused solely on improving the first-gen experience—among the first of its kind in the region. As the director of first-generation student initiatives, Rivera offers support to offices throughout campus to ensure that programs are evidence-based and grounded in theory. She is also creating a hub for first-gen students within the CAAO, to better coordinate resources and foster community.

Advocates and mentors
During Rivera’s own time at college, she loved the community she found on a small campus in rural Pennsylvania. Still, she knew her experiences as a first-gen student with Puerto Rican roots set her apart from many of her classmates. “Coming from a working-class family and always having to work through the summers to pay for necessities throughout the year, but also being a Latina, and at times the only person of color in my sorority” could sometimes be isolating, she says. Navigating her financial identity, cultural identity, and mental health and wellness were challenges Rivera said could have easily derailed her if she didn’t seek out mentors to help her through it. “I might have gone home, I might have transferred to a local school, and I never would have explored other possibilities outside of my hometown had I not had those advocates,” she says.

Instead, she persisted, earning a graduate degree in higher education administration and advancing through roles in admission, career resources, and student affairs. Before officially starting in her new role at Suffolk, she attended the University’s sixth annual First-Generation Celebration. It gave her a full-circle experience.

Lisa Rivera brings personal and professional experience to her pathbreaking role as Suffolk’s new director of first-generation student initiatives

By Andrea Grant

First Things First

“I see an important part of my role as helping to guide students and keep track of them so no one falls between the cracks.”

—Lisa Rivera
In his seven years as senior vice president for advancement, Colm Renehan, PhD, built an operation that has produced the best fundraising results in the University’s history, including multimillion-dollar contributions in support of institutional priorities.

But colleagues, alumni, and friends who packed the Sargent Hall Commons in late February to celebrate Renehan on the occasion of his retirement also made clear their genuine affection for the man, including his distinctive Irish wit, his collegiality, and his friendship.

“I am incredibly grateful to you, Dr. Renehan, for all that you have done for this University,” Suffolk President Marisa Kelly told him from the podium. “I am going to miss you personally as a colleague, as a friend, and I know the entire Suffolk community is going to miss you.”

Kelly called Renehan “a true institutional thinker” who, as a member of the University’s leadership team, always looked to move the institution forward as a whole. Many advancement leaders see “dollars in the door” as the only thing that matters, she said.

“But Colm has been incredible in understanding that it had to be done in a way that made sense for us as an institution, in alignment with our mission, our goals, and with what we needed to achieve as a community. That is a rare thing to find in somebody who is as successful in the world of advancement as Colm has been.”

In spite of a pandemic, Suffolk achieved its six best years for cash donations in its history and several other fundraising records under Renehan’s leadership. He built major and principal gift and planned giving programs, expanded events, and improved alumni and donor communications, research, and volunteer programming. He had a vision of building a culture of philanthropy at Suffolk and bringing the advancement program to new levels of success. “And that he has done,” said Caitlin Haughey, MEd ’96, associate vice president for advancement engagement and alumni relations.

He also built a diverse and dedicated advancement team and a structure that will serve the University for years to come. Renehan, who recently created the Colm Renehan Fund to support the Law School’s Immigration Clinic, thanked the Suffolk community, including each member of his team by name.

“Thank you for being the force for good that you are,” he said, “and for letting me be a part of it for the past seven years.”
When Livia De Oliveira Costa first arrived at Suffolk, she knew one thing for sure: “I didn’t want to live in a bubble.”

College students in Boston “are surrounded by real-world issues like income disparity and the lack of affordable housing,” she says. Costa didn’t want to look the other way. She wanted to work for change.

And that’s how, on a cool day last fall, she found herself planting trees in East Boston.

Costa had never swung a shovel before—but then again, the chance to learn new things was what first brought her, as a volunteer with Suffolk’s Center for Community Engagement, to Eastie Farm.

A series of seven community gardens scattered throughout East Boston, Eastie Farm provides neighborhood residents—many of them immigrant families from Central and South America and Southeast Asia—with greater access to fresh produce, as well as welcome pockets of green space.

“At Suffolk, I study issues like environmental justice and food insecurity,” says Costa, now a junior majoring in international relations, whose own family emigrated from Brazil. “At Eastie Farm, I get to see these issues firsthand and meet people affected by them.”
This spring, Costa is a program leader at the farm, where she’s teaching a fresh crop of Suffolk volunteers how to step outside the bubble and connect with community. Most weeks she finds herself volunteering more than her required share of hours, just for the chance to hang out with others who are “nerdy about the environment”—and for the feeling that comes from confronting big issues head-on and chipping away at solutions. “This work,” she says, “makes me hopeful.”

Experiences like this have been powering the Center for Community Engagement for 25 years now. Since its founding in 1997 as S.O.U.L.S. (short for Suffolk’s Organization for Uplifting Lives Through Service), the center has attracted thousands of student volunteers like Costa, who’ve devoted hundreds of thousands of hours to working with community organizations in Boston, across the country, and around the world. One tree planted, one meal served, one child taught to read at a time, that service has changed those communities for the better—and changed how those students see the world and given them tools to help mend it.

“Experiential learning at its finest” is how Tim Albers, the center’s associate director from 2009 to 2017, describes the center’s impact. “The chance to work alongside a community and hear from them directly about the issues they face—that’s irreplaceable,” he says.

“As a political science major, I’m always talking about issues,” says senior Gloria Bouquet. “This is hands-on. If there’s an issue you care about, you can work on it directly—and work with communities who are impacted by it.” This spring, she led an alternative spring break trip to Minneapolis, where students met with community organizers working to advance racial justice in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder.

This commitment to the greater good has twice earned Suffolk recognition from the Carnegie Foundation as a Community Engagement Classified Institution, and that distinction held by fewer than 500 US colleges and universities—and one of only 75 to be so recognized as part of the most recent cohort in 2020.

This spring, when the center hosted its 25th annual Service Day, hundreds of Suffolk students, staff, and faculty spent the day serving meals at the Boston Rescue Mission, sorting through donated children’s clothing at Cradles to Crayons, and doing cleanup work along the Boston Esplanade. And on April 15, volunteers and staff past and present turned out to officially celebrate the center’s 25th anniversary.

Suffolk University President Marisa Kelly describes the Center for Community Engagement as “a tremendous force for good—not only for the many community organizations our students work with, but for our students themselves. Community engagement teaches them to look for the ‘why’—the root causes of inequities our country faces, and for ways they can make a difference.”

Yvette Velez, MA ’02, has a good vantage point from which to survey the center’s evolution and influence. Today she’s the center’s associate director for community partnerships, but back in 2000, she was one of several AmeriCorps/VISTA volunteers who worked with the fledgling center during its early years. Its growth, she says, has been both people-powered and mission-driven.

“Everyone who has ever been a part of the center has contributed to its impact,” she says. And while the center just turned 25, she adds, Suffolk’s deep engagement with Boston and surrounding communities “goes back to the University’s founding—it’s part of our fabric.”

Adam Westbrook, the center’s director since 2018, points to another bright thread running through that fabric: a shared belief that a Suffolk education “is about more than just getting a good job. It’s about becoming a good citizen. And showing up for your community is part of leading a good life.”

Lighting the spark

When S.O.U.L.S. launched in 1997, it didn’t have an office on the Suffolk campus or a line item in the budget. What it had was good timing and a core group of true believers. Suffolk had opened its first residence hall the year before, and with it came a growing call for more student activities, including community service. Kelly Dolan, BA ’00, then freshman class president, gave an impassioned interview to The Suffolk Journal that lit the spark that would lead to S.O.U.L.S.

“Kelly’s basic message was that when you bring students to the heart of Boston, they need more ways to engage with each other and with the surrounding community,” recalls co-founder Sherry (Mattson) Noud, then a staffer with the Office of Enrollment and Retention Management. “She really got people talking.”

And the administration was listening. President David Sargent, Dean of the College for Community Engagement, then a staffer with the Office of Enrollment and Retention Management, gave an impassioned interview to The Suffolk Journal that lit the spark that would lead to S.O.U.L.S.

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Dolan and a handful of other students to serve on a steering committee, joined by Noud and Tom King, the assistant director of student activities.

The group hammered out a plan for a service organization that would offer an alternative spring break service trip and a campuswide service day—programs that continue to this day. They forged early partnerships with Jumpstart, the national nonprofit that recruits college students to prepare children from underresourced communities for kindergarten, and with the Paulist Center, a Catholic church that adjoins the University campus where Suffolk students continue to serve meals at the Wednesday Night Supper Club.

Funding initially came from Massachusetts Campus Compact, part of a national nonprofit that fosters partnerships between colleges and their surrounding communities, and which also partners with Americorps/VISTA. And so, inadvertently, did the group’s name. “The grant application was due, and we still didn’t know what to call ourselves,” Noud says with a laugh. With the deadline bearing down fast, a student suggested Suffolk’s Organization for Uplifting Lives Through Service, or S.O.U.L.S for short.

“We all thought it was a mouthful,” Noud says, “but it did describe what we were trying to do.” (The name stuck in various permutations until 2014, when it was officially changed to the Center for Community Engagement.)

Discovering common ground

Under the leadership of Carolina (Garcia) Comella, who served as director from 2005 to 2016, S.O.U.L.S. grew in size, scope, and impact. It moved out from under the wing of Student Activities to become its own center, complete with University funding and two full-time positions.

And that center quickly became a campus hub, “a home away from home for students who believe in this kind of work,” Comella recalls. “I never felt like I was going to work. I felt like I was going to see my second family.”

During her tenure, the range of the center’s programming increased; so too did the number of community partners (today there are close to 80). And by collaborating with faculty in both the College of Arts & Sciences and the Sawyer Business School, she helped expand the number of service learning courses—and the number of students exposed to service work.

“No one student thinks that service is for them, but when you put it in an academic setting, that validates its importance,” she says. “When students take a service learning course, they often discover how powerful an experience it can be.”
As its alternative spring break trips grew in popularity, S.O.U.L.S. added a winter break trip to El Salvador. Suffolk had developed a special relationship with the country after Massachusetts Congressman (and Suffolk Law alumnus) Joseph Moakley helped investigate human rights crimes during the country's civil war. The ties he forged there provided S.O.U.L.S. with a network of local partners, who hosted them on a series of trips from 2007 to 2014.

“Those visits yielded so many ‘a-ha’ moments,” Comella says now. “We learn so much from the communities we visit, and from each other.”

Current director Westbrooks couldn’t agree more. Getting out of your own environment, he says, “can open your eyes to injustice. You’ve seen what inequality looks like in another country—now what does it look like in Boston?”

The center now offers trips devoted to issues like racial justice, affordable housing, and LGBTQ and reproductive rights. Before anyone gets on a plane, student leaders spend a semester meeting weekly with trip participants, to study the community they’ll be visiting, explore the issues its residents live with—and consider what it means to enter a community that is not your own.

“There’s a long history of richly resourced colleges coming into communities and thinking they have all the answers,” Westbrooks says. “We’re trying to teach students to be more responsible, to recognize that these communities already have knowledge and norms and resources, no matter who they are.”

These are lessons that senior Matthew Lopes, a global business and accounting major, saw up close when he led an affordable housing trip to Denver in March, where he and his team worked with Habitat for Humanity. “What you see pretty quickly is that we’re all very different,” he says. “We come from different backgrounds and perspectives—and yet we all want a lot of the same things.”

This May, the center is launching its newest international trip: a 10-day environmental service trip to Spain, in partnership with Suffolk’s Madrid campus.

Lessons in leadership

From its earliest years, the center has placed a premium on developing student leaders.

Students don’t just punch in and out as volunteers; they also hold work-study positions as office assistants and project leaders for ongoing service partnerships. Students in the Service Scholar Program commit to working up to 300 hours per academic year; in turn they receive both intensive on-the-job training and $5,000 in wages and tuition remission—the latter being an especially critical factor for students who might not otherwise be able to afford to participate in service work.

As a service scholar with Suffolk Votes—the voter education and registration program launched in 2012 by Comella, Albers, and Political Science Professor Rachael Cobb—senior Syeeda Rahman created an ambitious strategic plan for the entire academic year, including the fall midterm elections.

A political science major and veteran political campaigner, Rahman brought a packed résumé to this role. “I’m not afraid to talk about being a liberal—that’s really important to me,” she says. “And I also really believe that everyone should be able to express their voice and vote, even if they don’t agree with me. We need a culture of respectful democracy. The more people who are registered to vote, the more representative our democracy will be.”

Between September and Election Day, Rahman and her team of Suffolk Votes ambassadors did voter outreach to more than 1,000 Suffolk students. They visited classes, worked social media, and held tabling events every Tuesday and Thursday to make sure students had the information they needed, from how to register and vote absentee in their home states to the hours and locations for local polls.

“There are a lot of different variables that go into voting that can feel like barriers to college students. Suffolk Votes works to remove those barriers,” says junior Reegan O’Brien, a political science major. Coming from peers, the message carries more weight, she adds. “We can say frankly, ‘You need to do this. It’s important.’”

“Our generation has a reputation for complaining and not caring,” adds freshman Andrew Gomes, also a political science major. “I don’t think that’s true—we do care. I want students to understand that if they care, voting is one of the most important things they can do.”

As graduation approaches, Rahman is focused on recruiting more student leaders. Suffolk Votes has taught her so much, she says: How to work with peers; how to talk with deans. How to organize; how to be creative. How to get comfortable asking for things, even when the answer is no. “You learn how to become a community leader,” she says. “That’s information I want to pass on.”

Service comes full circle

Like the trees that Livia De Oliveira Costa planted in East Boston, the seeds that S.O.U.L.S. and the Center for Community Engagement have planted over the past quarter century have taken root. Today, the center’s alumni are helping run nonprofits around the county.

“S.O.U.L.S. was the core of my education—it’s the whole reason I became what I am,” says Lisa Galon, BA ’13, now director of finance, operations, and development at chica, a nonprofit serving Latinas and young women of color. “As an immigrant from Colombia and first-generation student, I was really every one of my professors took a genuine interest in me, as a person as well as a student. They taught me my values, and the value of community.”

she says that being mentored by Comella—herself an immigrant from Venezuela—“meant everything. It showed me what was possible.”

Eric Bassette, BA ’13, counts the two years she spent as a Jumpstart volunteer at Roxbury’s Sunnyside Preschool among her fondest Suffolk memories. “I was living a very busy, over-extended college life,” she says, “and coming into that classroom just centered me. It reminded me that kids are the key to building a resilient society.”

While she was busy helping the children improve their language and literacy skills, Bassette learned some crucial lessons of her own—namely that “too often a ZIP code determines a child’s outcome,” she says, “and that’s completely unacceptable.” Today, as the senior program director for Boston’s Jumpstart office, Bassette is working to address that inequity, calling her work “a journey I’ll be on the rest of my life.”

Out in California, Deborah Searfoss, BA ’10, draws a line between her S.O.U.L.S. experiences and the work she does today with unaccompanied refugee children as program director at Compass Connections in the San Francisco Bay area.

That line runs through El Salvador, where she helped build a septic tank in a rural village on a S.O.U.L.S. service trip, through Everett, Massachusetts, where she taught English and citizenship classes to Central American immigrants. “I learned to love grassroots nonprofit work, myself an immigrant from Venezuela—“meant everything. It showed me what was possible.”

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While she was busy helping the children improve their language and literacy skills, Bassette learned some crucial lessons of her own—namely that “too often a ZIP code determines a child’s outcome,” she says, “and that’s completely unacceptable.” Today, as the senior program director for Boston’s Jumpstart office, Bassette is working to address that inequity, calling her work “a journey I’ll be on the rest of my life.”

Out in California, Deborah Searfoss, BA ’10, draws a line between her S.O.U.L.S. experiences and the work she does today with unaccompanied refugee children as program director at Compass Connections in the San Francisco Bay area.

That line runs through El Salvador, where she helped build a septic tank in a rural village on a S.O.U.L.S. service trip, through Everett, Massachusetts, where she taught English and citizenship classes to Central American immigrants. “I learned to love grassroots nonprofit work, where you’re on the ground and can see how the things you do can change a community,” she says.

And Suffolk, she adds, “helped me become the person that I am. Literally every one of my professors took a genuine interest in me, as a person as well as a student. They taught me my values, and the value of community.”

Everyone who has ever been part of the center has contributed to its impact,” says Associate Director Yvette Velazquez (left, with Director Adam Westbrooks). That includes Carolina Garcia (center, photo, left, with Erin Bassette, BA ’13, who led the center from 2005 to 2016, and current volunteers like Catlyste Koppenhaver (left, photo) and Brooke Harvey (right; photo).
Making A CASE FOR the Future

Debate provides a pathway to success for students, teaching them how powerful their voices can be.

By Andrea Grant

For more than a decade, Suffolk has forged a close partnership with the Boston Debate League, hosting debate tournaments, a summer debate camp, and a dual-enrollment college course. Here, BDL debater Marcela De Souza delivers a heartfelt speech after a tournament at Suffolk Law.
Marcela De Souza knows she’s racing against the clock. Her opponent increases his pace as the seconds tick down, the LED lights on the time clock flashing from green to red. She is focused on winning, determined not to concede a single point.

When the judge calls time, De Souza lets up her furious pace and begins a hurried conference with her teammate, Ericka Portillo—not on the basketball court or track, but in a mock courtroom at Suffolk Law. The students, both from Everett High School, are making a case for the United States to cooperate with NATO to increase investment and regulation in biotechnology. It is the final tournament of the year for the Boston Debate League (BDL), and scores of high school debaters have swarmed three of Suffolk University’s largest buildings.

The biotech investment topic is particularly meaningful to De Souza, because it could translate to innovations in medical treatments and expanded equity in health care. “Every case that makes things better and more accessible to everybody is special for me,” she says. “Our team at Everett High School is composed of immigrants and first-generation students, so we always try to debate about topics that really influence our lives.”

After poring over detailed notes on their rival’s arguments, De Souza strides to the lectern and lets fly. Speaking in Spanish—our lives.”

She recalls entering her first tournament, unsure of herself and full of anxiety, and quickly finding herself a second family. “I met people, I heard feedback to improve, but above all,” she says, “I felt the emotion of finishing a round successfully, happiness that only a debater knows.”

While there are two sides to every debate, the benefits to students are irreplaceable.

Debaters learn to talk quickly and think even faster. They gain critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills that prepare them for college, careers, and active engagement with the world around them. Studies show competitive debate improves academic performance, raises SAT scores, and boosts graduation rates, especially among those in urban schools. In Chicago, for example, researchers have found that debaters were three times more likely to graduate high school than nondebaters.

Crucially, debate gives students the confidence to know that their voices matter—and so do their futures.

PATHWAY TO SUCCESS
“Debate creates a pathway to success for these students,” says Suffolk University President Marisa Kelly, who serves on the board of directors for the Boston Debate League. “Our commitment to individual students is the same no matter where they come from. But we have a responsibility to help Boston thrive,” she adds, “and that’s powerful. If not for this experience, many might not have stepped foot on a college campus.”

Suffolk also partners with BDL to offer students a dual-enrollment college course on the principles of debate. Participants earn college credit, saving them time and money later on. More importantly, the experience helps the students develop a sense of belonging.

“This is about giving them the opportunity to see themselves as college students, and that’s powerful. If not for this experience, many might not have stepped foot on a college campus,” says BDL’s Executive Director Kim Willingham.

And it gives De Souza and other students, many of whom will be the first in their family to pursue higher education, the assurance that they can hold their own in a college classroom.

This year, after an absence of three decades, college debate is returning to Suffolk. With support from Kelly, Frank Izurrry—a longtime debate coach as well as a professor of advertising, public relations & social media—has re-established a competitive college policy debate team at the University. Though related activities such as speech, Model UN, mock trial, and moot court teams thrive on campus, Suffolk hadn’t fielded its own debate team since 1991—the same year that Izurrry, then a sophomore at Marist College, won his first top speaker award in a tournament held at Suffolk.

Izurrry, who co-chairs the dual-enrollment course with BDL’s Marisa Suescun, is relishing the challenge of building a team. “Debate is a research, advocacy, persuasion, critical thinking, and listening activity,” says Izurrry.

This year, after an absence of three decades, Suffolk relaunched a competitive college debate team, whose members include (from left) Ciera Wong, Will Woodring, Bradley Burns, Debate Coach Frank Izurrry, Stephen Herrick, David Rivera.

and in 2017 it formed a partnership to allow students to compete on campus more regularly and establish a summer debate camp.

David Rivera, now a first-year marketing major at Suffolk, agrees. As De Souza’s former BDL debate partner, he learned how to support both sides of a case during the course of a tournament, and to prepare for cross-examinations by anticipating as many potential perspectives as possible. In the process, he gained valuable listening skills and the ability to respect other points of view.

“The best skill that you can have as a debater is not being able to speak, but being able to listen to others.”

David Rivera, now a first-year marketing major at Suffolk, agrees. As De Souza’s former BDL debate partner, he learned how to support both sides of a case during the course of a tournament, and to prepare for cross-examinations by anticipating as many potential perspectives as possible. In the process, he gained valuable listening skills and the ability to respect other points of view.

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When it came time to apply to college, Suffolk was a natural choice for Boston native Syra Mercer. She had been on campus for debates since middle school and grew more at home as she neared high school graduation. She recalls hectic days during the fall of her senior year, cross-crossing the city from her home in Roxbury to school in Dorchester, then downtown to Suffolk for the dual-enrollment course. Grabbing dinner on the way, she’d trek home just in time to log into Zoom and step into her role as the Boston School Committee’s student representative. Mercer, now Suffolk Class of 2026, says debate helped her channel her self-described “love of arguing” as a child into a way to back up her opinions and use her voice to help make change.

Her experience as the nonvoting advocate for students citywide

Continued on page 51

If you can’t lend a ear, help out in other ways.

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BUSINESS WITH PURPOSE

LEVERAGING ITS LOCATION AT THE CROSSROADS OF BOSTON’S PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND NONPROFIT SECTORS, THE SAWYER BUSINESS SCHOOL IS CHARTING A BOLD NEW VISION FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION–ONE THAT PURSUES POSITIVE CHANGE AND IMPACT

BY MICHAEL BLANDING
I quickly realized the very same set of conditions exist of the firms have been founded or led by women. rate of 85%—and created 1,000 jobs. What’s more, 51% launched 134 companies—with an unheard-of success. Boston Celtics star Bill Walton, the incubator has other health-related industries. Chaired by former Director Bob Rief. Rief started the nonprofit 12 years ago to promote the “San Diego lifestyle” of active, outdoor living, connecting established firms with their skills to a real-world problem in the private, public, or nonprofit sector. He’d been turned onto SDSI by Kevin Donahue, MBA ’84, chair of Vibram Corporation, North America, who in turn had been speaking with SDSI Executive Director Bob Rief. Rief started the nonprofit 12 years ago to promote the “San Diego lifestyle” of active, outdoor living, connecting established firms with startups in apparel, nutrition, fitness software, and other health-related industries. Chaired by former Boston Celtics star Bill Walton, the incubator has launched 154 companies—with an unheard-of success rate of 85%—and created 1,000 jobs. What’s more, 51% of the firms have been founded or led by women. Even so, Rief was initially skeptical the concept could work anywhere else. “After all,” he says, “the San Diego lifestyle can only happen in San Diego. But I quickly realized the very same set of conditions exist in Austin, Boulder, Portland and Boston.”

Donahue, an SDSI board member, encouraged him to explore Boston and recruited Vadala and his students to test the waters. The students got to work, speaking to contacts at both established local firms like Reebok and New Balance and new startups in the sports and wellness world. They conducted market research on the demographics of people in the region interested in healthy lifestyles. They surveyed funding opportunities from foundations such as those led by Patriots owner Robert Kraft and Red Sox owner John Henry, as well as venture capitalists and private donors. Their conclusion: A Boston Sport Innovators would not only survive but thrive. “They found that the potential community in Boston is actually much greater than it is in San Diego,” says a grateful Rief, who is now actively exploring how to make a Boston-based incubator a reality. The students’ energy and intellectual curiosity, he says, made their findings particularly valuable: “There wasn’t anybody who was going to give us better information than what we got.” That makes Donahue particularly proud. “Suffolk students have a spirit of self-development and improvement,” says Donahue, a former president of the Dean’s Cabinet. “I thought this would be a great opportunity to give students encouragement to get to the next level.”

The project by Vadala’s students is more than just an exercise to help one nonprofit—"not only profits, but also people, policy, and the planet. That’s what I call the four P’s of business education,” says Dean Amy Zeng, who has articulated this vision. “Since business is everywhere, in every part of society, business education can make a positive impact and be a driving force to make the world better.”

Suffolk’s unique location places it at the center of the public, nonprofit, and private sectors—just steps away from the Massachusetts State House and Boston City Hall, a few blocks from Massachusetts General Hospital, and a short walk to the city’s financial district. Being embedded in the heart of the city has given Suffolk students an opportunity to gain valuable experiences and network with key individuals in the field. The Sawyer Business School’s new vision looks to build upon those strengths with a more intentional focus on helping students create impact. They may be a marketing major or a finance major,” Zeng says, “but they could figure out how to help address the challenges faced by a nonprofit or public sector organization.”

A NEW CURRICULUM TO MATCH NEW PRIORITIES

As part of that effort, the Sawyer Business School has created a comprehensive, two-year review of the undergraduate curriculum. After more than 150 hours spent consulting with faculty, staff, students, and alumni, the curriculum committee approved a new curriculum late last year dubbed “Boston Depth, Global Breadth,” which seeks to draw more connections between disparate fields, incorporate more experiential learning and design thinking into classes, and emphasize social well-being along with financial growth.

“What we were reading in reports and hearing from external stakeholders is that the world has changed,” says committee co-chair Pelin Bicen, an associate professor of marketing and associate dean of undergraduate programs. “Equality is a problem, inequity is a problem, poverty is a problem, climate change is a problem; how can we take on those problems?” As a result of that inquiry, the committee helped create a new course, Tackling Wicked Global Problems, which will zoom in on major issues and explore how business can better address them. “What we’re challenging students to do is to move beyond just thinking about how businesses can solve these problems for their own benefit,” says Russell Seide, associate professor of strategy and international business and the committee’s other co-chair, “but also how businesses can come together to address these intractable, global problems affecting not just Boston but the world as a whole.”

The course will “raise more questions than it answers,” says Seide, who will teach the course with Amy Zeng and another co-chair, “We wouldn’t presume to say that by the end of the semester we’ll have..."
a solution for global poverty.” But the course will explore practical solutions to problems on a local level as well as how to scale them up more broadly. “There’s an appetite for this we are seeing from students, who are not happy with the status quo and want to change things,” Seidle says.

Beyond that particular course, the curriculum will also weave social responsibility into the roles of nonprofit, government, and social enterprises.

HELPING COMPANIES AND CONSUMERS TRANSLATE CONCERN INTO ACTION

Oftentimes, those cases involve working with real-world clients. In a market research class, students have consulted for supermarket operator Roche Bros. and home sound-system maker Sonos.

“Being in downtown Boston, surrounded by a rich network of organizations, provides us a great opportunity to work with clients,” says Associate Marketing Professor Andrew Smith. “When students go on job interviews later and drop these names, it sounds impressive.”

In a recent section taught by Smith, students wrapped their minds around a sustainability challenge involving VF Corporation (VFC), the parent company of apparel brands Timberland, The North Face, and Vans. The company enlisted the class to research how it could better position itself around environmental concerns for younger consumers. That was particularly exciting for students, says Smith. “If you were to think of a bull’s-eye—the perfect client, the perfect project—it would be a big bang they are aware of, and an issue of concern to them,” he says. “Ultimately it comes down to a better learning experience and more effective outcomes when we turn to more experiential projects rather than drily delivering content without application or relevance to their lives.”

The company was looking to better understand the concerns of millennials and stereotyping can lead to discrimination in the workplace. In his course Managing Across Differences, Professor Greg Beaver and his students (including Beck Tinker, front row, right) examine how bias and stereotyping can lead to discrimination in the workplace.

Today Richards is vice president of equitable business development at the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency—otherwise known as MassHousing—a quasi-public agency that works to make housing affordable to low-income buyers. Governor Maura Healey has also tapped him to co-chair her Advisory Council on Black Empowerment. He also serves on the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network Leadership Committee.

Richards grew up in Dorchester, where he helped his ironworker father with the community basketball program he created, No Books No Ball. Later, he worked in nonprofits, including Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD, Inc.), a community service organization providing everything from childcare to senior services, and as executive director of Youth Design, which helps place talented students with design and architecture firms.

It was at a fundraiser for that organization that he met Baker, talking with him earnestly about what he thought the state could do to increase diversity and inclusion. “I said, ‘Have you ever thought about working for the state government?’” Richards recalls. Soon after he joined the administration, first as director of community affairs and then deputy chief of staff, leading the state Office of Access and Opportunity.

“If you’re the governor and you’re sitting at a table with a diversity of people, you want to have a diversity of people in your administration,” he says. “I took this idea of making the state more equitable. Richards used a project at Suffolk to create a dashboard to break spending down by race and ethnicity—the only state in the country to do so—in order to ensure funds were spent equitably. “You can’t manage what you don’t measure,” he says.

Now at MassHousing, Richards helped to create a standing $50 million predevelopment equity fund, which will make loans to minority developers to help them plan projects before they are able to get funding from banks. He’s also in charge of ensuring the agency meets ambitious yet attainable goals around inclusion, such as ensuring 50% of homeowner loans go to minority business enterprises, and 5% of portfolio balances go to minority-owned principal borrowers.

“That’s the hardest one,” he says, given decades of systemic racism and government redlining. “We’re planting a sequoia seed now, for shade in 10 or 20 years.”—Michael Blanding

TONY RICHARDS: EXPANDING HOUSING EQUITY AND HOME OWNERSHIP

While pursuing his Master’s of Public Administration degree at Suffolk, Tony Richards, MPA ’21, was in a unique position—he was also serving as a senior official in the administration of then Governor Charlie Baker. “I’d be with the governor travelling around the state all day, and then attending class at night,” he says. “I could stress-test strategy at Suffolk and talk with my peers about it, and then implement it in real time.”

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Father Bill Robinson: Every Priest Should Have an MPA

A student in Suffolk’s Master of Public Administration Program, Bill Robinson, MPA ‘22, took a leadership survey to determine what industry he’d be best suited for, and the result came up “ministry.” “I was joking about it with the rest of the class,” he remembers.

Soon, however, he began considering the priesthood in earnest. He’s always been devoutly religious, and interested in theology and philosophy as well as public service. “Once the call came, it got clear pretty quickly,” he says.

Now, Father Bill serves as parochial vicar for two parishes in Westwood, south of Boston, running the affairs of the parishes along with a team of two pastors. He conducts day-to-day operations, as well as outreach and running programs for parishioners. Far from giving up on his MPA, however, he finds the degree indispensable.

“Each parish is truly a mini-business, with many financial aspects,” he says. “As priests we have to identify and execute a vision and are also called to be involved in the community, which is literally what an MPA teaches. If I were the pope, I’d require every priest to have an MPA!”

Luciana Canestraro: Seizing Opportunities for Social Impact

A s the manager of interpreter services at Boston Children’s Hospital, Luciana Canestraro, MHA ‘24, has witnessed firsthand the intensified mental health challenges children face in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the increased demand for services, children often come to the emergency department (ED) and then wait days for a psych placement. “It’s a silent crisis,” she says.

After working at Children’s for 16 years, Canestraro came to Suffolk to pursue a Master of Healthcare Administration degree. In a course on health systems, she decided to write a policy brief on pediatric behavioral health, making recommendations including more preventive care, specialized support in the ED, and outpatient services embedded in schools.

While she couldn’t institute those systemwide changes herself, she decided to tackle the issue in her department, proposing a proactive approach to interpretation for non-English-speaking pediatric patients boarding while waiting for a placement. Instead of waiting to be called for services, or have the staff resort to video or phone interpretation that isn’t appropriate for mental health, she sent interpreters to round the emergency department to ask what patients needed. That’s crucial for behavioral health patients in that setting. Canestraro says—because of cultural barriers, they may not ask for an interpreter themselves.

“We don’t have control over how fast they leave the ED,” Canestraro says. “But we do have control over how comfortable they are in terms of meeting their needs for language access and culturally sensitive care.”

Over time, she says, the change has led to an improvement in how her department is able to meet the needs of diverse patients: “Just by digging deeper, I was able to have an impact.” —M.B.
ten years rather than throwing it out next season,” Smith says. “That’s something consumers care about.” One group even recommended that brands open a store in New York City or other major metropolitan centers to specifically sell secondhand goods as a benefit to the environment.

The experience, Smith says, was a heady one for students, who were forced out of their comfort zones to consider the perspective of consumers who may not have been like them. In addition, it gave them a better understanding of the fact that companies such as VFC are genuinely interested in creating social good beyond their own bottom line. “We’re all very cynical of greenwashing and you wonder if these things really matter,” Smith says. “It’s affirming for them to hear from a VP of sustainability at a firm and realise this is something companies care about—then when they graduate they can go out and find organizations aligned with their values and that they can feel good supporting.”

MANAGING ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Those values include not only companies’ relationships with their consumers but with their employees as well. On a recent Wednesday, several dozen students sat in a classroom

PROFESSOR CARLOS RUFÍN: MAKING ENERGY MORE SUSTAINABLE

When he takes students on his annual travel course, Doing Business in Brazil, Carlos Rufín presents them with a tale of two cities. In Rio de Janeiro, a city with 12 million people and surging poverty and social problems, the main energy company has struggled with leadership, seen huge financial losses, and watched while up to 40% of its electricity is stolen by residents who can’t afford bills. Meanwhile in São Paulo, a city with a similar population, the main energy company has been profitable and successful, expanding affordable energy delivery to poorer areas of the city.

The difference, he shows students, is one of institutions. "A São Paulo is generally better governed from an economic and political perspective. A developed civil society," says Rufín, a professor of strategy and international business. "The authorities in the state and city have said [to utilities], ‘You have to take care of this.’ It’s a reminder, Rufín explains, of just how important it is for companies coming into another country to adapt their business model to the social reality of the place—but he doesn’t just tell students this, he shows them through interviews with utility executives and visits to local nonprofits in the backstreet favelas. They also travel to the rainforest to talk with Brazilian biologists and grapple with questions of profit, people, and sustainability.

Originally from Barcelona, Spain, Rufín has spent more than 30 years as a consultant and professor researching energy, poverty, and civil society around the world. Much of his work has focused on Latin America, contrasting energy policies of different countries, states, and companies in delivering goods and services in a sustainable way.

In 2021, Rufín traveled to the Kyrgyz Republic as a Fulbright scholar to examine how to make energy production more sustainable. Central Asia, he says, is very susceptible to climate change. "It’s basically a giant oasis dependent on snow in the mountains for water," he says. At the same time, the republic relies on Soviet-era coal plants for energy, creating high levels of air pollution and negatively affecting the health of the population.

“We’re a very good setting to ask how you can build renewable sources of energy in the context of deep poverty,” he reflects. In that and other research, Rufín is actively engaged with coming up with solutions to intractable problems around energy and poverty— and then bringing these examples home to Suffolk to inspire the next generation of leaders.

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DOROTHY SAVARESE: A BANKER WHO PUTS COMMUNITY FIRST

Dorothy Savarese, MBA ’04, HDCS ’21, witnessed the power of banks early on in her career. After graduating from a small college in Kentucky, she worked as a community organizer in the then-struggling city of Covington, just across the river from Cincinnati. She helped start a department of economic development, working closely with local banks to form public-private partnerships to jump-start the economy.

“I saw the tremendous impact that happens when there is revitalization and people have jobs,” she says. Now, more than 40 years later, she is still evangelizing for the power of community banking, as the recently retired CEO and now executive chair of Cape Cod 5. “The nation needs an ecosystem of banks of all sizes,” she says. “Community banks serve an incredibly important purpose as the largest lender to small businesses. There are an understanding of the needs of local communities, and can be a trusted advisor of individuals, businesses, and families.”

Among other accolades, magazine perennially ranked Savarese as one of the nation’s 25 most powerful women in banking, crediting her with building Cape Cod 5 into “one of New England’s most influential banks” while remaining “mindful of its responsibility as a corporate citizen.” Last November, the magazine named her its Community Banker of the Year.

Under her leadership, Cape Cod 5 championed economic and environmental resiliency on the Cape, financing affordable housing and initiatives combating climate change. Savarese has also served on advisory councils for the Federal Reserve and FDIC, and served as a member of former Governor Charlie Baker’s economic development task force and most recently on the Bradley-Driscoll Climate Policy Transition Committee. In 2021, Suffolk awarded her an honorary degree, and she now serves on the University’s Board of Trustees. And recently she established the Dorothy A. Savarese Scholarship Fund to support Cape Cod students who demonstrate financial need.

Cape Cod is a unique location, Savarese says, with seasonal employment and sometimes wide disparities in wealth between vacationers, second homeowners, and locals. As a community bank, Cape Cod 5 has to use its local knowledge to toe the line between supporting neighbors and making realistic decisions about credit-worthiness. “You are doing someone a disservice if you make a loan they can’t repay,” she says.

Savarese started her career at Cape Cod 5 as a commercial lender, and then became a developer of new financial products. When her boss was approaching retirement, she went to Suffolk for her MBA, taking classes online and during nights and weekends to gain experience in case a potential new chief executive cleansed house and she found herself out of a job. Instead, the bank offered the job to her. In the decades since, she has not only spearheaded local development and philanthropic efforts but also transformed the culture of the bank, diversifying its staff and being more proactive in serving customers.

Stepping down as CEO last year, Savarese can look with satisfaction on the legacy she has left behind. “I’m proud to see just how many people for whom we’ve made home ownership possible,” she says. “A lot of the businesses I helped customers start when I first got here 30 years ago are now being run by their children. It’s overwhelming to see the impact we’ve had on families in the community.” —M.B.
“I am a rule follower, and I love the structure—it’s almost like solving a puzzle,” she enthuses. At the same time, Beaver’s research focuses on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, has been teaching this course at Suffolk for the past five years, challenging students to think more closely about bias and stereotyping and how they can lead to discrimination in the office. This particular class begins by examining the difference between heterosexism (assuming that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual) and homophobia (treating LGBTQ people with fear or hatred). “The percentage of Americans publicly identifying as LGBTQ has been steadily increasing. Beaver tells the class, from 3% of boomers up to 25% of Gen Z.”

This winter, she completed an internship at KPMG, one of the Big Four accounting firms; she’ll return there for a full-time position in 2024, after she completes her master’s degree. And she also hopes to find a way to accounting to give back. “For me, business with purpose means going beyond the bottom line,” she says. “Yes, we are here to make money and live comfortably, but I think we would all be better off if we could focus more on the greater good.”

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This winter, she completed an internship at KPMG, one of the Big Four accounting firms; she’ll return there for a full-time position in 2024, after she completes her master’s degree. And she also hopes to find a way to accounting to give back. “For me, business with purpose means going beyond the bottom line,” she says. “Yes, we are here to make money and live comfortably, but I think we would all be better off if we could focus more on the greater good.”

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In 2021, James Carras, BA ‘71 was selected as an Advanced Leadership Initiative Fellow at Harvard. He is teaching courses at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and Harvard Extension School on equitable development and housing policy.

George King, MBA ‘79 performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in March in a Black History Month concert entitled “The Passion of Octavius Catto.”

Loretta Keane, BSBA ‘80 joined the board of trustees of Eversource Energy in January. Keane currently serves as the chief financial officer of Arvada Solutions, LLC in Boston.

Carol A. Siemon, JD ‘81 received the Pracemaker of the Year Award in 2022 from the Peace Education Center in Lansing, MI, for her efforts to bring fairness in charging and sentencing criminal defendants.

Stacy DeBole, BA ‘94 was named the new executive librarian for the Commonwealth in December, overseeing the State Library of Massachusetts and supporting research and information needs of government, libraries, and citizens.

In November, Northern Trust named Michael A. Janko, BA ‘85, MBA ‘92 to its Foundation & Institutional Advisors (FIA) practice as a senior investment advisor in Boston.

Brian Lepore, MPA ‘87 retired after 32 years as a US Government Accountability Office analyst, the last 12 of which he served as director of defense capabilities and management.

Michael Hamilton, BSBA ‘88, MBA ‘95 was promoted to chief information security officer at Voyager Corporation in 2021. Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education named Mark S. Rotondo, BS ‘92, JD ‘04, LLM ‘11 as its executive director in November.

The Marinelli Group, run by Dominic Marinelli, BSBA ‘93, MBA ‘95 and his team at Morgan Stanley was named one of Forbes Top Financial Advisors. He was also named one of America’s best financial advisers in 2023 by Barron’s.

In July, Kathie Lasky, BA ‘94 will become the principal at Dustin Elementary School, a member of the Framingham Public Schools.

Abim O. Kolawole, JD ‘95 became chief audit executive for Northwestern Mutual in December 2022, leading the internal audit function for the company. In addition to his current role, Kolawole is also the executive lead for the company’s Sustained Action for Racial Equity Task Force.

Mike Moyer, BS ‘95 has joined Access TCA as senior director of client services.
Yuliya Akسلров, BSBA ‘99 has started a new role as vice president of business intelligence and analytics at Amwell.

Ann-Margarette Ferrante, JD ‘99 began her eighth term in office as Fifth Essex District Representative in the Massachusetts House in January, following a victory in November’s general election.

Amy Joyce, BFA ‘00 is the creative director at American Ancestors/Neon History Genealogical Society in Boston and a volunteer committee member (and participating artist) for Rodinland Open Studios, an annual art event in Rodinland, MA.

The Honorable Jeremy C.ucci, JD ’00 was sworn in as a superior court judge on November 2, 2023.

Rachael Adriko, BS ’04 has been named principal of school at San Francisco Day School, beginning in July 2023. Adriko recently gave a talk about education at TEDx Roma.

Denis V. Mezherskts, BSBA ’04 is chief executive officer of ROK Corporation, a business brokerage firm based in Rockland, MA. He acquired the firm in 2022.

Nirali Chawla, MBA ’02 was named a finalist for the 24th Annual Women in Technology Leadership Awards.

Virginia Aksamit, BS ’03 was appointed executive director of Rodale Architects Principal and Director of Integrated Design. Jessica Haley, BFA ’05 earned the 2022 Distinguished Alumna in Interior Architecture Award from the Boston Architectural College. Alumni Council for her exemplary accomplishments, service, and commitment to the field of interior design.

Michelle Miller-Groves, BS ’05, MA ’10 joined Franklin Cunningham Tech as executive director of its Center for Computing and Interdisciplinary Technology last fall.

Karen Dzendolet, MEd ’06 was named senior manager, global information reporting at BDO USA, LLP in January.

Edward Cronin, CAG ’11 is professor at Gordon College in 2021.

Nicolás Cachanosky, MS ’12, PhD ’13 is associate professor of economics and director of the Center for Free Enterprise at the University of Texas at El Paso Woody L. Hunt College of Business, published “There Is No Such Thing As Student Debt Cancellation” in the February 2023 issue of Harvard Economic Review.

Deepti Bhushan, MBA ’08 works with Boston’s marketing intelligence company.

Ed Cronin, CAG ’11 is professor at Gordon College in 2021.

Majid Dehghan, BS ’02, MSC ’16, JD ’19, an assistant professor of economics and law at Rutgers Business School, published “There Is No Such Thing As Student Debt Cancellation” in the February 2023 issue of Harvard Economic Review.

Darren Seab, BSBA ’12, MSc ’14 was named senior manager, global information reporting at BDO USA, LLP in January.

Edward Cronin, CAG ’11 is professor at Gordon College in 2021.
Joy Kete, JD ’15 was promoted to principal at Fish & Richardson, effective Jan. 1, 2023. Kete litigates multimillion-dollar global patent disputes in US District Courts and at the US International Trade Commission. Kete received her BA in history from Vassar College before attending Suffolk University Law School, from which she graduated summa cum laude.

David Mazza, MBA ’15 has been named chief strategy officer at Roundhill Investments.

Captain John Mensch, BSBA ’15 writes: “For the past two years I have been doing my dream job while living in Okinawa, Japan. I am a fighter pilot flying the F-35B Lightning II for the US Marines. Last year I spent six months at sea flying missions in and around the South China Sea while leading 42 young men and women of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121.”

Lauren Peters, JD ’15, former undersecretary for health policy for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in the Baker administration, was appointed executive director of the Center for Health Information and Analysis in January. Providence, RI, Mayor Brett Smiley appointed Matthew Shumate, BS ’15 as deputy chief of staff in December. Prior to the campaign, Shumate served as deputy chief of staff for the City of Providence.

Lauren Burke, BA ’17 served as a production stage manager for K-3-S-I-F, a Lenole Meise play in production at the Huntington Theater in March.

Christine Lindberg, MPA ’17 of Middleton, MA was named chief of staff to Mayor James J. Fiorentini in the City of Haverhill, MA in January 2023.

Aziza A. Asad, BA ’18, JD ’21 joined the Office of Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark as an assistant district attorney in October.

Felicity Otterbein, BSJ ’18 became the producer for “The Morning Mix,” a new show on WRAS.

Doudaylene Paul, BA ’18 recently became a senior philanthropy officer at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom.

Kellie Vehlies Boretta, MPA ’19 was promoted to senior development manager and celebrated four years at Project Bread in February.

Rachel M. Fancy, BS ’19 joined Fitzgerald Law in Boston in November, where she advises business owners and leadership teams.

Representative Adrian Madaro, JD ’19 was sworn in for his fifth term in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in January.

Christina Coleman, BSBA ’20 graduated with a Master of Science in human resource management in 2022 from Northeastern University and is currently studying for an SHRM-CP certification.

Graduate student at Northeastern University Leticia Gomes, BS ’22 is studying in the Lopez Lab within the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology. She is using high-throughput virtual screening calculations to identify novel organic photoredox reactions and collaborates with the Doyle Group (UCLA).

Karine Kanj, BS ’21 has been hired as the advance coordinator in the Office of Governor Maura Healey.

“I am the first veteran to pursue a master’s in deaf education at Boston University,” reports Tony Rocca, BS ’21.

Anshelo Taho, BSBA ’21 opened his own business, Bamboo Beach Juice Bar, in South Boston this January.

Kathlina Teague, MS ’21 is a certified medical dosimetrist (CMD) at the University of Utah School of Medicine in Salt Lake City, UT.

Helli N. Patel, BSBA ’22 joined Bamboo Beach Juice Bar as a wealth advisor.

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