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TU provides personalized professional development for students.



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There are few things Jennifer Skolochenko-Platt '99 cares about more than helping kids.



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Marty Hendrick '80 and Abbas Karimi have their sights set on August's Paralympic Games.



ON THE COVER



Madison Yelle, who took this issue's cover photo, is a photographer who lives and works in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where the image of Marty Hendrick '80 and Abbas Karimi was taken at the city's aquatic center. To capture it, Yelle donned her suit and cap and jumped into the water with her camera. She's incorporated

underwater photography into her work as a wedding photographer for years. Yelle is also a part-time swim coach and member of Swim Fort Lauderdale, which is how she got to know Hendrick. "There's so much I love and admire about Marty," she says. "He's able to listen, remember what's important and show up in a way that positively impacts others' lives."

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Mark Ginsberg**  
President

**Mike Unger**  
Editor

**Lori Marchetti**  
Art Director/Designer

**Megan Bradshaw**  
Copy Editor

**Lauren Castellana '13, '23**  
**Alexander Wright '18**  
Photographers

### *Contributors*

Kailey Adams  
Megan Bradshaw  
Elizabeth Braungard  
Grace Hoggarth '22  
Felicity Knox '94  
Chandler Vicchio '24

**Lori Armstrong**  
Associate Vice President,  
Alumni Relations

**Sean Welsh '05**  
Vice President,  
University Marketing  
& Communications

**Teri O'Neal '98**  
Associate Vice President,  
Communications and Media

**Office of Alumni Relations**  
410-704-2234 or 800-887-8152

**towson.edu**  
**towson.edu/magazine**

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*Please send address changes to Alumni Relations, Towson University, 8000 York Rd., Towson, MD 21252-0001 or email [alumni@towson.edu](mailto:alumni@towson.edu).*

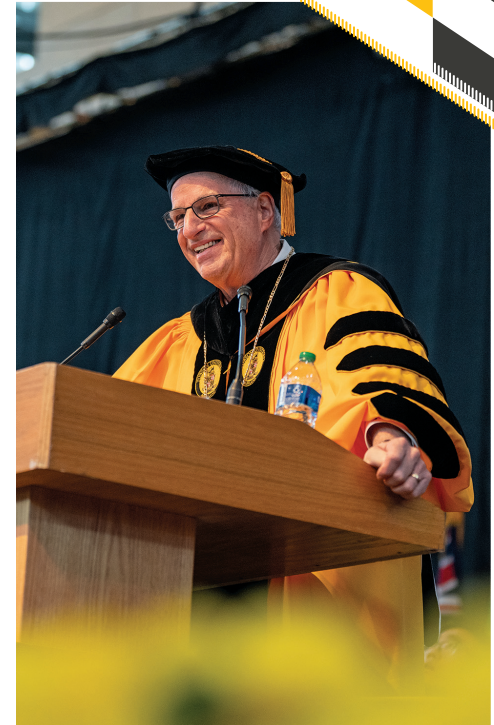
# President's Letter

Fellow TU Tigers,

It was one year ago this spring that I was approached about my prospective interest in the presidency of Towson University. As I learned more about the university and its mission, I knew this was a place I could call home. Now, six months into my presidency, it really is home.

And I mean that literally. My wife, Elaine, and I are living in a residence hall on campus most nights of the week—a decision that allows us to fully invest ourselves in this terrific community. Nearly every night, we attend campus events—from athletics to the arts to academic showcases—eat dinner with students and get to know the many neighbors and friends of TU.

This busy and exciting spring included a wonderful inauguration ceremony in April, one of the greatest honors of my career. I shared my vision for the future of Towson University



and vowed that as we grow and evolve, we will always remain true to the core values that are so deeply ingrained in our DNA. Core values like student success, teaching excellence, community engagement and, above all, a commitment to inclusion and access for all.

As you may have heard, my goal is to help make a great university even greater. There is already such extraordinary work happening at TU and among our network of alumni—much of which you can read about in this issue. You'll find the incredible stories of alums—like Marty Hendrick '80 and Jennifer Skolochenko-Platt '99—helping others, the ways TU is fostering student success and how a little dog named Bruno is the most popular guy among our student population.

I know with your support, we will make Towson University the very best it can be for the Tigers of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

**MARK R. GINSBERG, PH.D.**  
PRESIDENT



## TREASURES

# TU Talks About Bruno

Towson University's newest Tiger has brown fur, a wiggly tail and a love of tiny tennis balls.

Meet Bruno, a chocolate lab and TU's first comfort dog—a trained companion who provides cuddles and connection to students, faculty and staff.

Albert S. Cook Library staff members have partnered with Pets on Wheels for years to bring therapy dogs on campus during finals, but this is the first time the university has had a resident furry destresser.

Adding a comfort dog to campus rose out of the 2023 Big Give, when a donor established a fund to bring a puppy to campus and pay for his care. Any future donations to the fund will pay for Bruno's food, training and health expenses.

Vice President of University Advancement Brian DeFilippis and his family's gift ensured the TU community met the goal. "Our family is excited to support the Canine Comfort Companion program at TU because we know the immense

value that a dog can bring to a community," says Heather DeFilippis '00. "Dogs always lead with compassion and love."

Research shows that interacting with dogs increases dopamine and serotonin levels and deescalates stressful situations. Drawing from that, Bruno will provide emotional support and companionship as part of TU's community policing approach. The dog lives and works alongside TUPD patrol officer Jafar Taru, offering a comforting presence at building walk-throughs and calls for service.

"He's not like traditional K-9s trained to detect substances or aid search and rescue," says Taru. "His sole focus is to reinforce the well-being of our campus community."

Bruno started paw-trol in February. He will be on campus 220 days this year, and he's already incredibly popular. Bruno sightings draw everyone—faculty, staff and students—in the immediate vicinity.

And out of it.

Within his first week of official duties, Bruno appeared on WBAL and twice on WBFF and also was featured in articles by the Baltimore Banner and the Chronicle of Higher Education. The Instagram post introducing the pup to campus received nearly 3,000 likes, 101 comments and more than 600 shares, and it reached more than 18,000 people.

The university community was involved in choosing the pup's name via a social media poll, with options including Ty, Chap and Goldie, but Bruno—the name suggested by Taru's daughter—won by a landslide.

It seems, this time, everyone is talking about Bruno.

*For more information, visit [towson.edu/brunodog](https://towson.edu/brunodog).*

# Campus News



## Library Wins Magazine Award

The Albert S. Cook Library received the 2024 Library Excellence in Access and Diversity Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. The award honors academic libraries' diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs and initiatives.



## TU Tech Hub

The Biden–Harris administration and Department of Commerce named Baltimore as one of 31 Regional Innovation and Technology Hubs across America last fall. The StarTU at the Armory and TU's culture of entrepreneurship are cornerstones of the area's innovation and development.



## Showing Tiger Pride

Dozens of members of the university community rallied in Annapolis on March 7, to meet with lawmakers and show support for pieces of legislation that impact TU. Students attended general assembly sessions, legislator meetings and committee hearings.

## Shopping into the Future



Tiger Express, an innovative, checkout-free store located in West Village Commons, debuted in the fall. Open 24/7, it offers frictionless shopping to the entire TU community. It stocks a variety of essentials, including snacks, drinks, packaged meals and personal care products, ensuring patrons can find what they need at any time. OneCard holders such as students, faculty and staff shopping at the store can choose between paying with Dining Dollars or Doc Dollars.



## Droning On

SURVICE Engineering, a defense company and Maryland small business, and Malloy Aeronautics are producing unmanned aircraft systems. The companies have partnered with TU's Cyber4All Center to secure the drones. The faculty and students in the cutting-edge education programs across TU will work at the center on risk analysis and the encryption capabilities of drones for this project, led by Mike O'Leary and Nathan McNew from the Department of Mathematics.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**1** young alumna (Briseyda Barrientos Ariza '22) named TU's first Gates Cambridge Scholar

**2** years running TU has been named a top Fulbright-producing institution by the Department of State

**3** students were semifinalists for Fulbright awards for the 2023–24 academic year (Lauren Asbury '24, Ashley Hajimirsadeghi, Taylor Richardson '23)

**23** students and young alums have won Fulbright awards since 1968.



## Presidential Powers

TU President Mark Ginsberg earned a spot on the Maryland Daily Record's 2023–24 Power 100 List announced last month, less than two months after beginning his tenure as TU's 15th president. He joins USM peer presidents on the list.

"I am honored to be included among such respected leaders whose contributions make Maryland stronger every day," Ginsberg said. "Above all, this is truly a reflection of Towson University and its consequential impact on the state as a setting for innovation and an engine for economic development and opportunity. I look forward to working with colleagues in our state to continue TU's legacy of excellence as we help a great university to become even greater."

Rob Sharps '83, the president and CEO of T. Rowe Price, also received recognition from the paper.

According to The Daily Record, the list honors "the 100 men and women who are shaping our businesses, governments, nonprofits, law firms and other key institutions" and who "play an outsized role in the culture, lifestyle, civic conversations and economic fortunes of Maryland."



## Listening In

—  
**“I believe listening is among a leader’s most important responsibilities.”**  
 —

In October 2023, Mark R. Ginsberg, Ph.D., became TU’s 15th president. He arrived from George Mason University, where he had been the dean of the College of Education and Human Development from 2010–20 and the provost and executive vice president from 2020–23. Ginsberg has enjoyed a more than 40-year career as a psychologist, educator and senior administrator in academia.

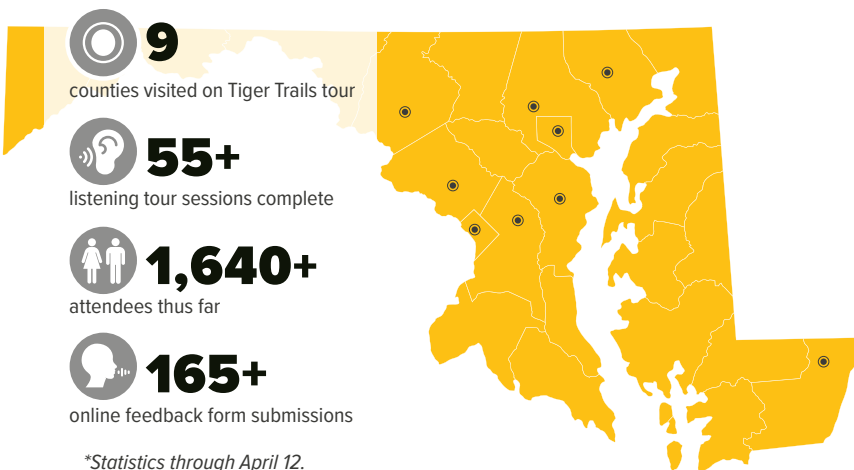
Upon arrival, Ginsberg commenced a campus-wide listening tour, visiting with faculty, staff and students in large and small group settings. He has also met with alumni and friends of the university throughout Maryland and beyond.

Ginsberg has created two other activities designed to connect with community members. He holds office hours twice a month, where he

meets one on one to hear visitors’ perspectives. He also has monthly Lunches with Mark where groups can register to bring their lunches and join in a relaxed and engaging conversation about the university.

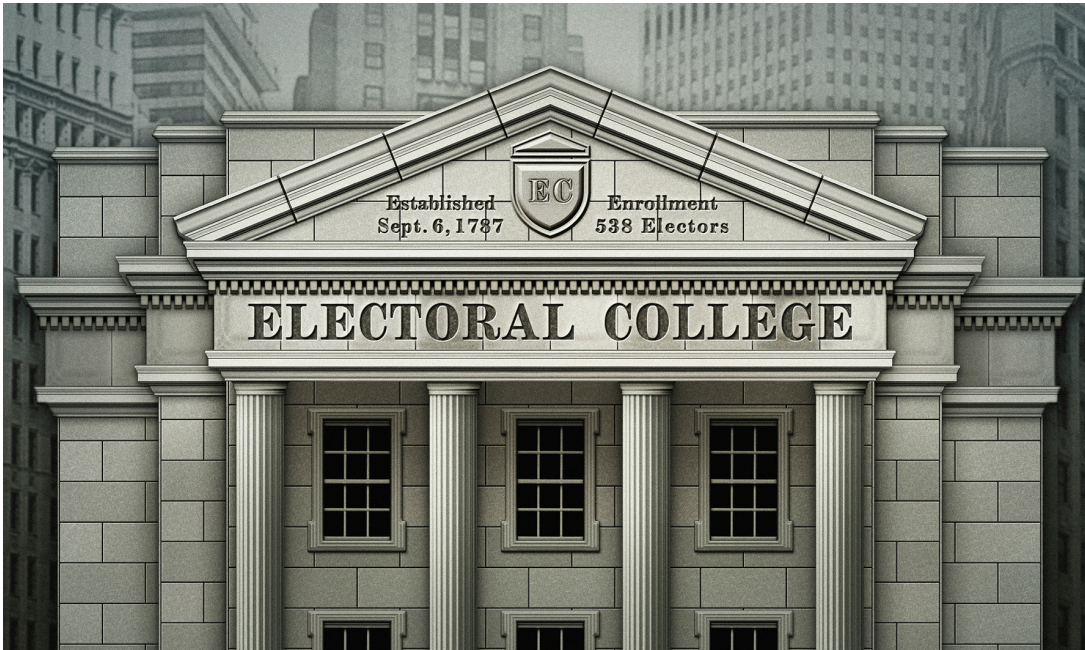
“I believe listening is among a leader’s most important responsibilities... My hope is to listen and learn more fully about the context of TU—to understand who we are, who we aspire to be and how we can achieve our shared vision for the university,” he wrote in an introductory message to the campus community.

University community members can contact the president directly via email at [presidentsoffice@towson.edu](mailto:presidentsoffice@towson.edu).



## The Free Listening State

President Ginsberg’s listening tour has wound its way around TU’s campus and beyond. The university’s 15th president has made it a point to schedule times and events to meet with as much of the TU community as possible. To see how you can engage with President Ginsberg, visit [towson.edu/engagewithpresident](http://towson.edu/engagewithpresident).



## OFFICE HOURS

# The Electoral College

**John McTague, professor and assistant chair of the Department of Political Science, explains the way we elect our presidents.**

Like many features of the American constitutional system, the Electoral College is grounded in a theory of representation of states rather than representation of voters or individuals. The framers held a mistrust of direct democracy, and they wanted to keep the presidential election separate from the elections that staffed the legislative branch.

There were also implications regarding race and slavery. The North had a population advantage over the South, so direct election by popular vote was a threat to southern power. The Three-Fifths Clause of the Constitution, which said any person who was not free would be counted as three-fifths of a free individual for the purposes of determining congressional representation, also had the effect of inflating white southerners' power in the Electoral College. Small population states likewise preferred the Electoral College to direct the popular vote. Thus, the Electoral College was a way to ratify the Constitution and bring the southern slaveholding states into the fold. In part, it was just a political compromise based on the politics of the late 18th century.

We have 538 electors to the Electoral College. Each state gets a number of votes equal to its number of congressional representatives plus its two senators. The only exception is Washington, D.C., which gets three Electoral College votes thanks to the 23rd Amendment of the Constitution.

In 49 out of 51 jurisdictions, the Electoral College awards 100% of its votes to the plurality winner of the state. Maine and Nebraska award two electoral votes to the state popular vote winner and give one electoral vote to the popular vote winner in each congressional district. Electors tend to be professional partisans, usually elected officials at the state level. In 35 states, the electors who are sent to vote in the Electoral College are bound to represent the will of the popular vote of their state. So occasionally an elector can go rogue and vote for whomever they want. In 2016, for the first time in more than 100 years, there were multiple faithless electors. Five of them were

Clinton electors and voted for other candidates.

Electors show up to their state capitals in the second week of December. They cast their votes and then states send the results to Congress, which counts the votes at a joint session in the first week of January. That's what happened on Jan. 6, 2021. The vice president's role in that accounting process is purely ceremonial. As recently as 2000, Al Gore presided over his own loss.

More states tilt Republican right now because the Republican Party is favored by more rural voters and the Democratic Party is favored by voters in more densely populated metropolitan areas. However, as recently as 2004, John Kerry lost the popular vote by about two points, and if 60,000 votes in Ohio flipped from Bush to Kerry, he would have carried Ohio and won the Electoral College while losing the popular vote.

The most recent occasion when the Electoral College was almost abolished or significantly reformed was following the election of 1968, which was a three-way race between Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace, who was a third-party Dixiecrat

independent candidate. Nixon only beat Humphrey in the popular vote by less than 1%, but he won the Electoral College 301 to 191, with Wallace pulling 46 from southern states. The disparity between this very narrow popular vote victory and the landslide in the Electoral College instigated a movement to amend the Constitution. The House voted overwhelmingly in favor of this change. Richard Nixon signaled that he would support it, but it failed to overcome a filibuster in the Senate.

There are people who think that abolishing the Electoral College would be unfair to more sparsely populated rural voters, because if you had a national popular vote as the way of winning the election then candidates would disproportionately campaign in large cities and ignore rural interests.

Now there is something called the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, which is a movement by 16 states—including Maryland—and D.C., which have passed legislation that says if enough states whose Electoral College voters total 270—a majority in the Electoral College—pass a law pledging to commit their electors to vote for the national popular vote winner, their state will do the same. So in theory, if all 50 states adopted that law, then whoever won the popular vote would win every Electoral College vote. But there are some doubts about whether that would pass constitutional muster.

The Electoral College probably isn't going anywhere anytime soon. There's no way to get around the politics right now.



## Coffee With...

# Nora Clark-Giles

**We talked with the inaugural assistant vice president for student health & well-being about the importance of well-being to the whole campus and some of the ways she practices it in her life.**

**LOCATION:**  
Cunningham's Cafe

**IN HER CUP:**  
"Any espresso. It's got to be strong. And I sometimes get an extra shot. Typically, I get a macchiato."

**ADDICTION LEVEL:**  
"I only start my morning with it. Because if I drink it later in the day, I have a hard time sleeping."

**Q: What set you on your career path?**

**A:** It was really an accident, but it started when I was getting my master's degree at Binghamton University in public administration. I happened

to see a job posting for a coordinator of student success and retention. I had a very difficult time with transition [to college], and I did not feel supported. And I'm like, "That exists? That's a thing?" I just kept growing in the field of higher education with different career opportunities.

**Q: Why did you join TU?**

**A:** When I saw the opportunity at TU in student health and well-being, I knew from my experience and all my engagements with students that that is central to their success. It's the entire campus community's experience that lends to the well-being and the success of students. I was really attracted to that concept because I know that that's the truth. I came to TU from the community college space, which is a completely different experience. Students come from all different backgrounds, are all different ages. You get to know a student for about a year and then life happens and you don't see them. Very rarely was it because of academics: They were struggling financially. They had lots of family issues. They had child care issues. They had food issues, mental health issues, transportation issues. All these things were barriers to their success.

**Q: Where do you see potential for TU to grow in this area?**

**A:** Dr. Vernon Hurte, the VP of student affairs, talks about synergy. We need to move away from collaborating on individual events to having synergy between every area on campus, where

wellness is built into everything we do.

That's going to require a university-wide effort. Everybody will feel it because well-being is about inclusiveness. It's about belonging, and it's about making sure that no one is left out. That has so much to do with how you feel in a space.

**Q: What are you reading?**

**A:** I like to habit stack. I can wash the dishes and listen to an Audible and clean the house and drive to work. I'm on a minimalist journey. I listen to a lot of folks talk about how to reach that point in your life. I also like true crime. And I'll listen to some podcasts on fitness. I listen to podcasts that talk about being your best self, whether it be juicing or gut health or inflammation and brain health.

**Q: What's something people would be surprised to know about you?**

**A:** Probably how down to earth I am. I don't like a lot of drama. I don't need a lot to feel happy. I really appreciate what some might feel like are basic things in life. I've had a lot of opportunity in my life to reflect on my blessings. I'm grateful for the opportunities that I've had professionally, but I'm also grateful for the things that I have not had to go through. My father used to always say, a smile is a form of charity. You don't know what that might have done for somebody's day. I want to be a good person at the end of the day and make an impact however I can in whatever space that I occupy. That's my goal.



# Moving On Up



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

## Sean Fenlon '90

Founder and CEO of Symphony42

Most people wouldn't connect even a crooked line between playing bassoon and creating a business-to-business AI-powered customer acquisition service. But to serial entrepreneur Sean Fenlon '90, they're in perfect harmony.

"When you have to defend your doctoral dissertation in front of a committee of really smart professors, that gets you ready for the boardroom," Fenlon says. "Analyzing an orchestral score and having to do transpositions in your head from alto clef to treble clef in real time and seeing how every line relates with every other line gets you ready to evaluate an income statement or a profit and loss statement."

Fenlon's first business is the only one (so far) that had anything to do with music. After that, he founded customer acquisition and online marketing businesses. His latest venture—Symphony42, the sales and marketing platform built on top of ChatGPT—may be his opus.

"From the beginning days of Listensmart.com all the way to the intersection of digital ads, performance marketing, lead generation and customer acquisition, we've combined that with this incredible world of AI," he says. "This is the big one. All the other ones were just prelude."

**1968**



BORN IN MARYLAND AT PRINCE GEORGE'S HOSPITAL (NOW UM CAPITAL REGION MEDICAL CENTER)

**1986**

ENROLLED AT TU.

"If you look at my arc as a bassoon player, the most improvement I made was during the years at Towson."

**1987–89**



STUDIED WITH JAZZ LEGENDS HANK LEVY AND GREG HATZA.

"They are two of the most amazing musicians in the world. I don't think I really appreciated the honor and privilege of being able to study with them both then."

**1999**

FOUNDED LISTENSMART.COM.

"I launched my first internet startup with the vision of allowing the independent artists of the world to put their music on the internet and build an audience."

**1995**



MARRIED HIS WIFE TERI '89, A FELLOW BASSOON STUDENT AT TU.

**1993**



EARNED A MASTER'S IN MUSIC AT THE PEABODY INSTITUTE IN BALTIMORE.

**1990**



GRADUATED FROM TU WITH A B.A. IN MUSIC AND PURCHASED HIS FIRST PERSONAL COMPUTER.

**2001**

EARNED A DOCTORATE IN MUSIC AT JOHNS HOPKINS; COFOUNDED THELOANPAGE.COM WITH JASON GOLDSMITH '97.

"We grew very quickly, and we got up to over \$10 million in revenue and about \$3 million in profit with around seven employees."

**2004**



STARTED DOUBLEPOSITIVE, A CUSTOMER ACQUISITION AND ONLINE MARKETING PLATFORM.

**2011**



WON THE ERNST & YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AWARD.

**2024**



SYMPHONY42 PROJECTED TO MOVE FROM TEXT INTERACTIONS TO AI VOICE INTERACTIONS IN THE SECOND QUARTER.

**2022**

CREATED SYMPHONY42, WHICH HE CALLS THE WORLD'S FIRST AI CUSTOMER ACQUISITION PLATFORM. LATER THAT YEAR CHATGPT DEBUTED AND FORCED A TOTAL OVERHAUL OF SYMPHONY42.

"It surprised us all. We knew this was 10 times better than anything that we were considering using. So we had to scrap the old product and rebuild on top of ChatGPT."

**2015**

FOUNDED META42, AN ONLINE MARKETING PLATFORM FOCUSED ON EMAIL, AND ABOVE, A SERVICE THAT HELPS INDIVIDUALS PUBLISH ON THE INTERNET BY SENDING EMAILS.



# U.S. Murals As A Means of Communication Rather Than Just Art

As TU seeks designation as a high research activity institution, TU Magazine will each issue bring readers a story of high-impact research. For this edition we spoke with anthropology and art history adjunct professor Katharine Fernstrom about the deeper political and social meaning of public murals throughout the United States.

**Abstract—** Murals are a ubiquitous presence in American cities, suburbs and even small towns. But are they just art or something more? Katharine Fernstrom has spent the last decade researching murals as a mode of communication. Her passion for the subject started when she was driving on Broadway in Baltimore's Fells Point neighborhood. "I saw this mural on the end of the wall of a townhouse complex," she says. "It was a memorial to someone who had died. It was absolutely breathtaking. I began to realize how much really detailed, important information is being put into a lot of murals. Then I volunteered with Baltimore mural artist Michelle Santos to gain experience with the community context. That was in 2011 and the mural is 'Historic Druid Heights,' at the intersection of Presman Street and Druid Hill Avenue. I was very impressed at the way people would stop to talk about the work in progress."

## A Conversation with Katharine Fernstrom

**Q: How do you define the term mural?**

**A:** A mural is visual imagery that is put on a wall, ceiling or floor. So I start with prehistoric American Indian rock art, which can be 10,000 years old. People put their ideas and their concerns into murals. We have lots of official government murals, also some on libraries, in hospitals and certainly churches.

**Q: What was one of the first murals that captured your academic attention?**

**A:** The first mural made in Chicago in the 1960s about civil rights interests me a lot. It was called the "Wall of Respect" and created by a group who called themselves the Organization for Black American Culture (OBAC). It presented many famous African American artists, politicians and other figures important to American history.

**Q: What is one of the most controversial murals that you've studied?**

**A:** A mural that Diego Rivera was commissioned to paint in the foyer of Rockefeller Center in the 1930s. The Rockefellers wanted a mural that celebrated future developments in American industry and supported his successful business empire.

Rivera's sympathies lay with the left wing Mexican revolutionary goals even as he was working in the U.S. during part of the Depression. He inserted Vladimir Lenin's portrait into the commission, which greatly angered Rockefeller, who paid Rivera's remaining fees and chiseled the fresco off the wall. He then hired someone else to make a mural more in keeping with his business philosophies.

**Q: What's a local mural that fascinates you?**

**A:** I love the one in the Custom House in Baltimore. It was originally the place where the ship captains paid their custom taxes when they brought their goods into the port. It is still a federal building. The painter was Francis Davis Millet. On the ceiling is this amazing panorama of ships sailing on the ocean. All around the upper part of the wall and the ceiling Millet put in an example of every boat and ship he knew of in the world.

**Q: What kind of message do you think he was trying to impart?**

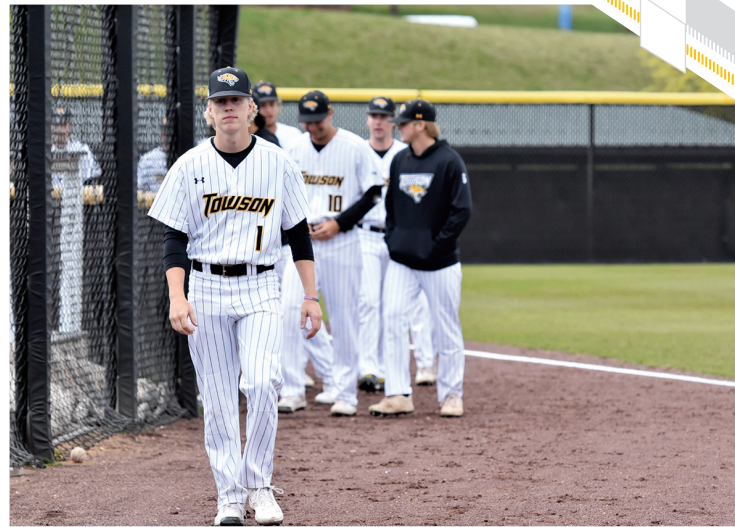
**A:** That the United States is a major maritime

power, and Baltimore is at the heart of that global maritime power.

**Q: You've studied some murals from thousands of years ago. What do you think it is about this medium that's persisted so much?**

**A:** I think it's a matter of visibility and presenting important qualities of that society, whichever one you are discussing. Jump to the 21st century and Black Lives Matter at the time of George Floyd when, for example, a street mural is put in Washington, D.C., within sight of the White House. [Washington Mayor] Muriel Bowser had a specific audience in mind. She wanted it aimed at the White House. People don't typically put their paintings under the wheels of cars.

Murals are a really important way that the United States, at the community level, is able to lay out the problems that we have and face them. Their visual quality allows an attention to the subjects in a way that maybe speech-making, article writing and internet pronouncements don't necessarily communicate. I think that they're a vibrant and essential part of how we work out issues that we all know we need to work out.



# Making Their Names

## ★ BASEBALL

**TU baseball is no stranger to famous names. The team's home ballpark is named after John Schuerholz '62, '07 (hon.), the first general manager to lead Major League Baseball franchises to a World Series title in both the American and National leagues and a recent inductee into the MLB Hall of Fame.**

But these days, Nate Nabholz '24, Joey Zito '28, Jordan Luton '24 and Jeremy Wagner '24 have brought famous last names to campus in hopes of forging their own paths.

Nabholz is the nephew of former MLB pitcher Chris Nabholz '95. Nate, a 6'5" pitcher, transferred to Towson from East Carolina and led TU in 2023 with 57 strikeouts, which stood 10th in the Coastal Athletic Association

(CAA). The criminal justice major is also a two-time member of the CAA Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll (see page 11).

"Nate is a serious contributor has made great strides from day one to today," says head coach Matt Tyner. "Professional baseball has made some inquiries about him and he's looking to be a frontline pitcher for us this year."

Zito is the nephew of former Cy Young award winner Barry Zito. Joey is a first-year lefthander who pitched 21.1 innings as a senior at Dover High School (Pennsylvania), with a 1.97 earned run average and 38 strikeouts. Both of his parents are former TU student-athletes; his father Michael played

football and his mother Melissa played volleyball.

"He has a world of potential and has to tap into it," Tyner says.

Luton is a sport management major whose older brother is Jake Luton, a journeyman NFL quarterback. Last season Jordan registered 11 strikeouts in 16 innings pitched over 14 appearances. He joined Nabholz on the CAA academic honor roll.

"Jordan has been asked to contribute on the back end of a game in relief," Tyner says. "So far he has performed pretty well."

Wagner is the son of longtime MLB pitcher Billy Wagner, who played 16 seasons for five teams. Jeremy spent two seasons at

Austin Peay State University before transferring to TU. Last season at TU he batted .282 with 13 doubles, three home runs and 24 RBI and had a team-best 19-game hitting streak during the year.

"Jeremy has a tough act to follow: Hall of Fame father, a brother drafted by the Astros," says Tyner. "He's a very solid college player. He certainly plays baseball with the zeal you want. He is a very team-oriented player who shows up every day, ready to go."

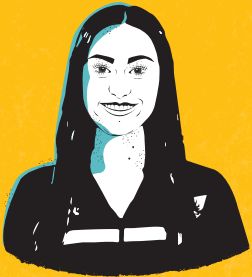
One thing is certain, all four student-athletes will work hard to add new achievements to those famous last names.



**MILANA ZIZAKOVIC '25**  
made the final tryout roster for the Canadian Women's Box Lacrosse team.



**BRIAN BENZING '24**  
won the CAA Most Outstanding Swimmer of the Meet award on the men's side for the third time.



**FELICIA POBLETE '25**  
posted a 9.875 on the vault—a career best—at the Penn State Quad meet. TU finished ahead of No. 25 Ball State and West Virginia.



**DION CREWS-HARRIS '24**  
moved from defensive line to fullback last season and finished third on the football team in sacks with five.

## III Former Tigers at Super Bowl LVIII

Former assistant football coach Brian Fleury '02, fashion designer Kristen Juszczyk '16 and former associate athletic trainer Julie Frymyer represented TU during the most recent Super Bowl. Fleury is the 49ers' tight ends coach, while Frymyer has been with the Chiefs as an assistant athletic trainer and physical therapist since 2018. She was lauded for her work on quarterback Patrick Mahomes' ankle injury rehab in 2023. Juszczyk became famous for her designer NFL jackets worn by Taylor Swift, Simone Biles and Taylor Lautner, among others. She signed a licensing deal with the NFL after last season.



Julie Frymyer



### FOOTBALL

#### NexTUp

The football team signed eight players on National Signing Day in preparation for the 2024 season. All players signed a National Letter of Intent on Feb. 7, the beginning of the national signing day period. Towson also added 16 players on Early Signing Day on Dec. 20, 2023, to total 24 players in the 2024 class, including 17 freshmen and seven transfers.

### TOP ATHLETES

#### Honor Roll

Two hundred eighty-one TU student-athletes were recognized on the fall 2023 CAA Commissioner's Academic Honor Rolls. Two hundred fifty-four were on the CAA Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll while 27 were placed on the CAA Football Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll.

### SOCCER

#### A Friendly Competition

The women's soccer and volleyball programs won their respective CAA championships, laying a foundation for the department's third-place finish in the CAA in the 2023–24 Learfield Cup fall standings (a national ranking of collegiate athletic departments) with a total of 95 points.

### LACROSSE

#### Growing the Sport

The geography of the sport of lacrosse has widened in the last 10 years, and the TU men's team this season illustrates it. Of the 49-man roster, 17 states and Canada are represented. The 10-man starting lineup has players from Maryland, California, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Washington state.



Throughout the two-week experience, professor Jason Freeman (back left) took his students on tours in cities that are important to Black history in Britain. They are pictured here after the Black Heritage Walk in Birmingham, England.



# HOW BIG IS YOUR WORLD?

TU STUDENTS AND FACULTY BROADEN THEIR HORIZONS AND PERSPECTIVES WITH CULTURE-FOCUSED STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES.

BY MEGAN BRADSHAW | PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER WRIGHT '18

Depending on who you ask, it was either Diogenes or Socrates who, when asked where he was from, rather than naming the place of his birth replied, "I am a citizen of the world."

Regardless of who got there first, in the ensuing 2,400 years, that statement has gone from radical to nearly required. As communication and travel methods have improved, the metaphorical distance between peoples has shrunk. Having cultural competency—the continuously evolving knowledge of other cultures' values, norms, traditions and customs—has become a marketable skill and sometimes

simply necessary for navigating day-to-day life.

TU has many opportunities for students, faculty and staff to increase their awareness of cultural consciousness, including diversity, inclusion and social justice.

One source is the Study Abroad and Away Office. From its location in Hawkins Hall, it opens the door to the wider world, expanding participants' perspectives on life in other places and how that coexists with their lives in the U.S.

One of those experiences occurred this past January when College of Liberal Arts professor Jason Freeman took nine students to the north of

England on a faculty-led Minimester course called Blacks in Great Britain.

The idea came when Freeman combined his love of travel with his passion for teaching.

"I was teaching a class at TU called Blacks in America," he says. "It looked at Black culture and history in the United States. The first half was essentially Blacks in Britain because the beginning of slavery in America was in the colonies, but then instead of continuing to study United States history, I wanted to explore what was happening in England at the same time."

Nearly 74% of TU students who go abroad do so under a faculty-led program, according to the Study



(Left to right) Madison Baltimore and Arthlynn Jean-Pierre are facing tour guide Anne-Marie Walker in Brixton at the African and Caribbean War Memorial located in Windrush Square. The memorial was unveiled in 2017 and is the United Kingdom's national memorial to African and Caribbean service personnel who fought in World War I and World War II.



Abroad and Away Office. Seniors preparing for the workforce made up 54% of TU students who went abroad last academic year.

Freeman and his students initially were based in Birmingham, a location chosen because Birmingham City University has one of the few Black studies departments in the country. The program included trips to Bristol, Leeds and London. Freeman partnered with Birmingham City professor Martin Glynn to teach lectures on topics like the Windrush Generation (named for the ship that brought more than 1,000 West Indians to England to help the nation rebuild after World War II), the role of sugar cane in the slave trade and the idea of cultural Blackness—who British people consider Black and how that has led to positive and negative results.

Glynn is an expert on British Black history and cultural contributions in a variety of areas. Most of the students had no grounding in the subject, so what they learned from Glynn and the tour guides on their day trips to

Liverpool, Bristol, Leeds and London was remarkable.

“They’re familiar with African American history to an extent, but Black British history is totally alien,” Freeman says. “The guides are very blunt sharing what happened. Learning about the shocking brutality brought up deep emotions. But the students were appreciative because they were learning from tour guides they really enjoyed interacting with.”

Arthlynn Jean-Pierre ’24, a sociology and anthropology major with a criminal justice concentration, had never been abroad before. Learning about the Windrush Generation was a new experience for her.

“It was refreshing to learn something that was never taught to us,” she says. “It was interesting to learn about how people of color weren’t always victims of history in a way—that they were also part of forming history as well. The tour guides made the trip 10 times more enjoyable for me. I went on the trip to learn, but meeting new people was really cool.”

Sydney Howard ’25, a political science major, enjoyed hearing about the different, often creative ways enslaved people gained freedom.

“Henry Brown [hid in a crate and shipped himself] from Virginia to Philadelphia and then went to England,” she says. “Another man used his trade skills to buy his freedom. In learning about the individualized paths people took, there was power to that for me. It gave me a new pride to be African American. There’s a lot of discourse about African Americans. But on this trip, I realized we come from resilient people that find community in times of oppression.”

Howard was surprised to learn Black people make up only about 4% of the population in England. It stuck out to her, she says, because she was used to being in majority Black spaces.

“When we went to an English football game, the people in my group were some of the only people of color who weren’t working the game or in the game,” Howard says. “Later we read an article about racism and sport that



A statue of Claudia Jones, a Trinidadian-born Civil Rights activist, by the artist Favour Jonathan and a globe created by the artist Zita Holbourne. These statues are located in the courtyard of the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, a neighborhood in London.



said how people in the audience have yelled slurs and thrown banana peels at the players. I could never see that happening at a Ravens game.”

Howard also had the opportunity to reflect on social justice issues in the U.S. and U.K. The group visited Bristol to learn about the massive Black Lives Matter protest that occurred there in 2020, when a crowd tore down a statue of Eldridge Colston, a city benefactor whose wealth came from the slave trade, and threw it in the river.

“Social justice issues like Black Lives Matter and police brutality, I tend to look at those as American issues,” Howard says. “But it opened my eyes to the fact that’s not the case at all.”

At the Black Cultural Archives in London, Howard remembers reading an old copy of a magazine with an article on Britain’s SUS (suspected person) laws. Created in 1824 and revived in the 1960s and ’70s, they allowed police to arrest anyone they deemed suspicious without the burden of proof. They were repealed in 1981.

“Their SUS laws were the equivalent of our stop and frisk laws,” she says. “Despite Black people being less than 4% of the population at the time, they were 80% of the arrests.”

Freeman’s perspective broadened along with his students’.

“I got to know the students a lot more and how they view the world,” Freeman says. “They were born in the late ’90s, early 2000s, so they have a very different experience than me who grew up in the ’80s and ’90s. Some of my knowledge about these topics that I took for granted was eye-opening for them.

“Another thing I learned, particularly in chatting with our tour guides, was how some British people see America. As an American, I have a particular view of my own country. But in many ways, [Britons] are very aware of what’s







Students like (left to right) Sydney Howard and Faith Brennan, pictured here with Jason Freeman in the background, got an in-depth look into Black British history and internalized those lessons during tours like Black Heritage Walk in Birmingham.



TU professor Jason Freeman and Birmingham City University professor Martin Glynn gave lectures on Black British history to the students.

happening here, and they have a lot of questions as to why we do things in a certain way.”

Not only has Freeman altered the content of his TU-based courses after returning to the U.S., he has made changes to their structure. His connection with Glynn has influenced him to include more interactive class activities and delve into emotions as well as facts in discussions and assignments.

“I do reflection papers in my classes now because I want people to consider their experiences with race, gender, sexuality and topics like that,” he says. “I’m trying to get more of a personal interaction when discussing as a group, which we did a lot during the trip: ‘How do you feel about this? Do you think this is problematic?’”

The study abroad experience affected the students in their own ways.

Howard internalized the resiliency she learned about and is applying it to the challenges she faces as a college student.

“It made me realize there are going to be times when things are hard. But then I recall those stories of how hard

people had to fight to get to freedom,” she says. “People have difficult paths that they have to take, so I can apply to internships and hear a couple noes.”

Jean-Pierre has slightly revised her career plans.

“Learning about English slavery laws helped me realize there’s a lot more than what meets the eye with what really happened back then,” she says. “I want to be a criminal law attorney. Before the trip I was more focused on the logistics of law, but now I want to develop the social justice side. There is a quote I heard there that really stuck with me: We’re here because you were there. I think to understand why people can be anti-immigration or anti-people of color is because they don’t understand the consequences of colonization that are playing out now.”

Blacks in Great Britain is not the first culturally focused study abroad TU has offered, and several more are planned for the spring and summer. Topics include diversity and social justice in Irish health care; the nature of ethics, social justice and critical social issues in Thailand’s education

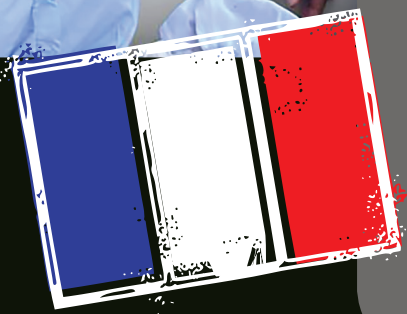
system; and social permissiveness in Amsterdam through the links between culture, difference and communication.

Freeman clearly sees the value in study abroad experiences like these.

“For the first time, for a lot of students, they are foreigners in a foreign country where they don’t know all the norms,” he says. “I think it’s an important experience because it fosters empathy, as we have refugees and people all around the world coming to the U.S., and it helped them break down their assumptions. Some aspects of American culture the students take for granted gets questioned [in other places], like, ‘Why are you doing this? Why is this okay?’ I think it gets them out of their comfort zone, which is where growth happens.” **TU**

**LEARN HOW THE STUDY ABROAD & AWAY OFFICE HELPS STUDENTS BROADEN THEIR WORLDVIEWS.**





## An American in Paris

Allison Brown '12 knows the value of her time at TU as an undergraduate, where the business administration major was a member of the Honors College.

“It set me up for success,” she says. “It was nice to be with people who had the same mindset as me. I also appreciated the faculty and learning about topics like masculinity in literature and the dialogue between Caribbean and English literature around colonialism.”

She knew studying abroad would be a key component of her international business concentration. She chose a semester-long experience at a business school outside Rouen, France. She roomed with a fellow TU exchange student in the city center and plunged into local French culture. They participated in events like a running dinner—where each portion of the meal (drinks, appetizers, entrees and dessert) was held at a different native student’s home—and found the silver lining in transportation strikes by hitching car rides to campus with classmates, making new friends on the commute.

Brown’s fellow business students came from all over the world: China, Canada and India in addition to countries all over Europe. She ran into cultural differences almost immediately. From learning

what winning at negotiation means in different cultures to receiving very honest critiques on her work from French professors, Brown’s cultural knowledge grew alongside her business acumen.

“Even something as simple as long division is different,” Brown says. “I never knew that until sitting down and doing math with somebody and seeing that they’re doing it differently on their paper—using a kind of chart—but coming up with the same answer. That’s a good analogy: Problem-solving is different in every culture.”

She returned to France after graduation, and, in a full-circle moment, she is now a recruiter for a French business school. She received French nationality in 2021 and recently purchased a home in the suburbs of Paris. Brown clearly sees how her academic and cultural education have broadened the opportunities in her life and highly recommends students participate in a study abroad experience.

“You can learn so much about yourself,” Brown says. “Living abroad has given me the perspective to see what aligns with my values and what doesn’t. No country is perfect. But I wouldn’t have that viewpoint and know there’s a different system—whether it’s for me or not—without going abroad.” ●

# CENTERING STUDENT SUCCESS

TU's career communities offer students personalized professional development.

BY MEGAN BRADSHAW | PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER WRIGHT '18

Imagine there was a centralized location staffed by motivated people who use personalized resources and strategies to help students succeed.

This place does exist. It's called a career center, and students can use it to seek help for internship searches, mock interviews and networking preparation—all activities that are proven to aid in job searches.

Among the many supports Towson University's Career Center offers are four career communities that feature focused coaching and programming by industry experts to maximize employment, experiential learning opportunities and career education for students and young alums.

"Career communities give students the specialized advising they need to ultimately be successful because what we want here at Towson is to make sure our students are able to find employment after they finish school," says Wil Preston, director of career communities. "That's the most important goal."

Each community has a dedicated career coach to work one-on-one with students for career planning and exploration and an assistant director of external relations who connects with outside employers and alums to locate and develop career opportunities that fit each student.

"We are a melting pot of transfer students, adult students, non-traditional learners, military/veteran students, international students and traditional students in their late teens," Preston says. "It's important that we have career communities

that allow for everybody to get what they need where they are."

Renee Harris, assistant director career exploration and development, assists students who are undecided in their major or may be looking to change direction. She develops programming based on her conversations with students about what they need help with.

"I see a lot of anxious students about their majors, their careers," Harris says. "I tell them, 'This is a process of getting to know who you are, what things you value, what things you're good at, what are some areas you may not be as strong in but you're willing to put in the time, effort and energy to be successful.'"

Among the many apps and platforms available to students at any time through the Career Center's website are What Can I Do With This Major? and O\*NET Online. Amen Justice-Awuzie, assistant director—liberal arts career education and a TU alum, says those benefit liberal arts majors who have employability fears.

"Those resources show you a lot of roles you probably haven't considered," Justice-Awuzie says. "With O\*NET Online, for example, you type in psychologist, and it is going to pull up so many different jobs you can have in psychology but also related careers. And then you can start clicking and exploring."

**Students most frequently** seek help with resumes and cover letters, finding an internship or job

## Student Testimonials

"I came into Towson knowing what I want to do with my major. I started taking public health classes my junior year and now have more of a passion for that. I'm a career peer adviser in the Career Center, helping with resumes and cover letters. I feel very fulfilled knowing I'm helping students expand their career options. I can go to two career communities because of my major and minor. I've met with my career coach, gone to networking events and signed up for the job shadowing program. I learned you can relate to people you never thought you could, so that was a great, viable thing I've gained from this experience."

— **Miracle Harris '24, psychology major and public health minor**

"On my tour, I enjoyed the environment on campus, and I really liked the idea of a career fair—how it was a big event every year and how each college also provides its own resources for success. I was undecided on my major and fell into recruiting. When I received an internship offer from Tesla in Austin, Texas, as a junior, (program specialist) Zach Runge was instrumental in helping me make a class schedule that allowed me to graduate on time. Marcy Lightfoot has been super helpful and supportive, particularly giving advice on negotiating pay, looking over my resume and working on interview tactics."

— **Shane Zaluski '24, communication studies major**



and preparing for interviews. Each career coach and employer relations staff member approach those requests in ways that are tailored to their communities.

Before students meet with potential employers, they typically need to work on their resumes and interview skills. Resumes can look different for each field, with nursing students needing a standard two-page document, for example. They can also be hard to build if a student doesn't have much work experience, like student-athletes who have rigid practice and game schedules in addition to their academic coursework.

Interview coaching needs can vary from specific, hypothetical scenarios frequently encountered in health care job interviews to perfecting students' elevator hiring pitches to employers, which apply in all fields.

"For students in STEM, it can be understanding what their skills are, including their soft skills," says Tanja Swain, assistant director STEM career education. "It's not just the technical skills. You are going to be working on a team. You have to communicate. You have to problem-solve. Here we have so many opportunities for students to do project-based work. I think our students have the skills to do really well in project- and team-based work environments."

**External outreach coordinators** partner with career coaches to connect students to employers. In fact, they model the networking skills students need to learn through those partnerships.

"Sheila [Tilghman, external outreach coordinator for the STEM and health and wellness communities] and I work together to bring employers on campus," says Swain. "We love doing STEM networking events where students can learn it's not that hard. It feels scary and difficult, but I really encourage people to network."

Twice a year the Career Center hosts the Mega Job and Internship Fair with more than 200 employers participating. The career communities' staff can also address specific needs by hosting major-specific boutique job fairs or pointing students to Forage, an online program that provides virtual work experience at real companies, especially if the students are unable to travel to a job or internship site. And some—particularly health care majors—have less need for on-campus recruiting since they spend most of their senior years in full-time clinical internships.

Miracle Harris '24 is a Career Center student employee and dual career community participant. She took part in events from the Liberal Arts and Health and Wellness communities.

Subi Lawal '24 participated in the STEM Career Community and worked with career coach Tanja Swain before receiving his job offer from Walmart's corporate headquarters in Arkansas.

However, the communities are not siloed. The communities' staff work together in an interdisciplinary way to serve students who may fit in more than one community.

"We can see connections between programs and then provide events and services that meet that interdisciplinary need that might be harder to do at a department level," says Sidney Pink, assistant director external relations (liberal arts and fine arts and communication).

"There might be students in the liberal arts college interested in working at a museum just the same as an art history student. So we work across our group communities in strategic ways to maximize those opportunities for all students while still serving the individual needs in each career community."

Justice-Awuzie concurs.

"It's okay to be curious about everything you see," she says. "If there's an employer coming in, don't just think, 'That employer is not related to my field or industry, so I'm not going to go talk to them.' You can see what they have because even if we have a hospital coming, for example, they need blog writers. They need website creators. Some of them need tech help. They have an HR department. They have administrative assistance."

TU's career communities' staff members are united in how invested they are in student success.

"We are very student centered," Preston says. "We're really focusing on getting students the knowledge, career readiness skills, connection and experience they need to thrive in the world of work." **TU**



## BY THE NUMBERS (from 2022–23)



**26,904**

interactions with students

**15,495**

unique students supported



**4,960**

students attended job fair and events

**108,522**

jobs and internships posted to Handshake



**93%**

employed or enrolled in education six months after graduation

**\$55,706**

average full-time annual salary for the Class of 2022



**3,826**

1:1 appointments with career educators held with

**2,349**

unique students



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

### TIGERS HELPING TIGERS

The Tiger Mentor Network connects alumni with current students who need advice or are looking to network. Alums can choose their level of commitment and areas of engagement. “Mentoring can impact students personally before their career development, and it can last for years,” says Renee Harris, assistant director career exploration and development.

[towson.edu/alummentoring](http://towson.edu/alummentoring)

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are many ways to get involved with your alma mater. Interested alums can contact the Career Center directly to recruit at career fairs or participate in mock interviews with students. Or they can contact their colleges to join deans’ advisory councils or take part in college-specific activities like case competitions or guest lectures.

### CAREER CENTER SERVICES FOR ALUMNI

TU alumni have unlimited access to the job database, Handshake, free admission to career/job fairs and access to the Career Center’s online resources. Recent alumni (up to two years post-graduation) may take advantage of Express Hours and meet with a Career Center staff member for up to three in-person career counseling or advising appointments. “I’ve met with a lot of lovely alumni, a lot of grad students, people who aren’t even currently staying in Maryland,” says Miracle Harris ’24. “It’s eye opening especially because I’m talking to someone who has already graduated who can also give me feedback and advice.”

[towson.edu/alumcareercenter](http://towson.edu/alumcareercenter)



### Student Testimonials

“I learned about the Career Center through (the student job app) Handshake. Then I went to the Mega Job and Internship Fair and learned more about what the Career Center offers. I set up a meeting with Tanja Swain (assistant director STEM career education) my junior year, and we talked about what it takes to get an internship and networking opportunities. The most valuable thing I learned was how important networking is for getting a job, and that showed when I got my job offer from the corporate headquarters of Walmart. I’m going to be a software engineer, developing next-generation products.”

— Subi Lawal '24, computer science major

“Marcy Lightfoot, my career coach, was instrumental in preparing me to land my job at 2fold Collective. Through multiple sessions, Marcy and I worked on strengthening my resume and preparing for all possible interview questions. Also, she guided me through researching various companies and my industry to understand what skills I needed and to see how their values align with my own. She helped me network during site visits at imre (a marketing agency) in Towson and NBC Universal in New York City. Building that network is essential for professional development. She truly went to great lengths in assisting me during all aspects of my job search.”

— Matthew Yankowski '22, communication studies

# GOING TO BAT FOR OTHERS

There are few things **Jennifer Skolochenko-Platt '99** cares about more than helping kids. — BY MIKE UNGER

📷 Lauren Castellana '13, '23

Jennifer Skolochenko-Platt might be the only baseball fan on Earth who never complains about the umpires. Her perspective—like theirs on the diamond—is unique. For the past dozen years, she's run UMPS CARE Charities, the official charity of Major League Baseball's marshals, the men so many fans love to hate.

Spend just a few minutes with Skolochenko-Platt '99 and your opinion on the boys in blue just might change.

"They're human beings behind the mask," she says. "Sports officials in general are by nature giving people. You start out in youth sports, you're not there for the money. You want to give back to your community, you want to give back to the game and the kids. They're a lot of different personalities, but at their core they're really great people who want to help."

The same can be said of Skolochenko-Platt. She's dedicated her working life to community relations, first in baseball and then in nonprofits. Since taking over as UMPS CARE's executive director in 2012, she's elevated it to new heights. Last year, umpires and volunteers put in 4,773 volunteer hours in support of several of the organization's programs,

including Blue for Kids, for which they visit children in the hospital.

"UMPS CARE is always one of my favorite events to provide for patients and families just because it's so well run," says Peyton Pike, special programs and arts and health coordinator for Johns Hopkins Children's Center in Baltimore. "Jenn does an excellent job in preparing the umps for what to expect. They hit the mark every single time."

Much of that credit, says former umpire Jim Reynolds, should go to Skolochenko-Platt.

"There is a direct correlation between her hire and our charity being able to raise more money and make more of an impact," says Reynolds, who retired in 2022 after 24 seasons on the field and now works for the Commissioner's Office as a supervisor of umpires. "She's outgoing, she cares, she connects with people. Her presence in this organization is incalculable to us."

**Skolochenko-Platt** was an athletic kid growing up. She played softball and volleyball, was a cheerleader and a member of the swim team. Her family lived in Clinton, Maryland, then moved to nearby Crofton, meaning the Skolochenkos were Orioles fans.

Her first two years at TU were spent in ROTC, and though she loved the experience, after a heart-to-heart conversation with her dad she decided against a career in the military. Instead, she double majored in communication and sports studies.

"I never really thought much about working in the sports industry until I realized that it was a huge business and there were a lot of different opportunities," she says.

Landing an internship was the next logical step, and fate intervened. Bill Stetka '77, now a member of TU's Alumni Board, was the Orioles' assistant director of public relations at the time, and he was looking for some help. He called the then-undergraduate Skolochenko-Platt and offered her a position for the spring.

"It was my internship with the Orioles where I really got a vast view of all the different capacities that were in the sports business," she says. "I thought I wanted to do public relations until I got into it and realized sports public relations is so different than public relations in other industries. But it opened my eyes to community relations and outreach, which is where I discovered my passion."



Skolo, as Stetka, now director of Orioles alumni and the team historian, still calls her, fit in immediately.

"She was one of the best interns we ever had," he says. "Jenn stands out not because she's working in baseball now but because she cares passionately about her work and the people she helps. She asks questions, she had a good feel for people. She has that 'it' factor."

After earning a master's degree in sports administration from St. Thomas University in Miami, Skolochenko-Platt worked in community relations for MLB's Marlins for two years.

She moved back to Maryland and, following a stint at Six Flags, joined the community relations department of the Washington Nationals, a franchise that had just relocated from Montreal.

A team of about 40 people were working in double-wide trailers in the parking lot of Washington's RFK Stadium. They used port-a-potties for bathrooms.

"It was a unique experience," she recalls. "A lot of late nights and early mornings. A lot of long hours. But to be there on Opening Day and watch the whole thing unfold and know that you played a part, it was incredibly rewarding."

As a community outreach coordinator for the Nats, she helped establish a partnership with Most Valuable Kids, a nonprofit that distributed unused sporting and cultural event tickets to underserved youth and active-duty military and their dependents. She attended some of the games with the children and describes the experience as magical.

One of the charities Most Valuable Kids worked with was UMPS CARE. Its Blue Crew Tickets program brings children battling chronic illness, kids in foster care, kids in youth baseball and softball programs and military families to Major League ballparks for VIP experiences that can include trips to the dugout and the umpires' locker room. To date more than 9,000 children have benefitted.

By 2012, Skolochenko-Platt and her husband, Jimmy (an ESPN director) had settled in Edgewater, Maryland, where they still live with their four children. When UMPS CARE asked her to become its executive director, she felt the timing was right.

**UMPS CARE** was founded in 2006 by a group of Major League umpires who, as the organization's clever creed says, decided that "helping people is an easy call."

"They had reached the top of their game and felt very grateful for the opportunities that were given to them and their families," Skolochenko-Platt says. "Umpires live all over the country, some in Canada,

some in Puerto Rico, the Dominican, Venezuela. But the one thing that they have in common is that they work in the same Major League cities. So they wanted to give back to those cities."

Today, nearly all the 76 active Major League umpires are involved in UMPS CARE in one way or another. The All-Star College Scholarship program has awarded more than \$350,000 in scholarships to young people who were adopted at or after the age of 13 whose parents may not have had an opportunity to save enough for college. The Official Leadership Program teaches social and emotional learning skills

among them is the ability to make choices. That's one reason why umpires bring Build-A-Bears—essentially customizable stuffed animals—when they make their 15 to 17 annual visits to children's hospitals around the country. They've delivered 21,265 of them since 2006.

"Their care team is making their choices, their parents are making their choices," Skolochenko-Platt says. "So the ability for them to choose a stuffed animal, to choose the outfit is something that's really empowering to them."

Umpires are not as recognizable, nor as beloved,

as the players they share the field with, and thus, their impact on the hospitalized kids they visit is different. But when they arrive bearing gifts (sometimes with a team mascot, like the Oriole Bird, in tow) children quickly become enamored with them. Sometimes an umpire will tell a kid to look for them on TV that night during the game, and they'll tip their cap as a signal to them.

"We have the kids that are real baseball fans who think it's really cool when we say, 'These are the umpires that you're going to see at the Orioles game tonight,'" Pike says. "But even if they don't, when kids are in the

hospital, there's so many hard things that happen. To have a fun and happy event like UMPS CARE [put on], it just changes the whole trajectory of the day."

For most baseball fans, Skolochenko-Platt is as anonymous as the ump working second base during a Pirates-Brewers game on a muggy Tuesday night in August. She's fine with that; her reward comes from the gratitude she receives from the umpires she serves, from the young men and women who have had their college dreams funded by an UMPS CARE scholarship, from the smile on the face of a sick kid in the hospital whose day has been made a little brighter by a visit from UMPS CARE.

"I was approached by the child life specialist at a hospital during one visit, and she said, 'This child has been practicing for you. They're so excited to see you,'" she says. "We walked into the room and the child that was there was blind and hard of hearing. An adolescent, 13 or 14. He had been practicing singing 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame' all day. I stood there and listened to this child sing the best that he could—it was beautiful. It was a memory that will sit with me forever." **TU**



Left to right – MLB umpires in black shirts: CB Bucknor, Fieldin Culbreth (retired), D.J. Reyburn and Ramon De Jesus. (Those wearing blue shirts are volunteers.) Photo courtesy of Cindy Loo

to young umpires while providing mentorship and a direct line to employment to teens in under-resourced communities.

"There is a huge crisis looming in youth sports because of the shortage of youth officials. My kids play youth sports, so I am seeing that firsthand," Skolochenko-Platt says. Along with playing, one of her sons is enrolled in a soccer refereeing course, while another has dreams of becoming an ump. "The program is aimed at helping recruit and train the next generation of umpires and coupling it with leadership skills. It addresses a lot of the challenges that officials in all sports are facing. The treatment of officials, the negativity, the lack of respect. There's a big problem there, and we're working to be part of the solution."

Skolochenko-Platt leads a full-time staff of three and serves as a sort of utility player for the organization.

"She does everything from stuffing envelopes to donor relations, but her strength is the connections she makes with our people and our donors," Reynolds says. "She can speak passionately about our initiatives and what we're trying to do."

Blue for Kids is UMPS CARE's flagship program. Hospitalized children are robbed of many freedoms;

# GOING FOR GOLD

MARTY HENDRICK '80 AND ABBAS KARIMI HAVE FORMED A FAMILIAL BOND. NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT FOR THE COACH AND SWIMMER IS TO MAKE HISTORY.

BY MIKE UNGER • PHOTOS BY MADISON YELLE

Marty Hendrick is the only person at the Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Center doing laps—on foot. He's on the deck of the Olympic-sized pool clutching a stopwatch walking back and forth from one end to the other, his focus intently on the man in the lane closest to him.

"Little quicker on this one Abbas," he says as he moves at a noticeably brisk pace, shadowing the swimmer, who completes a 50-meter freestyle lap in less than 40 seconds.

"Your head position is awesome," he proclaims. "Love it! Two more like that and I'll be ecstatic."

Hendrick '80 has been swimming and coaching at this world-class facility in Florida for decades. He's won U.S. Masters Swimming (a network of more than 1,200 clubs and workout groups for serious amateurs over the age of 18) championships as a participant and has led others to titles during his career, but he's never coached an athlete like Abbas Karimi.

The 27-year-old glides through the water with an outwardly seeming effortlessness. His legs kick powerfully yet produce little splash. Every few seconds his head emerges for a quick breath, then smoothly rotates back into the water. When he reaches the end of

the pool, he launches into a flip turn with the ease of a seal.

It's beautiful to watch. Like all great athletes, Karimi makes the incredibly difficult look routine, which is why it can take a moment for an onlooker to notice.

Abbas Karimi has no arms.

Take a moment and let that sink in. He's swimming—incredibly fast, lap after lap for an hour—with no arms. Try to imagine yourself in the water simply attempting to stay afloat, let alone swimming competitively, while using only your legs and your core strength.

"I've been swimming all my life, and I try to do what he does," says Hendrick, 65. "I put my arms to my side. I'll put fins on because I can't do it without them. And after going 25 yards, I'm done. And he just does it."

He does it better than just about any other para swimmer of his kind in the world. But it's those two little words—just about—that fuel the competitive fire in both men, who have formed a bond far stronger than coach-protégé. What was supposed to be a two-week training session in 2020 has turned into a tight-knit friendship that has enriched both their lives. They're roommates now, and they share a singular focus; every second they spend at the pool

they train with an eye toward August's Paralympic Games in Paris.

Karimi, an Afghan by birth, a refugee by circumstance and now an American by choice, was on the U.S. team that won the gold medal in the medley relay at the 2022 World Para Swimming Championships in Portugal, and he took home two individual bronzes at the 2023 Parapan American Games in Santiago, Chile.

But his ultimate goal is to win Paralympic gold, and Hendrick has dedicated his life to helping him achieve it.

"I believe that God took my arms, but instead he gave me this gift that I can be somebody in this world," says Karimi, who was born without his upper limbs. "I believe that my story can give some people motivation and inspiration. And I believe if we give someone encouragement, it can save someone's life. And if I can do that, why not?"

**MARTY HENDRICK COULD** walk before he could swim, but it was close. He first got in a pool around age 5, and he's rarely left since. The fourth of five children, he grew up in Camp Springs, Maryland, before attending high school in

Montgomery County. It was in Gaithersburg that he first realized his aptitude in the water.

"When we moved, all of a sudden I was the fastest swimmer in my age group, and that was fun," he says. "After my junior year we had an intrasquad summer league meet. I headed one of the squads, and the head coach, who was a collegiate swimmer, was the head of the other. So I raced him and I kept with him. He said, 'Where'd that come from?' I'm like, 'Well, I like to race.'"

Hendrick swam for four years at TU, where he majored in business administration. During the summers he returned to his swim club as a coach, and a lifelong passion for the vocation was born.

After graduating, he went to work for corporations, first for giants like Exxon and Wang, then for smaller firms.

"My business classes were great," he says. "I remember I was about 26 and I was doing a project and I called my parents and told them that I was actually using skill sets and methodology that I learned [at TU]."

While his jobs paid the bills, swimming nourished his soul. Throughout his 24 years in business,





he always swam, either for recreation or as an amateur competitor.

"Days when work is stressful, most people will go hit the bar afterwards and have a martini. And there were days that I would have liked two martinis," he says. "But I realized swimming was my [outlet] after a stressful day. In the corporate world there's a lot of stress. And swimming was my martini."

At age 40 he won the U.S. Masters 400-meter individual medley (IM) national championship, but at that point, swimming was just a pastime, not a profession. That changed in 2002 when the company he worked for as a vice president was sold. A two-year non-compete clause was part of the deal, so he decided to embark of a year of volunteerism. He began working swim meets at the aquatic center in his adopted hometown of Fort Lauderdale, then started filling in as a coach. He was hooked, and when a full-time position opened in 2005, he was convinced to take it.

The U.S. Masters Swimming club he's coached for two decades, Swim Fort Lauderdale, is comprised of more than 250 adult swimmers. Although just 20% or so of those swim competitively, the club has won seven national championships since Hendrick has been involved. His coaching philosophy is as relevant to those who swim for fitness and fun as it is for those who are all about winning.

"Swimming is one of the only sports you can do cradle to grave," Hendrick says. "There are so many benefits, not only from the physical aspect but for mental health and overcoming obstacles and challenges in life. It's about enjoying a healthy life through swimming and setting goals."

After Covid hit in spring 2020, the outdoor community pools in Fort Lauderdale were some of the first in the country to reopen. Hendrick got a call from his friend, Linda Larson, a member of Swim Fort Lauderdale who also spent time in her native Oregon. Abbas Karimi was a swimmer at her brother's club in Portland, and he was looking for a new coach and place to train.

“

SWIMMING IS ONE  
OF THE ONLY  
SPORTS YOU CAN DO  
CRADLE TO GRAVE.

—MARTY HENDRICK

”





Hendrick, who like most everyone else at the time was suffering through a sort of pandemic malaise, was hesitant at first. Retirement was the main thing on his mind, but Larson convinced him to work with Karimi for two weeks.

"I think Marty needed something right then because of Covid. This gave him an opportunity to coach someone different," she says. "Marty is a great communicator. He has that personality that people gravitate to. It's easy for him to talk to anybody, and people respect him."

Two weeks. That's the commitment Hendrick thought he was making. When he says that out loud four years later, he laughs.

**KICKBOXING WAS ABBAS** Karimi's first sport, which makes sense on many levels. Born in Kabul, Afghanistan, he faced relentless bullying for most of his young life. He liked the physicality—and practicality—of martial arts. Bruce Lee was a hero.

When he was about 10 years old, he jumped fully clothed into a river with some friends. A new feeling of freedom washed over him. When one of his brothers built a swimming pool as a business, Karimi dove into the sport. He began training with a coach four or five times a week.

"I always wanted to face my fears," he says. "It was not natural. It was something that I had to do to save

myself, to find out who I am. I wanted to face that darkness that is inside me or scares me."

Karimi says he was an angry boy before he started swimming. But being in the water offered him a respite from the cruelty and prejudices of his peers and countrymen.

"Every time I swim, it makes me feel calmed down. And it's refreshing. It feels like I'm reborn every time."

As Karimi became a successful para swimmer and his prominence rose, he felt less safe living under Taliban rule, so in 2013, he dropped out of school at the age of 16 and fled the country. After a harrowing trip through Iran, he wound up in Turkey, where he spent the next four years at refugee camps.

"It was very challenging. There was a lot of suffering and struggling,"

he says. "But at the same time, I was very thankful of God that at least I have the camp that feeds me and gives me a room."

Karimi, a naturally affable person, was lonely, but perhaps even worse, he could not train at the level he wanted. He would take buses from the camps to a pool and work with Turkish coaches, but he yearned for more. He began posting videos of himself swimming on social media, and they caught the eye of an American named Mike Ives.

After a lengthy and complicated process, Ives brought Karimi to Oregon, where he helped him learn, among other things, to drive. Karimi can accomplish nearly any task using his feet. He deftly grabs a fork between his toes and feeds himself with ease. In the pool, he hoists his leg high over his head onto the deck and propels himself out. His flexibility is astounding.

In 2017, Ives and Karimi went to Mexico City for the World Para Swimming Championships, where he won a silver medal in the S5 50-meter butterfly for the refugee team. (Para-athletic butterflyers with physical disabilities are classified by their functional disability, ranging from S1, the most impaired, to S10, the least impaired, according to World ParaSwimming.)

Karimi calls Ives his American father, which made his decision to leave Portland for Fort Lauderdale in 2020 that much more difficult. But he and Hendrick hit it off immediately.

"He is always very positive and very helpful, very supportive," Karimi says of Hendrick. "After a week, he told me that he feels like he knows me for many, many years. And then he said, 'You can stay here if you want.' Of course, he's a coach on the deck and in the swimming pool. But at home, we're buddies. We watch movies together, all those kind of things. He's the nicest person that I ever met."

Their first major competition together was the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo (held in 2021). Karimi was the flag-bearer for the refugee team during the opening ceremonies. In the Paralympics, the refugee team leads the parade of nations, so Karimi led all athletes into the stadium. He competed in the 50-meter butterfly S5 and qualified for the final, in which he



Marty Hendrick '80 started coaching swimming during the summers while he was a student-athlete at TU.

finished eighth. It was a remarkable achievement, but it left both Karimi and Hendrick thirsting for more.

There's almost nothing Karimi thinks that he cannot do.

"I don't like to make my disability an excuse because if I did, I would not be successful. I want to be the best," says Karimi, who is publishing an autobiography titled "The Gift" this year. "I like to show the world that if a

family is about to have a disabled child, they have to be very excited because that child could be very special. We may be missing some part of our body, but we can be part of society. We can be part of the country. We can be part of the world and make the world a better place."

**IT'S EARLY FEBRUARY,** Fort Lauderdale's busiest time for tourism.

If it weren't for the constant hum of cars on Florida's famed A1A, you might be able to hear the Atlantic Ocean's waves from the aquatic center, which sits in the shadow of the International Swimming Hall of Fame right across the street from the beach. While tourists are lathering up for another day of lounging like lizards in the sun, no one at the pool is on vacation.

Karimi jumps feet first into the water at 8 a.m., by which time Hendrick has already been on deck coaching others for three hours. Fatigue, if there is any, doesn't show on his tan, white-bearded face. His attitude is lively, his body language positive, and his laugh frequent. This Friday is the first day of a new training regimen that he hopes will have Karimi in peak form for the U.S. Paralympic Trials in June.

"One of the things we're working on is his breathing," Hendrick says as he watches Karimi. "We don't want the kick to stop. In able-bodied swimmers the constant movement is coming from the arms. His constant movement is his legs, so I should be able to turn away and not hear any difference of the cadence."

In the lane next to him, 19-year-old Anastasia Pagonis methodically swims freestyle laps. When she approaches the end of the pool, her mother, Stacey, uses what looks like a boom mic to gently tap her on the head, alerting Anastasia to execute a flip turn. Pagonis, who won a freestyle gold medal at the Tokyo Paralympics, is blind. She and Karimi have formed a friendship, and during a brief break he asks her how practice is going.

"Hard," she says. "Very hard."

"But you're a legend," he replies.

She smiles, and both submerge themselves for yet another lap.

"Abbas is great at motivating other athletes, and Marty just wants to see people live their life like they're capable of," Stacey says, as she watches them practice. "They just both have such incredible hearts."

After the workout ends, Karimi hits the shower while Hendrick heats up his breakfast. Egg and spinach bites are on the menu today. Eating healthy and packing in calories are important because there's always another training session on the horizon, always another barrier to break.

After all, Paris awaits. **TU**

# #TU proud



## 📷 Game. Set. Match.

Patrick Smith '09 sees things in ways that few others can. The photojournalist (and former Towerlight photographer) travels the world shooting athletes and the games they play for Getty Images. Each year, photojournalists enter their favorite images and portfolios into the most prestigious photojournalism competitions in the globe hoping to be recognized. This year, he was honored as the Sports Photographer of the Year by Pictures of the Year International and NPPA Best of Photojournalism, respectively. This is the second time he won the POYI honor and third time being named for NPPA since he started his career after majoring in communication at TU. Among his photos was this shot from Wimbledon in England. "With this image I was given freedom to find unique angles of the tournament that no one had ever seen before. Using light and shadows I was able to frame this compelling image which highlighted my portfolio."



MY TOWN

# Sophie Lesage '17 Paris

**FAVORITE MUSEUM**

Musee D'Orsay

**PLACE TO EAT**

Pink Mamma

**HIDDEN GEM**

Palais Royal Gardens

**TOURIST ATTRACTION**

Boat ride on the Seine

**BOOK/MOVIE/PLAY SET IN YOUR TOWN**

"Ratatouille"

The City of Light will be heavy with traffic and Olympic medal expectations this summer. As the host of the XXXIII Games, Paris will welcome hundreds of thousands of people to its avenues and arrondissements—or neighborhoods—starting July 26 through Aug. 11.

"Many monuments are being renovated, and there is a lot of construction going on," says Sophie Lesage '17. "Even if most people are excited about the Olympics, a part of the population is very worried about the impact the event is going to have on traffic and how crowded Paris is going to be. The Olympics are also having a huge impact on the price of housing and hotels."

The former TU tennis player has plans to attend the Games...as a spectator.

"I bought about 20 tickets," she says. "I am planning on going to the track & field, equestrian, tennis, skateboarding, table tennis, boxing and golf competitions. I also got a couple of tickets for the Paralympic Games."

The Paris native came to the United States to attend TU on an athletic scholarship and earned a bachelor's degree in marketing. She discovered sports marketing at TU and still uses the skills she

"It is very chic and has a very rich history. I love the Saint-Germain-de-Prés area as well as walking around the Jardin du Luxembourg."

learned then in her job as sponsorship sales manager with **Paris-Saint Germain**. The club, which fields professional men's and women's soccer teams as well as a handball team, will likely have players representing France, and the soccer stadium, **Parc des Princes**, will host several games.

Lesage says most everything is still open, despite the construction.

She likes to spend time in the 6th arrondissement, an area special to her as the location of her graduate studies.

"It is very chic and has a very rich history," Lesage says. "I love the Saint-Germain-de-Prés area as well as walking around the **Jardin du Luxembourg**."

When Lesage hosts visitors, she hits Paris' highlights.

"I try to take them to all the famous monuments like the **Eiffel Tower** and the **Arc de Triomphe**,"

she says. "**Versailles Palace**, which is outside Paris, is also a very cool experience. And a great way to see Paris from a different angle is to take a boat ride on the **Seine**."

For a night out, Lesage recommends the **Moulin Rouge**, in the Montmartre neighborhood and the nearby Italian restaurant **Pink Mamma** in the Pigalle quarter. Paris has a wide variety of family-friendly activities too.

"**The Jardin d'Acclimation** is a very cool place for children but also for the adults who are with them," Lesage says. "It's a cute theme park, next to the **Bois de Boulogne**. We also have **Disneyland** in Paris, and many museums such as the **Musee d'Orsay** organize activities for kids."

Because why should the adults have all the fun and Games?





# Alumni News



## Save the Date: Homecoming Week

- 10/17 Distinguished Alumni & Deans' Recognition Awards
- 10/18 50th Reunion Luncheon
- 10/18 Tiger Athletics Hall of Fame
- 10/19 Homecoming



## Upcoming Events

- 5/22–24 Commencement Volunteering
- 6/12–20 Amalfi Coast Trip
- 8/3 First Fruits Farm Volunteering
- 8/17 Alumni Crab Feast
- 8/31 TU Football at Cincinnati

View more, including several alumni alliance events, at [alumni.towson.edu/events](http://alumni.towson.edu/events).



## Alumni-Owned Small Business Directory

Are you an alum who owns a small business? Visit [alumni.towson.edu/mysmallbiz](http://alumni.towson.edu/mysmallbiz) to include your company in our directory created just for Tigers.



## Postcards with a Purpose

For the seventh year in a row, alumni have enthusiastically welcomed accepted students through our From One Tiger to Another program, a project run in partnership between the offices of Alumni Relations and Admissions. In 2024, 275 alumni wrote more than 2,000 postcards to potential Tigers around the country—congratulating students on their acceptance, offering words of encouragement and sharing their own TU experiences. Often alumni got creative, adding stickers, artwork and other special touches to make the postcards truly personalized. The popularity of the program has grown exponentially since 2020, and though there are new participants each year, the vast majority of volunteers have participated multiple times. A few alumni, including Amanda Critelli '09, Stephanie LaMonica '05 and Melissa Luckman '05, have taken part an astonishing seven years in a row. We are grateful to all the Tigers who have generously contributed to this program over the years.

## 2024 Top Tigers in Their 20s Award Recipients

The program recognizes young alumni for accomplishments in their careers, within their communities or at TU.

- Faith Borrás '22
- Cody Boteler '17
- Ayana Bowman '17
- Mi'Kayla Britt '21
- Kelly Coffey '17
- Danielle Costabile '18, '21
- Craig Farmer '18
- Courtney Ferguson '21
- Nicholas Fioravante '17
- Emily Goodman '16
- Allison Guerra '17
- Alexis Bell Johnson '18
- Jessica Josey '16
- Elena Kalodner-Martin '17
- Lucienne Karszen '23
- Ian Lazarenko '20
- Jeffrey Martindale '16
- Joshua Norris '16
- India Richey '19
- Nicolo Russolillo '19
- Timothy Sciannella '22
- Jasmine Thomas '19
- Lea Triantafillou '20
- Sherwen Paul Triguero '19
- Seon Tromble '22

## Getting to Know TU's 15th President

Alumni have had several opportunities to meet President Mark R. Ginsberg at a number of special welcome events throughout the winter and spring. The receptions have taken place across seven Maryland counties, as well as in Baltimore City and Washington, D.C. The events have not only offered a unique chance for Tigers to get to know TU's new president and learn about his vision for the university's future but also allowed alumni to ask questions and offer feedback while the president continues his listening tour.





**TU NIGHT WITH THE CAPITALS:** On Feb. 21, Tigers met at City Tap House for a happy hour reception before watching the Washington Capitals defeat the New Jersey Devils 6-2 at Capital One Arena.

1. (Bottom row) Dario DiBattista, Eric Carter, Yesim Karaman '11, Amanda Allen '14, Matt Death '06 and Margaret Paulson '11; (Top row) Carly Mannava '93
2. Terri Cohee '02, '06; Brian Cohee '04, '07; Ashok Mannava and Carly Mannava '93
3. Sean Hollister, Celina Minto, Keith Hollister '16 and Amy Hollister '16
4. Janice Hartlieb '95 and Ryan Hartlieb

**VOLUNTEERING AT THE MARYLAND FOOD BANK:**

For our quarterly service project last winter, alumni spent the afternoon sorting and packaging donated items at the Maryland Food Bank Feb. 3.

1. The whole group poses together after a job well done.
2. Nicole Francese '19
3. Michael Massimini '08, Nadia Egbunine, Tatiana Egbunine and Julie Dickerson '01
4. Stephanie Johnson '95



1



2



3



4



1



2



3



4

**CALIFORNIA:** The TU Alumni Association traveled to California to host several events Feb. 22–25. The trip included a reception at Karl Strauss Brewing Company in San Diego Thursday, a crab feast at The Penmar in Venice Saturday, brunch and a tour of the Museum of African American Art in Los Angeles Sunday and a dinner with alumni working in the entertainment industry at Tony P's Dockside Grill in Marina del Rey Sunday evening.

1. More than 30 alumni and friends were treated to a tour at the MAAA guided by renowned African American art specialist Eric Hanks '79 (Los Angeles).
2. Luanne Arangio-Law '76, Helene Venegas '94, Ken Venegas and Zoe Venegas at Karla Strauss Brewing (San Diego)
3. Andre Owens and Nicole Rivera Farmarco '92, '95 at Tony P's (Marina del Rey)
4. Todd Steinberg '02, Lori Armstrong, Edna Primrose '84, Erandi Tillakaradne and Jonas Jacobson '90 at The Penmar (Venice)

**CRAB FEASTS AND O'S SPRING TRAINING:** On March 22 and 23, the TU Alumni Association continued a favorite spring tradition, hosting crab feasts and O's games at Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota, Florida. Although Friday's game was canceled due to bad weather, the O's secured a 3-2 win against the Toronto Blue Jays Saturday, with President Ginsberg throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

1. President Ginsberg and O's Executive Vice President and General Manager Mike Elias
2. Joseph Wesolowski '70 and Cynthia Stewart '08
3. We loved meeting O's fans of all ages.
4. Guests enjoy steamed crabs and a gorgeous day.

# Class Notes

## SEND US YOUR NEWS!

We'd like to hear about your personal and professional lives.

## SEND MAIL TO:

Alumni Relations, Towson University,  
8000 York Rd. Towson, MD 21252-0001

## EMAIL:

alumni@towson.edu


## WEB:


alumni.towson.edu/classnotes

 **Tiger Connect:**  
alumni.towson.edu

 **Facebook:**  
Towson University Alumni Association

 **Twitter:**  
@towsonualumni

 **Instagram:**  
@towsonalum

 **Tag your posts:**  
#TowsonUAlum

## 1960s

### CAROL PARKER '66

joined Towson alums for a volunteer day at First Fruits Farm in Freeland, Maryland. First Fruits Farm is a nonprofit organization that distributes food to food insecure people. Parker and fellow volunteers bagged potatoes.

### JOSEPH BOYLE '68

published "Famous for inventing Lies' Pennsylvania Runaways, 1784-1790."

## 1970s

### WILLIAM OWINGS '73

retired June 1, 2023, after 50 years in education. Owings worked for 26 years in P-12 education holding roles from English teacher to superintendent



of schools, and 24 years in higher education. Owings received Old Dominion University's Tonelson Award, the highest faculty recognition for research, teaching and service. Owings also received the National Education Finance Academy's R. Craig Wood Lifetime Achievement Award. Owings and wife, Leslie Kaplan, are finishing their 18th education textbook/academic book.

### WILLIAM MACCREHAN '79

was recently inducted into the NIST Gallery of Distinguished Alumni. MacCrehan's induction citation reads: "For the research, development, and application of innovative analytical measurement

approaches addressing a wide range of important national challenges, including those in the environmental, clinical/medical, oceanographic, water processing, forensic and homeland security domains."

## 1980s

### SCOTT RUSSELL '81

retired after 20 years with Loudoun County Public Schools as a teacher of business electives. Russell is pursuing a career as a fly-fishing guide in Virginia.

### BILL HORTEN '82

joined the Army Historical Foundation and is the special events manager for the newly opened National Museum of the United States Army in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Horton and his canine companion, Tilly, currently reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

### JILL GREENLEIGH '89

published "Go-Go Speaks: The Heartbeat of a Culture" about D.C.'s homegrown music, which became the official music of Washington, D.C. in 2020. She has spent more than 35 years in the music industry as a journalist, in PR and as a band manager. She is also the editor of the newly released children's book "Safety Cinnamon Saves a Friend" by Davey Shark about the dangers of children and lead poisoning.

## 1990s

### STEPHEN ROBERT

**MILLER '91** released "Over the Seawall: Tsunamis, Cyclones, Drought, and

the Delusion of Controlling Nature." The book tells the stories behind maladaptation: climate solutions that tragically backfire. From seawalls in coastal Japan to the reengineered waters in the Ganges River Delta,



Miller traces the histories of engineering marvels that were once deemed too smart and too big to fail. Miller is an author and journalist whose reporting and essays on climate change, conservation and agriculture have appeared in National Geographic, The Washington Post, The New Republic and more.

### SUSAN (DOBBS)

**O'BRIEN '92** is now director of state communications for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. She is managing PR firms in state capitals across the country working on legislation to end the sale of flavored tobacco products and reduce smoking rates. When not working in Washington, D.C., she lives in Anne Arundel County and is enjoying her life as a new empty nester and volunteering with Annapolis nonprofits.

### KEITH L. EWANCIO '94,

**'07** was the recipient of the CCBC Alumni Association's President's Award for 2023. The CCBC Alumni Association sponsors the annual award that recognizes outstanding service and commitment to the CCBC Alumni Association and to the Community



Jacob Webster, pictured, took these photos of Lori Harvey, upper left, and Doja Cat.

## JACOB WEBSTER '20

### New Perspectives

Freelance photographer and creative director Jacob Webster always knew he wanted to pursue a career in the visual arts. Specializing in the conceptualization and fulfillment of beauty and fashion-centric photography, Webster began his photography journey in 2014 when he founded JPW Photo LLC.

Growing up in Silver Spring, Maryland, Webster frequently collaborated with friends who were makeup artists, hair stylists and models to produce photo projects, most notably his recreations of TV shows, cartoons and movies like “The Rugrats,” “The Proud Family” and “Don’t Look Under the Bed.” Many of these went viral on Instagram.

After graduating from TU, Webster moved to Los Angeles, where his work slowly began to become recognized by musicians, artists and actors. Celebrities like Lori Harvey, Doja Cat, SZA and Michael B. Jordan have been photographed by Webster, and his shots have been featured in publications including Harper’s Bazaar, Vogue, Essence, BET and NBC.

His dynamic work has garnered significant recognition, most recently by Forbes as one of its 30 Under 30 in Art & Style.

Webster, 25, credits his TU Marketing 101 class and photography work at TU for some of his success. After creating

a mock business proposal, he began to visualize where his craft could take him. He advertised his services for graduation photos and after receiving 60 requests in one month, he knew he could turn his passion into a career.

“At TU I would do shoots in Tubman House and all across campus,” he says. “Anywhere I was, I was being resourceful and consistent, and I wasn’t afraid to fail.”

In L.A., Webster felt prepared to take on the real world largely because of his experience at TU, where he was in the Theta Omicron chapter of the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity.

“The community was so graceful and supportive, and I always received great feedback,” he says. “They want to prepare you for the real world.”

Webster’s goal is to continue to evolve and eventually expand his business to include a variety of creative mediums, including behind-the-scenes footage, interviews with photography subjects and more.

Looking toward the future, Webster is most excited about the opportunity for reinvention. “You can do anything and be anything in this lifetime,” he says. “I think it’s exciting to know that I can reintroduce myself to the world at any moment.”

College of Baltimore County. The award is one of the college's highest volunteer honors, and is bestowed to one CCBC alumnus annually who demonstrates outstanding volunteer service and community outreach on behalf of CCBC, through contributions of a significant amount of time, talent and resources.

**KERRIE NEAL '95** received a gift that will stand the test of time: a Towson State University class ring. Her husband, Michael Neal, is living on borrowed time after being diagnosed with atypical multiple myeloma in 2012 and he's working to fill Kerrie's bucket list. Understanding Kerrie's love for TSU, Michael wanted to get her something that represents her hard work and something she will



treasure forever. Balfour no longer makes Towson State rings, so Michael overcame this challenge by coordinating with their leaders and several departments at TU.

**DOUGLAS SENTZ JR. '95** recently published his first book of fiction, "Evolution #5-Book 1: Evan and Lily." It's available in paperback or for Kindle. The title characters believe they are destined for one another but are pulled apart by a nefarious corporation.

**MATTHEW WITENSTEIN '96** received tenure and promotion to associate professor at the University of Dayton, where he works in the Department of

Educational Administration in the School of Education and Health Sciences. He publishes regularly about higher education in the areas of comparative and international education, global citizenship education and sustainable development and immigrant education. His upcoming co-authored textbook with Bloomsbury Publishing entitled "Comparative and international education: The fundamentals" is anticipated to publish in late 2024.

**TRACY FINK '97** was appointed vice president of the Institute Conference Center and Operations by The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research. With more than 20 years of experience in strategic event management, Fink brings a wealth of expertise to her new role. Fink is an experienced marketing, sales and event leader known for her strategic leadership and dynamic approach to event management. Her track record includes planning corporate and social events with guest counts exceeding 1,000.

## 2000s

**CHRIS AUGSBURGER '00** has been named director of public affairs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). He will lead an enterprise of more than 200 communication professionals to help engage with communities, industry partners and other military and interagency stakeholders.

**JESSICA SCHIELE '03** was included on the Shreveport

Times People to Watch in Business for 2024. The annual lists were created in 2021 as an effort to highlight individuals who strive all year to make Shreveport-Bossier a better place while looking toward the future. Schiele is the executive director of Cohab and has been with it since it launched in 2010. Before Cohab, Schiele worked in broadcast journalism as a news producer in Baltimore at the Hearst-Argyle and served as a technology specialist for the AP.

**DORAY (SITKO) LIVELY '05** was promoted to director of project management at Berry Consultants. She was married in June 2023 in Warren, Vermont, to Jason Lively. They reside in Austin, Texas.

**STEPHEN R. CATANZARO '08** advises and represents clients in real estate and

business litigation matters, as well as a broad range of



other commercial disputes, at Day Pitney LLP. His real estate litigation practice includes commercial real estate contract and lease disputes, prerogative writ matters and zoning appeals, construction litigation, easement disputes and commercial foreclosures. Catanzaro also represents companies in class action defense, private employers in employment matters, creditors in bankruptcy actions and executives in all aspects of marriage dissolution. Catanzaro handles cases in both state and federal courts in New Jersey and New York.

**MARVIN DOUGLAS '08, '11** graduated from Hutch, a digital services incubator

in Baltimore that strengthens minority and women entrepreneurs. Douglas' company, Triton Technology, is a digital services company located in Baltimore delivering cloud, security, agile project management and automation services to government health care agencies and private sector.

## 2010s

**MATTHEW BOHLE '10** was named co-chair of Rifkin Weiner Livingston's government relations division. It's a legal and government relations firm based in Annapolis, Bethesda and Baltimore.

**KAITLYN LIKAS '10** and **COLLEEN KENNY '10** were honored in New York City as part of Irish Echo's 40 under 40. The event is "a celebration of Irish and

“During my childhood... I remember being so excited when the weather segment would come on. I dreamed that one day that could be me. After studying electronic media & film with a minor in meteorology at Towson, I was able to make those dreams a reality.”

**GUY BROWN '15**

# In Memoriam

## Alumni

**Ruth (Maleson) Levie '42**  
Feb. 23, 2024

**Sara E. (McFadden) Gannon '48**  
Feb. 8, 2024

**Phyllis (Barnes) Lloyd '51**  
Dec. 22, 2023

**Betty H. (Hoover) MacDonald '51**  
Jan. 30, 2024

**Patricia A. (Dent) Shreffler '51**  
March 6, 2024

**Dorothy Groves Wright '52**  
March 22, 2004

**Wilbur Fink '53**  
Dec. 2, 2023

**Marjorie L. (Lynch) Gutkoska '53**  
Nov. 28, 2023

**Marilyn Sheila Davidson '54**  
Oct. 3, 2023

**Doris G. Weiss '54**  
Sept. 20, 2023

**Katherine B. Smith '56**  
Dec. 15, 2023

**Nancy L. Freeberger '57**  
Jan. 19, 2024

**Shirley (Thim) Hollander '58**  
Dec. 21, 2023

**Henry J. Lichtfuss '58**  
Dec. 17, 2023

**John M. Williams '58**  
Aug. 18, 2023

**Norris E. (Medley) Allen '60**  
Sept. 8, 2023

**Deborah C. (Colton) Sinsky '60**  
Jan. 22, 2024

**Mildred A. (Heine) Harrison '61**  
Oct. 21, 2023

**Kathryn E. Reuschling '61**  
Sept. 2023

**Nancy (Gliss) Jenkins '62**  
Jan. 15, 2024

**Priscilla Newman Beachley '63**  
Oct. 9, 2023

**George A. Henderson '63**  
March 2, 2024

**Rena C. (Cohen) Kelly '63**  
Aug. 4, 2023

**Larry J. Pazourek '63**  
Aug. 28, 2023

**Barbara C. (Wille) Sampson '63**  
Sept. 3, 2023

**Sharie L. (Lacey) Valerio '63**  
Nov. 5, 2023

**Vernon G. Rey '64**  
Nov. 17, 2023

**Joan E. (Thompson) Kroeber '65**  
February 2024

**Roslyn I. Siegel '65**  
Nov. 28, 2023

**Howard Robert Flater '66**  
Feb. 16, 2024

**Donald L. Carneal '67**  
Dec. 25, 2023

**Judith A. Free '67**  
Nov. 21, 2023

**John J. Hamilton '68**  
Jan. 6, 2024

**Marilynn M. (Terey) Larew '68**  
Jan. 31, 2024

**Toni H. Rosenblatt '68**  
March 4, 2024

**Michael W. Brennan Sr. '69**  
Aug. 9, 2023

**Nancy L. Johns '69**  
Nov. 3, 2023

**Eric R. Kinling '69**  
July 26, 2023

**William F. Loper Jr. '69**  
Oct. 5, 2023

**Suzanne L. (Eichen-green) Brafman '70**  
Jan. 26, 2024

**Larry R. Caple '70**  
Oct. 25, 2023

**Betty N. (Ney) Eckhaus '70**  
Oct. 9, 2023

**Arthur K. Jenne '70**  
Dec. 13, 2023

**Barbara M. Shisler '70**  
June 3, 2023

**Patricia W. Althoff '71**  
Jan. 6, 2024

**Robert A. Berry '71**  
Oct. 8, 2023

**Wilbur E. Cunningham '71**  
Sept. 27, 2023

**Patricia L. Perkins '71**  
February 2024

**Sally Ann Ring '71**  
Feb. 6, 2024

**Dennis F. Tausend-schoen '71**  
Feb. 10, 2024

**Barbara B. (Petschke) Broadbent '72**  
Sept. 25, 2023

**Roberta L. Goldman '72**  
Oct. 8, 2023

**Philip Lansella '72**  
July 9, 2023

**Nancy H. (Matthews) Sevier '72**  
Aug. 31, 2023

**Michael A. Hamlin '73**  
Sept. 12, 2023

**Robert G. Nicewarner '73**  
Nov. 8, 2023

**James L. Schriefer '73**  
Oct. 12, 2023

**Marilyn J. Barrett '74**  
Dec. 14, 2023

**Diane K. Dell '74**  
Nov. 20, 2023

**Ray Ewing '74**  
Dec. 29, 2023

**Alexander E. Hooke '74**  
December 2023

**Bruce H. Webster Sr. '74**  
Dec. 4, 2023

**Susan Virginia Lee '75**  
Feb. 9, 2024

**Joseph W. Steffens Jr. '75**  
July 27, 2023

**Michael P. Swoboda '75**  
July 18, 2023

**Thomas Richard Adams '76**  
Dec. 20, 2023

**Cynthia C. (Hanson) Mossman '76**  
Feb. 5, 2024

**Walter P. Ross '76**  
Oct. 31, 2023

**Joe W. Atherton '78**  
May 25, 2023

**Herman J. Castillo '78**  
Aug. 18, 2023

**Cynthia G. Feinour '78**  
Oct. 14, 2023

**William A. Gargani '78**  
July 26, 2023

**Allen B. Macknight '78**  
Oct. 8, 2023

**Floyd R. Peyton '78**  
June 28, 2023

**Adrienne P. (Pearlman) Yaker '78**  
Dec. 4, 2023

**Anna M. Keenaghan '79**  
Feb. 19, 2024

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

**Agnes W. Eisenberger '83**  
Oct. 1, 2023

**David E. Bryner '84**  
March 2023

**Carol M. Aliprando '87**  
Aug. 31, 2023

**Carol A. Carr-Meinecki '87**  
Jan. 23, 2024

**Teresa M. Feliciano '87**  
Nov. 30, 2023

**Angela Spiller '87**  
Sept. 16, 2023

**Lee Stuart Zimmerman '87**  
Oct. 9, 2023

**Gregory Dickerson '88**  
Oct. 23, 2023

**Greg Koren '88**  
Feb. 12, 2024

**Mark P. Schlehr '88**  
Sept. 18, 2023

**Sheila Marie Goode '91**  
August 2023

**Nancy Neukam '91**  
Oct. 17, 2023

**Matt Goddard '92**  
Nov. 20, 2023

**Lillian R. Lazen '92**  
Nov. 12, 2023

**David Andrew Law '94**  
Nov. 18, 2023

**Susan M. Parks '95**  
Sept. 25, 2023

**Dorothy M. Kolakowski '96**  
Jan. 20, 2024

**Todd Allen Myrick '97**  
Oct. 25, 2023

**Daniel P. Flaherty '03**  
Sept. 25, 2023

**Charles H. Doeller IV '06**  
Oct. 18, 2023

**Tobias O. Vogelstein '17**  
Nov. 24, 2023

**Samuel J. Clark '20**  
Feb. 27, 2024

**Clinton K. Azagba '21**  
Nov. 2, 2023

## Faculty & Staff

**Karin B. (Bruggemann) Allen '92**  
Sept. 17, 2023

**Mary E. (Hughes) Becker '63, '82**  
Oct. 15, 2023

**D. Ellsworth Boyd**  
Jan. 17, 2024

**Antoinette B. Candia-Bailey**  
Jan. 8, 2024

**Julius Chapman**  
Oct. 25, 2023

**Victor Collins**  
Nov. 10, 2023

**Susanna F. Craine**  
Dec. 4, 2023

**Mary Anne Czyz '96**  
Dec. 19, 2023

**Alice D. Daum-Coen**  
Nov. 7, 2023

**Nancy C. (Carreira) Hoffman**  
Sept. 29, 2023

**Sanallah Kirmani**  
Feb. 23, 2024

**Halcyon M. Lawrence**  
Oct. 29, 2023

**Joyce Currie Little**  
Oct. 1, 2023

**Janice W. (Walker) Mabry '69, '72**  
Oct. 26, 2023

**Dale E. Rauschenberg**  
Feb. 2, 2024



 EMMA SHIPLEY '17, '19

## First in Her Class

For speech-language pathologist (SLP) Emma Shipley '17, '19, TU always seemed like a natural fit. From earning her undergraduate and master's degrees from TU to being one of five in TU's new autism studies doctoral program, Shipley has found her educational home at TU.

As an SLP at TU's Institute for Well-Being, Shipley supervises first-year speech pathology graduate students during their clinical internships in the Speech and Language Center, manages treatment and guides clinical decision-making for patients and frequently works at the Hussman Center for Adults with Autism—all while juggling her doctoral work.

After specializing in speech pathology in TU's speech-language pathology master's program, Shipley had her light-bulb moment while teaching in a Carroll County public high school.

In language and literacy-based interventions with her autistic students, they questioned why they had to complete certain tasks or activities to fit in socially when that wasn't who they were, and Shipley often felt like she couldn't give a satisfying answer.

Within the neurodiversity movement, autistic advocates started speaking out about their experiences in various therapies and the things professionals can do to better support autistic people, which resonated with Shipley and aligned with the feedback her students shared with her.

"I think I learned more from them than they did from me," she says.

While planning where she would attend school for her doctorate, Shipley's colleague-turned-mentor Kelly Coburn put a bug in Shipley's ear that the autism studies doctoral program was on its way to becoming a reality at TU.

When that happened, it didn't take long for Shipley to choose TU again. After all, not only is she a two-time TU graduate, but her mother and father met at TU while studying mass communication.

Her program is focused on integrative learning beyond the classroom. The cohort is in the field interacting with and working alongside autistic people with the goal of amplifying their voices and priorities within professional fields. Her goal is to become a professor, to educate the next generation of the clinical field of speech-language pathologists. It is important to her as an educator and supervisor to teach her students how to hold space for neurodivergent individuals, be multimodal communicators and realize communication therapy is not one size fits all.

"I tell my students that I try to be the supervisor that I wanted in my clinical internships," she says. "Being able to implement and innovate what supervision looks like for our students and teach them from a real-world perspective is so rewarding to me."



Irish Americans who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields of work before reaching the age of 40.” They were nominated by leaders in



the Irish community for the award. Likas founded the Towson University Irish Dance Collective, and Kenny was one of the first dancers to sign up and perform.

**MICHAEL B. TAGER '11**

is a writer and the managing editor of Mason Jar Press. His first book of poetry, “Pop Culture Poetry: The Definitive Collection,” was scheduled to be released this spring.

**LAUREN BAVIS '12**

recently joined the faculty at Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Bavis is a faculty fellow in the magazine, news and digital journalism department.

**GUY BROWN '15**

joined New York City’s 24-hour news channel, Spectrum News NY1, as a meteorologist.

**RYAN HINES '15**

published his debut novel “Moonshineland: A Tale of Haunted Appalachia.” It is a story of mystery, adventure and terror set in the Appalachian wilderness during the Prohibition era. He also has a podcast of the same name.

**JAKE ARMSTRONG '16**

has received five first place awards for Best Music Video at national (Iowa) and international (Australia, Italy and Hungary) film festivals since 2021. Additionally, he received several



second-place awards and honorable mentions for his music video submissions at other film festivals.

**ANDREW GRAY '19**

recently passed the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) exam. He completed his first semester as an adjunct professor in TU’s Department of Geography and Environmental Planning, teaching students about urban planning.

**“Colleen [Kenny '10] and I are still embracing our Irish heritage and celebrating our love of Irish dance and culture. We are making lasting impacts in our communities, and we credit Towson for bringing us together many years ago.”**

**KAITLYN LIKAS '10**



**Alice Haber '55**

**The Write Stuff**

Alice (Lazarus) Haber was destined to be a teacher, but she has found a second act in life as a writer.

After earning her bachelor’s degree from TU in education, she embarked on a long and fulfilling career as a teacher. Haber, 90, hasn’t slowed down. She has written four books and is pondering a fifth, and she has a semi-regular column with the Frederick News-Post. Haber’s books cover a range of subjects, from collections of essays and letters to the editor she’s written over the years—the latter called “I Never Get a Whole Loaf”—to her latest effort, “The Souls of Pets,” which features stories and anecdotes of individuals’ pets, told from the animals’ perspective.

“I used to write letters to the editor, but [the editor] told me I write too many, so he put me on the board of communicators. I get an article in every six weeks,” she says with a chuckle.

Growing up in the Forest Park neighborhood of Baltimore City, Haber had a blackboard in the basement of her home where she would play teacher.

“I always enjoyed teaching. I think it was in my blood,” she says. “I just took it for granted that that’s what I would do.”

Her first job was at Fallstaff Elementary School, teaching fourth grade.

“Of all the jobs I have had in my adult life, and there are many, the four years I spent at Fallstaff were the best,” she recalls. “I had a wonderful fourth grade class every year, more than 40 children. I had a wonderful principal, and the woman who was the head of elementary education knew me since I was a fourth-grade student.”

After she married Sheldon Haber, a professor, in 1955, she stopped teaching and raised two boys while earning a master’s degree in education. When they started school, Haber returned to work, first as a Head Start teacher in Montgomery County, Maryland, then as a government contractor. She traveled all over the country—including Alaska—as an outreach specialist to teach health care workers about the available federal materials and protocols in their areas.

Writing has always been another passion. In addition to her newspaper duties, she also writes for The Chatter, the newsletter for her independent living community where she resides with her cat Honey. After nine decades, she has a reflective view on her daily life.

“I cook. I drive only in my zip code. And that’s it,” says Haber, who has six grandchildren and two great grandchildren. “I appreciate each day. And I thank God that I’m able to do what I do.”



# On My Playlist

## JIMMY CHARLES, CLASS OF 2003

Jimmy Charles may be living in Nashville these days, but he's always been—and will always be—a Marylander at heart. The country singer, whose songs have millions of downloads, grew up on the Eastern Shore near Ocean City, which serves as a splashy setting for the music video of his Free State-soaked song "It's A Maryland Thing, You Wouldn't Understand." (The video also includes a cameo by TU's mascot, Doc.) He first picked up a guitar when he was 13, inspired by his late father, Chuck. "That's really where I found my love for three chords and the truth, listening to old country songs with my dad," he says. He's performed the national anthem at Camden Yards and Uinitas Stadium, shared the stage with the likes of Travis Tritt and Merle Haggard and recorded tunes that have galvanized thousands in their battles against cancer (see below). "I like to inspire people," he says of his music. Listen to a Jimmy Charles song, and you'll definitely understand.



### In 2003...

Charles came to TU to play football, and after four fulfilling years as a linebacker, he left with a mass communication degree and a burning desire to play the guitar. This is some of the eclectic music that was spinning in his CD player then.



#### "I Don't Want To Be A Player No More" by Big Pun

A lot of what I listened to back then was funny stuff, like this. I used to rock this in my Jeep with the top down and in the gym all the time.



#### "Crawling" by Linkin Park

I love the whole album, which is called "Hybrid Theory." Chester Bennington's voice was just amazing. It made you feel everything. It was some raw rock and roll with some hip-hop mixed in.



#### "You Don't Know How It Feels" by Tom Petty

My dad loved Tom Petty, and we all have the love of what our dads love. I remember him having that CD and cranking it up in the car.



#### "A Pirate Looks at Forty" by Jimmy Buffett

My dad loved Jimmy Buffett, and his music really influenced me. This was my dad and I's song. I sang it at his grave right before we said goodbye.

### In 2024...

Charles is busy touring these days, and on May 18 he'll be on the bill at the Maryland Music Awards concert at Rams Head Live in Baltimore. He's nominated for six awards, including Performer of the Year. Here are a few tunes that have caught his ear these days.



#### "Til You Can't" by Cody Johnson

This song has a great message. It's a fun song to listen to melodically, but the message is there. It's one of those songs that, you know, take that phone call from your mama because you never know when you won't be able to someday. It's one of my favorite songs to cover.



#### "Save Me" by Jelly Roll

My 4-year-old son actually loves this song. He has no idea that it's about addiction—he just loves that song. We sing it together, and he knows it word for word. It's one of those songs that right out of the gate, it grabs you. It just punches you in the mouth. This is the one that really catapulted his career.



#### "Beer Never Broke My Heart" by Luke Combs

It's just a damn fun song. It's definitely one that I get excited when I know it's getting ready to come up on my playlist. I do probably 60% originals right now and 40% covers, and that's one that's always on my cover list. Everybody knows the words, and they love to sing it.



#### "We Are Warriors" by Jimmy Charles

I wanted to write a song to say, "Cancer sucks, but we're here to kick its ass." The surgeries, the chemo, the radiation that they've had to endure, and their families have had to endure—they truly are warriors. I sang it to 30,000 people at a breast cancer walk. They were screaming out the words and holding hands. My goal has always been to make a difference and positive impact with my music. This song has certainly done that.

# From Towson, With Love

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



## Agnes Geisler

CLASS OF 2009, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Matt and I were both part of a campus ministry called Cru. My roommate and I went to the first meeting of the semester my freshman year, and Matt was the emcee. They would do this thing after the meeting where'd you go do something fun, so we walked to this ice cream shop on York Road. When I was in high school, there was this online cartoon called "Homestar Runner." I had on a shirt that had a picture of one of the characters, and Matt recognized it.

My roommate and I ended up becoming friends with Matt and others at Cru. Matt was super outgoing, goofy and didn't care what people thought. That was really refreshing to me.

I asked him out on our first date. Spring semester I took a ballroom dancing class. You had to go dancing somewhere outside of class, so



I asked Matt if he would come with me. We walked to the Towson Armory in the rain to go swing dancing. We stayed the whole time, dancing with old people and eating cookies. The following week, we had lunch at the Glen, and he asked me to be his girlfriend.

My senior year we went to the Cheesecake Factory for dinner. He hands me this letter and the front says, "For the past." I was like, "Oh my gosh, this can only end one way. This is

happening." But I tried to keep cool. After dinner we walked around on campus. We were sitting by the baseball field, and he hands me another letter. This letter says, "For the present." It's talking about how much we love each other. Then we went to a bench near Stephens Hall, and he gives me a rose and says, "I have one more letter for you, but I'm going to read it to you." And so, he reads me this letter that's about the future. When he finishes, he gets down on one knee, and he asks me to marry him.

This October we will celebrate 15 years of marriage. We have two awesome kids. He's such a great dad, hard-working man, loves the Lord and so fun to be with.

## Matt Geisler

CLASS OF 2009, COMMUNICATION STUDIES

I had a few different options for college, but I decided to go to Towson for communications studies. Towson impacted my life in a huge way. I met my wife and so many wonderful friends there. The contacts I got from there got me an internship at my first job, which landed me my first job at PayPal, which has now become a 15-year career.

I met Agnes at a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting. We were walking to an ice cream social after one of our weekly meetings, and I remember she was wearing a "Homestar Runner" T-shirt. I was like, "Oh, 'Homestar Runner' is hilarious. Let me talk with this cute gal."

I thought that she was just a lot of fun to be around. We always had a great time together just spending time around campus.



When I decided to propose I decided to do a multi-stage thing, which worked out great. I had a series of several letters that I wrote to her. One I gave to her at dinner and then the next at the place on campus where we had our first kiss. And then the last I gave to her in front of Stephens Hall at a spot where we would hang out. There's a little garden right in front where I proposed. There were lots of tears

on both of our parts. It seemed like a thoughtful way to do it, and it helped me express the way I felt in a way that I wouldn't mess up in the moment.

We got married in Savage Mill, and we went on our honeymoon to El Dorado Royale on the Mexican Riviera—it was an amazing time. I love what a kind and caring person she is. I love seeing the way she interacts with me and our children and at our church. She's always serving and caring for others. One of the main reasons I married her is how she cares for other people and will always work hard for them.

# Philanthropy



## Family

## Reception Area

The College of Health Professions dedicated the Vic S. Gladstone and Mary A. Saylor Family Reception Area, in the Institute for Well-Being Hearing and Balance Center, on March 4. Gladstone (TU emeritus faculty) and Saylor have generously supported students with an endowed scholarship for a graduate student in the audiology doctoral program and an annual award for another student.

Gladstone was a professor and director of audiology in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at TU and helped establish the audiology master's program at TU. The audiology clinic at TU was one of just a handful of university clinics to fit and dispense hearing aids. Saylor was the inaugural coordinator of the hearing aid program and served as a clinical supervisor of audiology graduate students.

## Tall-Wiedefeld Society Spring Mixer

Nearly 100 Tall-Wiedefeld Society (TWS) members and guests came together for the society's annual spring mixer on March 6. Each year, the society announces its annual grant awards to coincide with Women's History Month. Seven TU programs, which benefit primarily the advancement of women, were awarded a total of \$20,000.

*For more information on the Tall-Wiedefeld Society and the grant program, or to become a member, email [tws@towson.edu](mailto:tws@towson.edu).*



## Greater Washington Partnership Announces Scholarships

Building a diverse digital tech workforce is the mission of the Collaborative of Leaders in Academia and Business (CoLAB). That mission can help clear pathways to careers that align with employers' needs.

CoLAB is an initiative of the Greater Washington Partnership (GWP), a nonprofit alliance of the region's leading employers in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., all of which are committed to championing the region's economic growth and vibrancy. GWP's Emerging Tech Talent Scholarships are for full-time students enrolled in a major or minor aligned to computer science, data analytics, cybersecurity or machine learning.

Twenty-eight \$2,500 scholarships will be offered to TU students.

"The integration of emerging technologies transforms industries and economies, making it crucial to cultivate a skilled workforce," says Mike McGuire, professor and chair of the Department of Computer and Information Sciences. "The GWP's Emerging Tech Talent Scholarship invests in future technology professionals and provides networking opportunities for our students to meet regional business leaders. For that, we are very grateful."

Launched in summer 2021, scholarship funders include Deloitte Foundation, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman Corporation Foundation and T. Rowe Price.



TUCC Director Mollie Herman, left, and Amber Lea Walser, coordinator of anxiety and depression services.

♥ GIVING

## Suicide Prevention: Expanding Student Support

In 2020, a CDC study indicated that 25.5% of adults, ages 18–24, reported having seriously considered suicide in the past month, higher than any other adult age group. During the 2022–2023 academic year, almost 40% of the TU Counseling Center’s (TUCC) 710 clients reported having suicidal ideations, an increase over the past several years, which is especially concerning given that a history of past attempts increases a student’s lifetime risk for suicide.

With those statistics in mind, the TUCC was looking for ways to expand outreach to students who were struggling.

“It is a major priority for us,” says Mollie Herman, director of TUCC. “We know that by increasing training to faculty, staff and students, they are better able to identify and support students in distress. And providing easily accessible and strategically placed crisis information to students is equally important.”

Each year, the Towson University Foundation (TUF) awards grants to worthy programs in the TU community. In 2023, the TUCC was

awarded \$10,900, which provided valuable resources to expand the suicide prevention safety net through offering and incentivizing training and providing suicide prevention information in every on-campus residence.

### The TUF Grant Award funded:

- 4,000 magnets with suicide prevention information placed in every room in each residence hall.
- High visibility signs for installation on the top stories of campus parking garages.
- Empowerment for students, faculty and staff to notice students in distress and help connect them with resources.
- Training opportunities for the campus community, including the purchase of iPads for remote training.

If you know a student who needs help, have them contact the Counseling Center at 410-704-2512 or visit [towson.edu/counseling](https://towson.edu/counseling).

**“We are extraordinarily grateful to have been chosen to receive this grant. It may very well have saved lives.”** —Mollie Herman, Director, TU Counseling Center

♥ DONOR PROFILE

## Lafon Porter

F. Lafon Porter '87 has given to TU, consistently, for the past 10 years. A member of the Dean's Advisory Council in the Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science & Mathematics, past executive board member of the Towson Black Alumni Alliance and a member of Phi Beta Sigma, Porter believes giving back is more important than ever. "As I get older, I appreciate the need to continue to support tomorrow's leaders."

**YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH TU AS A VOLUNTEER IS EXTENSIVE. WHY IS GIVING BACK TO TU—IN WAYS OTHER THAN MONETARILY—IMPORTANT?**

I was taught as a child to give of your time, talent and treasures. I try to live up to this motto. Often, giving financially is the easy option. But giving of your time and talent can have an equally important impact.

**YOU HAVE GIVEN CONSISTENTLY TO THE BARNES-HARRIS SCHOLARSHIP, WHICH SUPPORTS INCOMING FRESHMEN FROM METROPOLITAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS. WHY?**

I selected Barnes-Harris because those are two individuals on whose shoulders I stand. I owe Ms. Barnes and Ms. Harris more than I can ever repay. By giving back, I hope those who benefit will also pay it forward.

**HOW HAS TU INFLUENCED THE TRAJECTORY OF YOUR LIFE, PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY?**

I met my wife of 33 years, Gersha, at TU. And my son, Dawson, graduated from TU in 2022. I can say, without exaggeration, but for Towson, I would not have my beautiful family that make me so proud. I also owe my long-standing career at IBM to TU. I landed my job as an intern my senior year and have remained there for more than 37 years.





OUR TOWN

## Mill Centre Artist Studios

From inside her studio in the century-old former cotton sail cloth mill in Baltimore's Hampden neighborhood, **Juliet Ames '05** has created some of the city's saltiest art. During the pandemic, Ames, an art major with a concentration in crafts, got the idea to attach snazzy letters made of broken china to a plain yellow city-issued salt box. A photo of her creation went viral, and about 120 boxes later they've evolved from just letters to images featuring local favorites like Billie Holiday and Old Bay. She's been on "Good Morning America" and the subject of an article in *New Yorker* magazine, in which filmmaker John Waters said, "Baltimore salt boxes went from being the most ignored city property to Banksy-bait in one single good idea." Turning broken plates into jewelry is her main gig, but now she's better known as the salt box lady. "My favorite thing," she says, "is to make the goofiest ideas reality."