Flight Path

LEARNING TO FLY CHANGED TERRY CARBONELL ’81 FOREVER. NOW SHE’S USING HER PASSION FOR AVIATION TO TRANSFORM OTHERS’ LIVES.
Female Flyers

May 21 of this year marks the 90th anniversary of Amelia Earhart's historic solo trans-Atlantic flight. One of the founders of the Ninety-Nines, her legacy can be found in its vice president, Terry Carbonell '81.

Photo courtesy of the Amelia Earhart Birthplace Museum
Out of the Shadows

Intimate partner violence skyrocketed during the pandemic.

Engaged in Giving

Fran Soistman ’79, ’15 (hon.) continues his philanthropic journey.

A Catalyst for Change

Catalina Rodriguez Lima ’06 saw the need for an office of immigrant affairs in Baltimore.

Photographer Lauren Castellana ’13 (pictured left) got a day’s worth of great shots during her time in—and above—south Florida with pilot Terry Carbonell ’81. But she still didn’t think she had “the one.” So Castellana waited until sunset to capture the cover shot, which was taken 10 hours after she, writer Rebecca Kirkman (pictured right) and Carbonell arrived at Miami Homestead General Aviation Airport. “It came together perfectly,” Castellana says. “The blues of the sky, the soft evening light, Terry’s polo and the Ninety-Nines’ compass rose on the tarmac.”
President's Letter

Student success at Towson University is one of my favorite stories to tell. Whether I'm meeting alumni at a crab feast before an OU’s spring training game in Sarasota, Florida, or parents during Move-In or Commencement, I beam with TU pride whenever I get the opportunity.

Towson University's story is one that continues to evolve, to solve the problems that face our state and our world. From its origins as a teacher preparation school to the anchor institution it is today, TU has always served as a workforce provider for our state. As we endeavor toward attaining a Carnegie Classification of R2—recognizing high research output—TU is merely continuing its natural evolution.

As our community and mission grow, our impact only continues to gain momentum. We’re now home to 20,000 focused learners, who are learning and achieving inclusively. TU is one of only a handful of universities nationwide that has zero achievement gap. Our minority student population achieves the same academic success as the entirety of our student population. TU is a national leader in social mobility, helping to change the trajectory of generations of Tigers through an inclusive and excellent learning environment.

That is the impact of a Towson University education.

This edition of TU Magazine captures so much of that. There are news items about student and alumni success, our pair of 20-win basketball teams and how TU Foundation grants are funding interdisciplinary research opportunities for undergraduate students. There’s also a glimpse at our Campus Master Plan, which lays forth the blueprint for how physical campus will continue to evolve to match our promise for our state and our future students.

You’ll find stories on those who give of themselves to support the university’s success—like inaugural leader-in-Residence Limas Singh—and those who give philanthropically—like Fran Soistman, co-chair for RISE, the Campaign for Towson University and the benefactor behind the largest alumni gift in TU’s history.

You’ll meet an alum who is a pioneer among aviators and creates opportunities for other women to fly and faculty and alumni experts who share their insight to help victims of intimate partner violence.

Through these stories, we can see how student success at TU has a national impact. As we enter the time of year where we celebrate our latest successes at Towson University, and there are indeed even greater things ahead.

It is a great time to be a Tiger!

President Kim Schatzel

Press Past

Baseball has always been Sean Welsh’s favorite sport. TU’s vice president for university marketing & communications first picked up a glove when he was about 9, and, though his playing career ended in junior college, he transferred to TU hoping to fashion a career covering the sport in the media. He’d eventually accomplish that, thanks, he says, in large part to the experience he had here. In professor John Turner’s sportscasting class, he got to call three innings during radio broadcasts of home games. Welsh eventually landed a job as an announcer, Steve Melewski ’83, allowed him to call three innings during radio broadcasts of home games. Welsh eventually landed a job as a member of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America as the newspaper’s Orioles beat writer. Among the events he covered was Cal Ripken Jr.’s induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2007 and the last game at Yankee Stadium in 2008.

For a kid a year and a half out of the dugout, this is a dream come true for me pretty quickly,” he says. Welsh moved on to the Baltimore Sun as an editor, where he was part of the team that covered the death of Freddie Gray and its ensuing impact. In 2018, he returned to his alma mater as director of media relations and, in December 2021, was appointed to his current position by President Kim Schatzel.

“This job enables me to do a lot of the things I loved about journalism, like working with creative people to tell stories,” he says. “That’s me doing it at a place I love being on the cake.”

President Kim Schatzel

Kim Schatzel, Ph.D.
TOWSON UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
Campus News

TU Rans on Dunkin’
The newly renovated Union Food Market took full-service Dunkin’ and Chick-Fil-A locations in February, giving students more dining options.

TU in the House
When the Maryland General Assembly begins session on Jan. 12, 13 alumni took their oath in the House (9) and Senate (4).

Top Honors
TU’s College of Education ranked No. 45 in U.S. News & World Report’s Best Online Master in Education Programs. The master’s in applied information technology ranked No. 64 in the Best Online Master in Computer Information Technology Programs. The workforce护照s & Queens ranked The Best Online Master’s in Undergraduate Business Schools and No. 4 with the highest percentage of minority and international students.

In 2015, a group of friends formed the a cappella group Towson Trills. In 2021, the group signed a management deal with Underscore Talent and released its debut EP, Four’s Children. The Trills feature five alumni—Aaron Byers ’18 (vocal percussion), Loryn Hydock ’19 (bass), Will Darnnica Jr. ’18 (baritone), Kathryn Marie ’19 (soprano) and Nick Zuelsdorf ’21 (baritone)—and one current student—Mickey Melkonian ’22 (alto). On Oct. 18, 2021, they performed the national anthem in front of 70,000 at the Baltimore Ravens game against the Green Bay Packers. The group has also been making a name for itself on social media. Towson Trills’ YouTube channel has more than 3.6 million views and went viral after reimagining their takes on sea shanties.

Kaila Hodge ‘23 is the second student in university history to be named a Truman Scholarship finalist. She is one of 189 finalists chosen from more than 700 nationwide applicants and one of only six women from Maryland.

“We are extremely proud of Kaila being named a finalist for this prestigious award,” says Melina Peruca, professor and executive vice president for academic and student affairs. “It is testament to her hard work and diligence and also to the excellence of our academic programs.”

The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation awards merit-based scholarships to college juniors who plan to pursue careers in government or public service. Winners receive up to $30,000 for graduate or professional school, participate in leadership development activities and have special opportunities for internships and employment with the federal government.

“One year ago, I realized my agency through political science. I knew I was going to focus on public service. At a young age, I realized my agency through political science,” Hodge says. “I hope to inspire other young people to do the same.”

Nominees must be in the upper quarter of their class and have an extensive record of public and community service, outstanding leadership potential and communication skills and a commitment to a career in public service. Hodge checks all those boxes—and more.

TU for the Future
TU is ready for its next evolution. The newest Campus Master Plan features a strategic new construction, renovation of key historic facilities, as well as campus safety and accessibility projects that support student success and goal of earning a Carnegie Classification of R2 (high research output). For a glimpse into the future of your TU, turn to the next page and visit towson.edu/masterplan.

Linda Singh concludes tenure as TU’s leader-in-residence

When asked how she defines leadership, Linda Singh doesn’t hesitate: “It’s quality, not a position or a destination.”

Those aren’t empty words. Singh’s journey through her 38-year career with the Maryland National Guard and her recently concluded two-year tenure as TU’s inaugural leader-in-residence embodies that philosophy.

She enlisted in the National Guard in 1981 but took medical leave for several years. During that time, she worked a variety of jobs—McDonald’s, a department store, temp jobs—before she returned to the reserves where she stayed for six years before returning to the Guard full-time.

A turning point for her was when she rose through the organizational chart at a job with a defense contractor as a reservist. With each rank, her experience and confidence grew. Singh earned a business degree and followed the advice of a first sergeant who suggested she enroll in Officer Candidate School.

After receiving her commission in 1991, she was deployed to Kuwait and did a combat tour in Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

Singh was named the 29th adjutant general of the Maryland National Guard on Jan. 21, 2015—the first Black woman to hold the position. She commanded more than 5,900 soldiers and airmen and more than 1,000 full-time federal and state employees who responded to emergencies and disasters. Singh advised Gov. Larry Hogan and oversaw the state’s efforts become one of the National Guard’s cutting-edge cybersecurity leaders.

“Sometimes we have to put all on the line for people we believe in,” Singh says. “The thing that I believe in over my career, I knew because of leaders that came before me. When you believed in your people, you put it all on the line. That truly is what I founded my leadership as adjutant general on.”

She retired in 2019 as a highly decorated officer with a new doctorate in organizational psychology. Singh began looking for a role that was affiliated with a university and put her in a position to impact others.

When she began her job as TU’s leader-in-residence in 2020, her understanding and practice of leadership was almost immediately tested. The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly shifted her plans from in-person events and seminars to focusing on a strategic examination of leadership development opportunities across campus.

“My thought was, ‘How can we bring synergy to leadership programs and events across campus and tie that to the culture of the university and what we make these competencies part of the culture not just for students but for everyone?’” she says.

Singh’s leadership journey has evolved even further over the last two years, as she focused on how to prepare students for life after graduation. “That’s probably been the biggest growth point to say, ‘Pandemic or no pandemic, I’ve been through worse things.’

So how do we keep a level of faith, confidence and being relentless about how we’re going to come out of this?” she says.

Find Singh in new roles caring for her clients in her consulting business, Kaldaskoe Afford, but she intends to remain a Tiger. TU, she says, “is always going to have a place in my heart.”

As she has at every stop in her distinguished career, Linda Singh leaves Towson University a better place for her presence. “President Kim Schates said ‘As our inaugural leader-in-residence, General Singh contributed greatly to TU’s innovative approach to leadership development.’
After thorough research and extensive community outreach, TU has drafted its 2020–30 campus master plan, the document that will guide future decision-making regarding on-campus improvements. For the first time, TU’s master plan is in direct alignment with the university’s strategic plan and its Self-Study for Middle States Re-Accreditation, which ensures a focused and comprehensive vision for the university.

The master plan outlines a long-term framework for sustainable development of academic, research and student life buildings as well as landscapes and infrastructure to connect and support them. Some of the major projects envisioned in the plan include updates to core areas of campus and renovated and new infrastructure to support TU’s goal of achieving a Carnegie Classification as an R2 Doctoral University with High Research Activity. The plan also maps out the creation of a North–South Campus Greenway as part of a larger connection between South Campus (SECU Arena, the Auburn House) and downtown Towson and calls for developing and refining the edges of campus to enhance engagement between TU and the surrounding community.

While construction timelines and building designs will fluctuate over the years, these renderings demonstrate the transformation taking place on campus now and provide the starting point for imagining the future of TU. 

For more information, visit towson.edu/masterplan.

**Pedestrian Bridge**

As part of the proposed North–South Greenway, a new bridge over Osler Drive and Auburn Drive connects the campus life center and academic core to the athletics district with an accessible route. The network of paths would run from South Campus (Auburn House, athletic fields) through campus to the new College of Business & Economics building at the corner of York Road and Burke Avenue.

**West Village**

New housing is planned for the West Village residential district, with the addition of open space to replace the Enrollment Services building. Currently housing options in West Village include Barton, Tubman and Douglass houses, West Village 1 and 2, Marshall Hall, Towson Run and Millennium Hall.

**College of Business & Economics**

The construction of a new academic building for the College of Business & Economics at York Road and Burke Avenue redefines this gateway to campus. Regrading the hillside connects the campus to downtown Towson in a more meaningful and accessible way.
Word Games

Chris Cain, chair of the Department of English, explains why they endure.

Word games like Scrabble and Bananagrams and language activities like Hangman hold linguistic interest for me. I think word games are attractive because they engage two fundamental instincts that people have. One is play; the other is manipulating language.

That two-way street is essentially the thoroughfare on which people seem to be most interested in language play. Spoken language games tend to be about encryption and decryption. So is Wordle. But word games seem to be about decryption. Scrabble is essentially a decryptional game. So is Wordle. Language games have rules. In Pig Latin, you take the onset (the first syllable of the first syllable) and place letters correctly. It was about keeping secrets and in-group identification. In a one-syllable word there are constraints on the sequence—you can’t have silent or drid or drin or most other arrangements. The spelling matches constraints on syllable formation in which the onset consonants and if it have to be progressively more sonorous—or louder—until the vowel.

People have an intuitive sense of what word games, to some extent, make these things explicit, just like taking a course on the structure of the English language, you can, for example, have RH as an onset. But not HR.

The game may start with a guess: “Let me try to get as many vowels in a single word as possible to increase the chances that the next row is going to tell me where letters should go.” People go on from there, using their implicit knowledge of English to place letters correctly. You already know that without thinking about it. And so you can do language games. It becomes your thing, then there’s no more research.

“Let me try to get as many vowels in a single word as possible to increase the chances that the next row is going to tell me where letters should go.”

Hangman hold linguistic interest for me. I think word games are attractive to me for a number of reasons. One is play, and sometimes it serves an in-group function. Some English classes are that don’t necessarily engage one’s vocabulary but one’s knowledge of movie titles, authors or actors. It’s not all about word power in the traditional sense, but word power plus cultural knowledge plus a native speaker’s linguistic intuitions.

If you speak the language, you’re an expert on that language, and so you can change the language. My advice to new word game players is to start small. Try something like Wordle first because it’s not going to take up a ton of your time. It’s not your thing, then it’s not your thing. And if it becomes your thing, then there’s no bottom line to what you can do with it.

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Moving On Up

1990
Born in Bayshire, New York

1997
Began working in his dad’s tow truck business.

2003
Started playing basketball.

2011
Transferred to TU from Westchester Community College, where he averaged 10 points and 9 rebounds to earn second all-Mid-Hudson Conference honors.

2012
Became a proud member of Omega Psi Phi.

2013–14
Average: 11.7 points and 1 rebound as a senior. Winner of the team freshman of the year.

2014–16
Started a passion for culture. Started a client-first agency.

2016
Placed professionally in Sweden.

2017
Started Fueled by Culture, a client-first agency.

2018
Opened the agency’s headquarters.

2020–21
Lost in-person events held by the company. A scout with former John Fox at FUBU.

2021
Opened a new office in New York.

2022
March
Restart date for Fueled by Culture’s in-person events.

Q: How do we achieve a more inclusive situation?
A: I think we’re about having conversations and dialogue. A lot of times when you have students that are coming into an environment that’s as diverse as ours, it’s the first time they’ve ever been around someone that doesn’t look like them, that doesn’t think like them. So you have to open up opportunities for dialogue so the students can get to know each other and understand diverse backgrounds.

Q: Why are these things particularly important on a college campus?
A: We’re responsible for teaching history, science, math and various other disciplines, but we’re also responsible for teaching humanity and love. People aren’t born to hate. People are taught to hate. People are also responsible for teaching humanity and love. Students, when they graduate, are going to be leaders in the workforce. If we don’t teach them how to get along with others and how to see diverse perspectives and understand the benefits of having a diverse society, then they’re not going to hire diverse candidates. They’re just going to continue to hire people that look like them. So it’s very important for us to develop leaders who are comfortable with differences.

Marcus Damas ’14
Founder, Fueled by Culture

In 2018, former TU men’s basketball player Marcus Damas ’14 found art relating to entrepreneurship.

After concluding a two-year professional basketball career in Sweden, he was working with EA Sports, reenacting player movement and scouting NBA Live.

Damas ‘14

March 2020
Last in-person event held by the company. A scout with former John Fox at FUBU.

March 2022
Restart date for Fueled by Culture’s in-person events.

Fueled by Culture is an innovative agency. These are its innovators. These are their stories.

We sit down with TU’s new(ish) vice president for inclusion and institutional equity to discuss the importance of diversity on campus.

Q: When would you say you first became aware of issues like inclusion, equity and diversity?
A: I think my first real awareness began in high school. North Carolina-Chapel Hill was my No. 1 school. We had a football recruiting day, and they were all African American. It was that point that the admissions director realized that I wasn’t who he thought I was. He thought I was white. When he saw that my friends were African American, and that I may be too, he started telling me that I should consider North Carolina Central or North Carolina A&T. He named almost every HBCU in the state in my case. It changed my outlook on everything, which is part of the reason I chose Towson. University, I wanted to be where I was wanted.

We use these terms diversity, equity and inclusion. What do they actually mean?
A: I could write a book about that. A lot of times people think about numbers. What is the population? What are the demographics? Oftentimes people think diversity: It’s black and white. It’s not. Diversity is not only racial diversity; it’s diversity in ability, it’s diversity in gender. It’s having people with various appearance, various thought processes. Equity is making sure that the resources are available so that when you create a diverse environment, everyone has opportunity and access to the programs and resources that are available. A lot of times people confuse equality and equity. Equity doesn’t mean that resources are distributed equally; it just means that educational or financial resources are distributed to give everyone a fair chance and opportunity and that systems are put into place to remove barriers to those access.

Q: What are some of the challenges that you are addressing as VP for inclusivity?
A: Some of the challenges that you’re addressing as VP for inclusivity are making sure that the students, when they graduate, are going to be leaders in the workforce. If we don’t teach them how to get along with others and how to see diverse perspectives and understand the benefits of having a diverse society, then they’re not going to hire diverse candidates. They’re just going to continue to hire people that look like them. So it’s very important for us to develop leaders who are comfortable with differences.

Coffee With... Patricia Bradley

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All text above is generated by the model.
A basketball tournament appearance. The Tigers’ 20-plus wins were more than the most since the 2007–08 season. The success of each program earned them bids to the 2022 National Invitational Tournament (NIT) as well. The men, led by Wake Forest, while the women met Old Dominion in the first round. The team has really epitomized strength and resilience. From the very beginning of the season, they were committed to play for each other, no matter what,” women’s head coach Diane Richardson says. The women’s program was commended for its 12 wins in the NCAA Tournament. They finished the regular season perfect 4-0. The team was ranked among the best in the country. The Tigers picked up wins against Florida, Wofford, East Carolina and American during that run. TU also string together five-game winning streaks twice later in the season. Aleah Nelson, Allie Kubek and Anissa “Peanut” Rivera each averaged double figures in points for the Tigers. Rivera’s 227 rebounds and 15 blocks were best on the team. Nelson led TU in assists and steals. She also earned first-team All-CAA honors, while Kubek landed a spot on the third team. Kylie Kornegay-Lucas was named Sixth Player of the Year. Cam Holden and Charles Thompson averaged at least 10.0 points per game. Holden led the team in rebounds, assists and steals and Thompson was tops in blocks. Timberlake and Holden were named All-CAA First Team, while Thompson earned All-CAA Second Team honors. “I’m incredibly proud of our team this year, especially the returners who endured a trying season during COVID-19,” men’s head coach Pat Skerry says. “We’re excited to see how what we can commit even further to improve our program in the expanding CAA and are excited for what the future holds.”

Welcome, Steven Eigenbrot

Steven Eigenbrot was named TU’s new director of athletics on Feb. 14. He joined TU from the University of South Carolina, where he oversaw fundraising, ticketing and a variety of facilities projects. “I think we’re in an amazing spot to be successful for a long period of time,” he says. “We have a chance to dominate the space we’re in, and who doesn’t want to be part of dominance?”

MBA MBM BASKETBALL

Twenty were a big number for the men’s and women’s basketball teams this year.

The programs celebrated their 20th anniversary as members of the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) by each winning more than 20 games in the same season for the first time. TU was one of eight Division I schools to accomplish the feat this year. The men finished 25-9 overall and 15-3 in the CAA to earn a share of the regular season title and the top seed in the CAA Tournament. The programs celebrated their success this year.

The 20-game mark then was the first time. TU was one of eight Division I schools to accomplish the feat this year. The men’s CAA crown was their first title since the 1994 Big South championship. Nick Timberlake, Cam Holden and Charles Thompson averaged at least 10.0 points per game. Holden led the team in rebounds, assists and steals and Thompson was tops in blocks. Timberlake and Holden were named All-CAA First Team, while Thompson earned All-CAA Second Team honors.

CAM HOLDEN ‘22 earned all-conference honors (first team, all-defensive) after leading the men’s basketball team in rebounds per game (7.9) and finishing second in points per game (17.6).

MAYAN CLARK ‘22 was the second starter in the weekend rotation last year, going 3-3 with a 4.88 ERA and 53 strikeouts in 66.2 innings. She finished the season with 170.

ALEAH NELSON ‘23 broke the season’s basketball single-season assists record in a win against Drexel on March 9. She finished the season with 270.

NICK JAKOMINCE ‘23 was a first-team preseason honorable mention All-CAA pick in 2022. He won the second starter in the weekend rotation last year, going 5-2 with 55 strikeouts in 52.2 innings.

MEAGAN CLARK ‘22 was the second CAA Swimmer of the Week on Feb. 2 after winning the 1,000-yard freestyle, the 200-yard freestyle and the 500-yard freestyle.

ALEAH NELSON ‘23

Offers

The Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) conference home of TU’s athletic program, will welcome Hampton, Big East and Morehead State back to action as members starting in July. The CAA will also expand to 12 participants announced by the fall 2022 term.

STUDENT-Athletes

TU student-athletes stand with a 3.25 cumulative grade point average (GPA) after earning a 3.055 Fall 2021 term GPA. This includes 104 student-athletes earning at least a 3.5 GPA, including 34 with a perfect 4.0.

Watch These Space

Fifth-year senior defenseman Koby Smith was selected to the Tewaaraton Trophy Watch List, landing him among the most elite players in the country. Smith was also named Preseason Media All-America Honorable Mention by Inside Lacrosse.

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“DO YOU WANT TO FLY IT?” asks Terry Carbonell, looking across the cabin of her 1978 Cessna 182 single-engine, four-seat plane known as Wild Mama. It’s a characteristically sunny Miami morning, and Wild Mama—so named for the last two letters of her tail number, N614WM—is cruising 1,000 feet above the Everglades.

From the co-pilot’s seat to her right, first-time flyer Ocheline “Oshee” Occy eagerly accepts the offer. Once Carbonell says, “your airplane,” and Occy echoes her with “my airplane”—an exchange used by pilots to indicate transfer of control—Occy is flying for the first time. With occasional guidance from Carbonell, she keeps the horizon steady in the distance and makes a left then a right turn as she steers the plane across the glinting marshland.

A flight attendant for a national carrier based in Miami, Occy is in ground school (the land-based part of pilot training), working toward a second career as a commercial pilot after leaving the nursing field during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today she logged her first flight toward the more than 250 hours required to earn her commercial pilot license.

Twenty minutes later, the plane is back on the ground at Homestead General Aviation airport in southern Miami-Dade County. Occy is all smiles as she recalls the moment Carbonell handed control over to her. “I felt like I was at home,” she says.

Inspiring future female pilots like Occy is the purpose of Let’s Fly Now!—a free, first-flight program from the Ninety-Nines, an international nonprofit organization of more than 6,000 licensed women pilots. Carbonell is its vice president.

At this morning’s event, the first since before the pandemic, four volunteer pilots from the Florida Goldcoast chapter, including Carbonell, took 28 passengers up for 15- to 20-minute flights to share the joy of seeing the world from 1,000 feet above the earth. Of the day’s flyers, five—including Occy—registered on the spot as new student pilots and two joined the Ninety-Nines.

“For many people and seeing their enthusiasm for the first time, it’s just...
so energizing,” says Carbonell as she hops out of the cabin after her sixth flight of the day. Wearing her signature accessory—a baseball cap embroidered with the phrase “A Woman’s Place is in the Cockpit”—Carbonell retains the same wide grin and infectious enthusiasm she had for the first flight of the day. “I mean, how can you not have a good day?”

Quick witted with a playful spunk, Carbonell, 60, is clearly happiest when she’s in the air or surrounded by the other women in the Ninety-Nines. Petite and spry, with wisps of hair falling around her face that have escaped her waist-length braid, Carbonell has the look of someone who does what makes them happy. But this satisfaction, or her self-described “development of wings,” came later in life.

AFTER GRADUATING FROM TU with a degree in general studies, Carbonell earned a law degree from the University of Miami. Her interest in law stemmed from the mentorship of then-Towson State University criminal justice professor Marion Cockey, who taught at TU for more than 50 years beginning in 1969 and was known for bringing students into state correctional institutions for experiential learning.

“We interviewed prisoners about civil rights violations they experienced,” recalls Carbonell, who graduated from TU in 1981 at 19 years old. “Going out into the world as an impressionable young woman and learning about the criminal justice system in that way, it made a huge impact on me and it’s what led me to law school. I still remember the conversations I had 40 years later.”

She worked as a business and real estate lawyer, but “law wasn’t my favorite thing to do,” she says. “I’m more of an outdoorsy person.”

Practicing law, however, was a crucial step on Carbonell’s journey to aviation. She met her husband, Mario, while representing him during a real estate closing at an airpark.

After 16 years together, during which the couple built a successful demolition and contracting company, Mario was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s in 2005. A private pilot in Cuba before escaping the revolution in 1961, Mario asked his wife to get her pilot’s license so they could spend their final years together in the air. Just 46 days later, Carbonell fulfilled his wish, obtaining her private license at 44.

Over the next three years, the pair spent as much time as possible seeing the world from the sky, including visiting all the U.S. national parks before Mario died in November 2008. Carbonell describes her passion for aviation as a gift her late husband left for her to share with others.

“This is a way of honoring him,” she says. “He loved, loved airplanes. And I would hate to think that such a wonderful man died for no reason. So him giving me to fly was something that I could share with everyone else.”

A year after her husband’s death, Carbonell was still feeling lost. One day, as she set out to visit his grave and ask him for advice, she got a phone call from a Ninety-Nines sister with a request. A teacher had quit in the career and technical education department at Charlotte High School in Punta Gorda, and she asked Carbonell to take over teaching about aviation.

“I saw this big, black cloud lift,” Carbonell recalls. “I knew in my heart that was Mario telling me that this is what I have to do.” In that moment, Carbonell found her new direction. As she developed her own love for aviation, she found new ways to share the joy with the next generation. In 2007, Carbonell earned her commercial license and entered the Air Race Classic, an annual, all-female, cross-country air race, for the first time. It’s also how she discovered the Ninety-Nines.

“When I read the history of the race, it talked a lot about the Ninety-Nines,”
AIR RACE CLASSIC. The achievement is one of the best female pilots in history when her team won the 2010 Air Race Classic. The achievement is acknowledged by less than 200 women pilots since the first race. Starting at Page Field in Fort Myers, Florida, and ending at Frederick Municipal airport in Maryland, the nine-stop race spanned 2,483 miles. After missing placing in the top 10 at the 2009 competition by one one-hundredth of a knot (a unit of speed equal to one nautical mile per hour), Team Wild Mares—pledged by Carbonell along with first-time competitors Ellen Herr and Laura Ying Gao—caught a tail wind on the last leg and beat 94 other teams by more than 200 miles. "We crashed it. We just came screaming across the finish line," Carbonell recalls. "To be one of such a select group, that is one of the coolest things ever. It really was a highlight of my life."

FOR MORE THAN a decade, Carbonell has been using aviation to inspire and empower youth, with a special focus on young women. In 2011, she teamed up with the Boys & Girls Club of South Alabama to launch the No Limits Girls Education Program. The six-month, after-school program became the basis for Aviation Adventures, a nonprofit incorporated in 2012 that expanded mentorship and flight training programs across the U.S. In 2016, she teamed up with her Ninety-Nines sister and longtime friend Myra Bugbee to front the first Let’s Fly Now! event, where 24 youth from Aviation Adventures programs and the Boys & Girls Club learned about aviation careers and communications, with specialty sessions before taking their first small airplane flight. "Terry and I have been trying to think of ways to expose the 7% of licensed pilots who are female to 50% or more," Bugbee says from the tarmac at Homestead General Aviation, pausing to applaud and cheer for first-time flyers as they land. "We really are trying to reach females of flying age, 14 and older, as they land. "We really are trying to promote the idea of possibilities for their future, either a career or a hobby. And we want to talk to more mature women, let them know it’s not too late for them to fly. One of our members was in her 80s when she got her private license."

Minimizing disparities in the aviation field is a passion for many members of the Ninety-Nines, especially Florida Goldcoast chapter president Kate Koch. "We really need to get a lot more..."
women flying,” Koch says from a table on the tarmac where she fills out certificates for the first-time fliers to receive when they land, along with a flight log to begin tracking their hours. She learned to fly before she could drive, flying solo for the first time at 16 and obtaining her pilot’s license at 17. Koch leads the chapter as a thank you to the women from the organization who inspired and supported her pursuit of aviation. Through events like today’s, she hopes more girls get the flying bug.

“It’s a really great career for women, for people of color, for people of every sexual orientation,” Koch says, noting that the industry lacks a gender pay gap because pilots are paid for the hours flown. “Those are the people that we want to bring more into aviation because, right now, Black females are only 2% of the female pilot population—less than half a percent of the total pilot population. And there’s really no reason for that other than entrenched societal norms.”

While there is a high financial cost to earning a pilot’s license, Koch says, the career pays off with the first job. To help lower the financial barrier, the Ninety-Nines’ Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship Foundation funds academic scholarships, advanced flight training, research scholarship grants and new pilot awards. Since 1941, it has awarded more than 500 scholarships.

“Days like today are important because it’s free. There’s no obligation or anything,” Koch adds. “It’s like, ‘Just try it and see if you like it.’”

Bugbee and Koch count Carbonell as a mentor and one of the organization’s strongest supporters.

“She’s really present at every single Ninety-Nines event—and all over the country too. She takes her plane and flies to all the different chapters and goes to their meetings,” Koch says. “And she is always one of the first to volunteer to fly at any one of those discovery flight days.”

“I’ve flown around the country with her a few times and learned a lot,” says Bugbee, who recently landed Moxy, her KVI 6 experimental aircraft that she built with her husband, in all 48 contiguous states. “I probably would not have done that without knowing her.”

Despite her long list of accomplishments and licenses including instrument, commercial, tail wheel and sea plane ratings; ground instructor certificates; and certified flying instructor (CFI) credentials for single- and multiengine aircraft, Carbonell’s curiosity never stops.

In March, she began ground school to learn to fly Special Kay, a 1944 Douglas B-26K Counter Invader down in the Vietnam War. The last remaining airworthy bomber of that model, the plane is being restored to perform in airshows across the country this summer.

“One engine on that plane is 10 times the power of what I’m flying,” Carbonell says. “To fly that plane and be a part of history would be so cool.”

This year, she’s also running for president of Ninety-Nines International and working on converting her nonprofit organization, Aviation Adventures, into a Ninety-Nines-branded educational center based in Oklahoma City with workbooks and educational materials that she edited.

Carbonell jokes that her friends say she suffers from a “terra firma phobia” because she spends so much time off the ground. While the average private pilot flies about 50 hours per year, Carbonell logs an average of 300.

“Flying opens up the whole world,” she says. “There’s nothing like seeing the world from 1,000 feet in the sky.”

Rebecca Kirkman is assistant director of strategic communications in University Marketing & Communications and a contributing writer.
Hidden within the public health crisis of COVID-19, a twin pandemic arose: intimate partner violence.

BY MEGAN BRADSHAW ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID CALKINS '93

Intimate partner violence (IPV) has happened for millennia. But over the last two years, evidence of incidents has increased dramatically in the U.S. and globally. The United Nations published a report late last year shining a light on what it called “the shadow pandemic” of violence against women occurring amid the public health crisis. The pandemic intensified many of the conditions that can fuel intimate partner violence, with many families facing economic tension along with the stress and uncertainty created by COVID-19. The statistics are eye opening. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 16% of homicides are perpetrated by a partner. A staggering 25% of women and 10% of men experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetimes. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. And a report from the American Journal of Emergency Medicine said domestic violence cases increased by 25–33% globally in 2020. Violent domestic crime rose 15% year over year in Baltimore City, from 394 incidents in the first three months of 2020 to 462 in the first three months of 2021, according to Baltimore Police Department (BPD) data. Among those incidents, domestic aggravated assaults increased 95%, from 266 to 519 during that period. Total reported cases of IPV swelled from 1,376 in 2020 to 1,499 in 2021. The city’s first homicide of 2021 was domestic, according to the BPD. Investigators charged Lakirnya Drayton, 36, a dirt biker known as “Wheelie Queen,” who was featured in the HBO movie Charm City Kings, with initially stabbing her partner, 19-year-old Tiffany Wilson on New Year’s Day.

There are plenty of stereotypes when it comes to IPV victims. Tall, confident and in her late 30s, Combs was never going to know what happened to me.” Running out of options, Combs called for Ozzie, barrel-chested and as tall as a great Dane, who bounded into the room and rushed her attacker. That gave her the time to get out—into the room and rushed her attacker. as tall as a great Dane, who bounded into the room and rushed her attacker. Whatever the form, intimate partner violence can be a subtle and insidious weapon. “They form a nexus of behaviors that’s designed to increase one’s power and control over their partner,” says Dardis, who researches IPV.

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Combs says of her relationship. “Your statements, lunch with friends—went to disclose abuse—at doctor’s appointment. It also can compound the isolation.”

With the arrival of the pandemic came the introduction of lockdowns. “What we see with intimate partner violence is that, very often, the safest place for victims to be is outside of their homes,” Dardis says. “If they live with their perpetrators, the safest place might not be at home. [Lockdowns] increase the amount of time spent with their partner, which can therefore increase the risk of injury exponentially. It also can compound the isolation.”

Being stuck indoors during the pandemic meant opportunities to disclose abuse—or doctor’s appointments, lunch with friends—were unobtained, and the signs of abuse often went unnoticed.

“The abuse was very, very slow,” Combs says of her relationship. “Your abuser doesn’t call you a bitch or fat right away. They start to say things like, ‘You’re stupid.’ Then it goes on to calling you names. And now the person is screaming names at you.”

Combs reflection on her relationship revealed many red flags she didn’t see then: how quickly her relationship moved and how much information she gave him without realizing the same. “He always knew, when the abuser learns what you wear most and paints a rosy picture of your future together; and gaslighting—Combs recalls how her perpetrator would reframe incidents of his abuse that put her in the wrong.

Williams advises that people pay attention to what they’re not hearing: “A not-so-obvious sign is they never talk about this person. Oh they get defensive,” she says. “Maybe they’re wearing different things or have a significant change in personality. There’s also a change in resources. This person may have been able to afford things for themselves. Or say, ‘Oh, they don’t like me to wear that.’ Or, ‘They don’t like me to buy these things anymore.’

Despite the trauma survivors endure, many are reluctant to report incidents of IPV. Durdey’s research on IPV revealed a 3-4% reporting rate among 150 students she surveyed who’ve experienced sexual violence—mostly to family and friends. A recent UN report noted less than 40% of women globally who experience IPV seek help of any sort, and very few look to formal institutions. Less than 10% of those seeking help appealed to the police.

Some of Williams’ clients tell her they are afraid of retaliation by the abuser or that no one will believe them. “They have called the police multiple times. And the police have sided with the abuser. So they wonder, ‘Who will I go to?’” she says. “The abuser is very strategic, cutting off supports, finances. Trying to leave is you leaving your life.”

Jessica Hostetler, a coordinator of trauma services and staff psychologist at the TU Counseling Center, believes IPV may be underreported because of American culture.

“Misogynistic, patriarchal norms and the red flags we might see within relationships are so often normalized,” she says. “It’s called rape culture. What don’t we have is a normalized way to check on people who may be experiencing abuse. I don’t know that in all spaces we have protocols to ask the questions or know what questions to ask or what to report.”

Combs only called the police once, after her partner estranged her during an argument two months before their wedding, leaving handprints on her neck. Even then, she couldn’t bring herself to press charges. “That was so upsetting for me, because this was still a person I loved,” she says. “Because sometimes, he was back to the person who I started dating. Now, I know that’s not my fault at all. You estrange someone, you deserve to go to jail.”

Leaving an abusive relationship isn’t as simple as walking out. One of the reasons Durdey decided to research IPV was a client she worked with at graduate school. When the woman came to Durdey, telling her the man was watching the client’s Facebook check-ins and showing up, Durdey didn’t know what to do. And, at the time, there was essentially no research on cyberstalking.

A frequently quoted statistic is, on average, survivors return to their abusive relationships seven times before they leave for good. And the pandemic has made connecting with resources, shelters, mental health services and law enforcement even harder.

“Many people have had to leave their jobs, lost resources, found new schools and a shelter that accepts them, with no where else to go, she says. There are many ways people can help survivors of IPV. The first is education.

Hostetler and Kari DeGraaf, assistant director of health education & promotion at TU’s Health Center, are taking aim at that issue. [Some people don’t know they are]
“What is really needed is for someone to be willing to listen, to say that they believe the survivor, to not make light or minimize what’s happening to that person and to be willing to be available repeatedly,” Daniels says. “Disclosures like this are not a one-time process.”

It’s also important, as a support person, to recognize no one person should be expected to know everything or have all the answers,” she says. “There are so many resources available, and it may be a matter of connecting that individual to those supports.”

The Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity (OIIE) assists members of the TU community by coordinating university compliance with Title IX and responding to reports of sexual misconduct. OIIE provides outreach, resources and interventions as part of that response. Individuals can make a report or find sexual violence survivor resources on their website.

Combs knows how lucky she was to have the support of her family, a job, her own bank account and health insurance to pay for therapy. So she decided to use her experiences to advocate for others. In 2018, she started a podcast called High Heels and Heartache. It has been downloaded in 65 countries. “It dawned on me, ‘What if I took the things that I had learned in therapy and interviewed experts on those things?' So that way, people had the same resources that I had,” she says. The first episode was on a topic. Combs felt it was vital to do this for many survivors. She created the podcast to help others find their voices.

In each episode, Combs interviews an expert on the topic at hand. One of them, Amelia Kelley, became her co-author on their Amazon best-selling book, What I Wish I Knew: Surviving and Thriving After an Abusive Relationship. The book explores many common abusive tactics and offers suggestions on how a survivor can thrive after an abusive relationship by offering research-backed strategies and prompts, lists and other opportunities to explore their own feelings and experiences. "As soon as I started speaking up, other people started speaking up," says Combs, who, in addition to her full-time job and time with her tight-knit family, has become an active advocate for survivors of IPV. "That's one of the reasons why I wrote the book, because you can take this thing that happened to you that was so terrifying and traumatizing, and you can help other people who have gone through that same thing."
Giving

BRADSHAW

BY MEGAN BRADSHAW

S ome returning to campus these days might not believe their eyes. New and renovated buildings are popping up seemingly everywhere. Academic programs are growing even richer. Student life is thriving like never before. What visitors may not see is in Fran Soistman’s contribution to that growth. And that’s exactly how he wants it. “[Being] behind the scenes gives me great pleasure, because I don’t need the attention,” he says. “I just like looking at the results.”

In November 2020, Soistman ’79 (hon) made a $50 million gift to TU—the largest from an alum in school history. The scope is expansive, benefitting athletics, the College of Health Professions, the College of Business & Economics and programming to advance equity, diversity and inclusion.

Soistman has supported many projects and initiatives across the university by donating more than $6.1 million since making his first gift to TU in the late 1980s. He was honored last October as Maryland’s 2021 Outstanding Philanthropist of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Maryland Chapter. “In giving of his time, resources and expertise, Fran’s leadership on behalf of our students and his alma mater has been extraordinary,” President Kim Soistman says. “He set the tone for the successful launch of the RISE campaign, which he now co-chairs. I am grateful for his inspiration, generosity and friendship.”

Soistman’s understanding of philanthropy has evolved throughout his life, he says. Growing up in a middle-class family living in Towson’s Loch Raven neighborhood, his only exposure to it occurred during the weekly collections at his church.

Soistman credits his education in giving to Megan Rock, the former associate vice president of the Office of Development who first approached him in the mid-1990s. “She showed me what my contribution could do to the betterment of Towson University and the students,” Soistman says. “She got me engaged.”

Several years later, he joined the TU Foundation board, which started a long-term relationship with his alma mater. It was around this time that he made what he called his “first real gift” to the university: $50,000 to start an endowment for faculty excellence.

“The academic and professional success I’ve enjoyed really goes back to the professors I had,” Soistman says. “Good professors, good teachers change lives. They inspire, they influence, they mold you at a very impressionable time in your life. I wanted to acknowledge that.”

In 2019, an impromptu conversation with Elysa Newman, TU’s director of academic achievement, during the football team’s trip to play the University of Florida revealed a need for 20 laptops. His gift purchased the computers, which aided the players in reaching a team GPA goal that term. “That was easy to do. Address the need. No tantrum,” he says. “I could have just stood there [while waiting for the team] and worked on emails. But I knew she was part of the program. It was an opportunity to not only understand the need but actually do something about it.”

Soistman’s record-setting gift will broaden academic support for student-athletes. Renovations are currently underway in the fieldhouse to transform several classrooms into a large student-athlete academic achievement center that will accommodate more than 500 student-athletes and support on-site technology for project work, tutoring and academic advising. “It will provide our student-athletes first-class resources to maximize their academic growth while pursuing athletic excellence,” says Shawn Nadelen, head coach of the men’s lacrosse team. “Our players will be able to study and access technology in the same building where they prepare for practice and games. This truly unites the student-athlete experiences by combining the resources to win in the classroom and on the field.”

In the latest graduation success rate (GSR) data for Division I (DI) schools, TU earned a 96% GSR—highest ever. That mark is the highest among all DI University System of Maryland (USM) institutions, and TU has the highest single-year GSR among the USM DI schools at 75% for the 2011–14 cohort. Six Tiger teams earned a perfect 100% GSR in the latest report: field hockey, men’s golf, gymnastics, women’s lacrosse, men’s swimming & diving, and tennis.

“Gifts of all sizes can make a difference on the classroom and on the court or field,” Soistman says. “And, of course, contributions to existing scholarship endowments could be the difference for a student’s ability to attend college in the first place.”

Soistman is aware of the many gifts in his life: family, friends and being in a position to help others. He firmly believes “a life fulfilled goes with it,” he says. “I have a son and two daughters, and knowing that children watch everything you do and listen to every word, it’s important to model this kind of support.”

FRAN SOISTMAN’S RECORD-SETTING GIFT IS THE LATEST IN HIS PHILANTHROPIC JOURNEY.
When Catalina Rodriguez Lima '06 saw the need for an office of immigrant affairs in Baltimore, she did what she’s done her whole life: She acted.

BY MIKE UNGER

Catalina Rodriguez Lima is sitting in Teavolve in Fells Point, sipping a warm mocha latte on a chilly January afternoon. The cafe is about a mile east of Baltimore’s City Hall, where her professional career has been shaped; about a mile west of her house near Patterson Park, the beloved neighborhood she and her husband call home; and more than 2,900 miles from Cuenca, the Ecuadorian city where her unlikely journey began.

“Immigrants are here to have a better life,” she says. “That’s part of the reason why they’ve left their countries of origin. They’re extremely resilient, but they have barriers, and those barriers are challenging to address.”

She’s not talking about herself, but she very well could be. Rodriguez Lima’s story is similar to many ways to the millions of immigrants who come to this country every year. At 18, she left the only home she’d known in search of opportunity. But her remarkable accomplishments, achieved in such short order, differentiate her from the people she’s dedicated her life to serving. In 2014—just 33 years old—she led the successful effort to establish the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA). She’s the only director it’s ever had.

In 2013, she was named one of 50 women to watch by The Baltimore Sun, and, a year later, she was on the Baltimore Business Journal’s 40 Under 40 list. Rodriguez Lima, 41, appreciates the recognition but doesn’t let it distract from her singular focus: improving the quality of life for Baltimore’s immigrant population.

“What I am trying to do is carve out a space at a local level where we can think about the realities of those people that are trying to build a life like you and I.”

Cuenca is a city of about 660,000, perched more than 8,000 feet above sea level in the Andes Mountains. Rodriguez Lima was born and raised there and has fond memories of it (especially its mild climate). Her parents and younger brother still live there.

But during her teenage years, Ecuador was experiencing a banking crisis and inflation, making young people like Rodriguez Lima nervous about their futures.

“It was grim,” she says, “especially for someone who had just finished high school and was thinking about their next move.”

Rodriguez Lima had an aunt and uncle who lived in Baltimore County, so at age 18, she went to visit them for a summer. Her plan was to improve her English, so when she returned to Ecuador, she could find a job in the tourism and hospitality sector.

But for an immigrant without citizenship or permanent legal status, long-term planning is an unafforded luxury.

“There’s always a constant reminder that you have until X-date until your visa expires,” she says, “I remember coming back to Ecuador to renew my student visa. I had an apartment, I had school, and I remember going to the U.S. embassy and thinking, ‘Oh my god, what if I don’t get a renewal? What am I going to do with all my stuff? But you’re young, and you take risks.’”

That one paid off. Her student visa was renewed, and when she returned to Baltimore, she landed an internship in the office of then-Mayor Martin O’Malley. Eventually, her stellar work caught the eye of Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, then president of the city council, who hired her as a Latino liaison on her staff.

In 2010, Rodriguez Lima accompanied her to her new office in City Hall.

“When I met Catalina, I knew she had the spirit of a servant—she wanted to help people. I could tell that immediately,” Rawlings-Blake says.
“Catalina has a strong moral compass and is incredibly passionate about her role as a public servant.”

— Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott & Catalina Rodriguez Lima 

I was raised to value public service, and I could tell that is the way Catalina and I were the same.”

Rodriguez Lima says she quickly realized that the issues Latino immigrants were facing were being faced by other immigrants as well. So in 2011, she pitched the idea of creating an office of immigrant affairs to her boss. Much to her surprise, the mayor said yes.

But that was just the beginning. Rodriguez Lima developed a task force that was charged with recommending to the mayor ways to make Baltimore a more inclusive, equitable and welcoming city for immigrants. The group, comprised of people from government, nonprofits, philanthropy and immigrant communities, examined the systemic issues government had in dealing with immigrants and tried to come up with solutions that made government more accessible.

“Language barriers impact every single system that you can think of in the city, especially for public-facing services,” she says. “Your water, your police, your permits, your parking tickets. Think about all the systems that are public-facing that are not necessarily accessible to people because they don’t speak the language.

A lot of programs are not designed for immigrants who are perhaps in mixed-status households, meaning they have a U.S. citizen child and parents who are undocumented. Because of that, agencies may not necessarily know whether the family qualifies. They may not know the types of alternative documents that immigrants, who perhaps don’t have a birth certificate or a passport, may have.”

MIMA was created to help solve some of those problems. The office does not deliver direct services to citizens; its focus is on overseeing the city’s compliance with federal regulations related to serving the immigrant population and improving the way city agencies work with immigrants.

“Catalina has a strong moral compass and is incredibly passionate about her role as a public servant and director of MIMA,” Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott says through a spokesman. “She takes pride in what she does and uses it as a platform to bring people together to do greater things. Her sense of humility and resiliency inspire others to focus on goals beyond their own self-interest. Most importantly, she loves our city and cares deeply about the people who live here.”

Along with leading an office that’s grown from two to six staff, Rodriguez Lima facilitates relationships between the city and nonprofits. In 2015, she helped convince the Washington-based Latino Economic Development Center to come to Baltimore. Since opening an office in Highlandtown, the organization has offered almost $2 million in loans to small businesses and for home ownership to more than 600 (primarily Latino) residents.

“Because of the need, at some point we would have figured it out, but Catalina was very instrumental in connecting us to the right organizations in Baltimore,” says Omar Velasco, chief of small business services and lending for the group. “She is able to engage all the stakeholders and be a mediator so each party can talk to each other and collaborate and get the resources they need.”

Perhaps one reason Rodriguez Lima is such an effective leader in the immigrant community is because she has never forgotten that she is one herself. While she became an American citizen in 2019, she says will always consider herself Ecuadorian—and an immigrant—as well.

But these days, Baltimore is home. “I love this city,” she says. “This city welcomed me. I love how quickly it is. I love its sense of community. I love how progressive it is. I love its people. I love how it is rough around the edges, and it’s not perfect. Because life is not perfect.”

Rodriguez Lima has no plans to leave the office of immigrant affairs, but in a strange way, she hopes that one day it will leave her.

“Ideally, agencies have all the tools to serve immigrants,” she says. “Ideally, we wouldn’t even exist because people are thinking about this population. But that’s not the case. They’re often an afterthought.”

Not to Catalina Rodriguez Lima.
For the past five years, alumni have answered the call to welcome newly admitted students at TU through personalized congratulatory postcards. In February, more than 220 alumni volunteered to write heartfelt messages to more than 2,200 accepted students. Although the program has been popular since its inception, participation the past two years has been tremendous. At a time when on-campus, in-person interaction was limited, especially for out-of-state students, alumni continued to provide friendly, firsthand glimpses into what it’s like—and what it means—to be a Tiger. We are #TUproud to see the enthusiastic support for this important program year after year.

Alumni News

From One Tiger to Another

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Accepted Student Cookouts

Catch up with fellow Tigers and help us welcome new students at one of several cookouts this summer. Visit alumni.towson.edu/cookouts.

Grants Application Deadline

Community and professional development grants applications are due May 3. For applications, go to TigerConnect in the grants section under the resources tab. Email applications to grants@towson.edu.

Upcoming Events

APRIL

The Big Event, April 30

MAY

Eco Park, May 7

Japanese Cooking Demo, May 11

Conservation Volunteer, May 26-27

JUNE

Atlantic Whitecaps, June 3

50th Reunion Weekend (Classes of ’70, ’71, ’72), June 8-12

Novel Idea

Since launching May 2020, the TU Alumni Virtual Book Club has grown to nearly 100 members and has featured 10 wide-ranging bestsellers across multiple genres—all chosen by participants. Brandi Reaser ’07 (top photo) joined the book club “to have another outlet during the pandemic,” but she says she remains an active member because she enjoys the page-turners selected each period and comments made by fellow Tigers. Cindy Candeleri ’79 (bottom photo) says it’s been “a great way to connect with other alumni and gain insight into what they think about the books we are reading.” And, for Candeleri, it’s also been the perfect platform to collect new recommendations for her must-read list. If you’re interested in joining the book club, you can find it on Tiger Connect under the virtual resources tab. The next reading period will run from May 27 to July 29.
Honor Elizabeth Wainio ’95 Fundraiser: Alumni, family and friends gathered Oct. 23, 2021, at Ropewalk Tavern in Federal Hill to raise nearly $20,000 for the Honor Elizabeth Wainio ’95 Memorial Communications Scholarship. Since 2005, the scholarship has awarded more than $160,000 to 37 students.

1. Marc McFaul ’95, Linda McFaul, Esther Heymann ’72, Ben Wainio and Sarah Wainio
3. Jenna Mills ’09, ’16, Lori Armstrong and Margaret Paulson ’11
4. Damon and Douglas Kaiser ’77

Class of 1970 Reunion Dinner: Members of the Class of 1970 met for a mini reunion in South Campus Pavilion on Oct. 29, 2021. The intimate dinner served as a precursor to a larger, long-awaited 50th reunion celebration planned for June.

1. Top: A. Marian Lipinski ’70, James Haupt III ’70, Dianne Friel ’70, Rick Brown ’70, Sharon Bay ’70, Ronald Bay ’70, John Swivel ’70; Bottom: Deborah Cole ’70, Charlene Haupt, Patricia Fielder ’70, Debbie Young ’70, Gloria Lang ’88
2. James Fielder and James Haupt III ’70
3. Ronald Bay ’70, Sharon Bay ’70, A. Marian Lipinski ’70, John Swivel ’70, Gloria Lang ’88 and Rick Brown ’70
4. Patricia Fielder ’70, Dianne Friel ’70 and Charlene Haupt

D.C. Metro Alliance Kickoff: Tigers living or working in and around the greater Washington D.C. metropolitan area got together Dec. 4, 2021, at Sauf Haus Bier Hall & Garten to celebrate the much-anticipated launch of the D.C. Metro Alumni Alliance.

1. Bow Bruun ’14, Cherie Nicols ’99 and Keith Cohen ’08
2. David Cooler ’08 and Lee Dean ’87
3. Ashley Adkins ’14 and Emily Sessa ’15
4. Michael Crino ’94, ’01, Edward Rehfeld ’87, Bear Bruun ’14 and Danielle Neal

Lambda Zeta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Celebrates 40th Anniversary: Exactly 40 years after the Lambda Zeta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi was chartered on TU’s campus, nearly 80 members of the fraternity gathered to celebrate the milestone anniversary Feb. 27.

1. Members of Lambda Zeta sing “In the Year 1911” in West Village.
2. Chapter founder Charles (Chuck) Hagar Jr. ’80 and Barri Hutchins
3. Chuck, also known as “The Seed,” cuts the ceremonial ribbon at the chapter’s bench dedication.
4. The youngest members of Lambda Zeta pose for a photo before dinner and a celebratory program in the West Village Ballroom.
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

WEB: alumni.towson.edu/classnotes

Tiger Connect: alumni.towson.edu

Facebook: Towson University Alumni Association

Twitter: @towsonalum

Instagram: @towsonualumni

Tag your posts: @towsonalum

ANDREW MYERS ’12

History, in First Person

Jackie Cohen was just three weeks old when her father, Leon Bloomberg, left for basic training in fall 1944. And if it weren’t for a school project, she may never have realized the trove of family history she had stashed in two battered shoeboxes.

Her parents never opened the boxes, and neither did Cohen until after her father died in 2014. Later that year, her then-7-year-old granddaughter came to the graduate of Towson State Teachers College and former sixth-grade teacher for help researching Bloomberg’s correspondence with the U.S. Army 94th Infantry, from September 1944 to February 1946.

“Each one starts by calling my mother something else—‘hon,’ ‘sweetheart,’ ‘Es’ for Esther, ‘babe,’ ‘baby’—each one is so different in many ways, but they all contain personal sentiments and the everyday of what he had to do, whether it’s shining his shoes for an inspection or the rigors of basic training,” Cohen says. “Not only is it a picture of my father at war and what he thought during that time, but it’s an opportunity to see a regular person at that time, but it’s an opportunity to see a regular person at war and what he thought during that time.”

My father would be thrilled that whatever he wrote might be interesting for future generations,” she says. “And he would be thrilled that they’re at Towson.”

For video and a link to the collection, visit towson.edu/historyfirstperson.
AMY DIVIER THORNE ’04 moved to St. Augustine, Florida, with her husband, Chris, in August 2020. The last time she was on campus, “it looked amazing and a continent to look more and more beautiful.”

GREG SLATER ’97 is the former Maryland transportation director.

The Tamir Milbank Foundation is currently supporting the following: a college student to attend the University of Virginia; a graduate student in the School of Education; a graduate student in the School of Public Policy; and a graduate student in the School of Law. The foundation is also funding research on climate change and the impact of climate change on human health.

2008


AMY WEISS ’12, a director of the Jewish Federation of Northwest Arkansas, was named a partner at her law firm. She is the former Maryland immigration, estate law, related litigation, property law, and remaking vintage clothing, Vazquez has decided to open her own shop. She chose Federal Hill in 2011, and many stores in Fells Point, Hampden, Annapolis, Washington, D.C., and Towson followed.

Looking on the Brightside

Sitting in the Towson location of Brightside Boutique, her clothing and accessory store, Christie Vazquez can’t help but remark, “It is in style for me,” she says. “This location used to be a Barnes & Noble. When I went to the store [as a TU student], I used to buy fashion magazines every day, and there and read them.”

Amy’s confidence led her to post-graduate jobs at New York City fashion icons Donna Von Furstenberg, Nanette Lepore and rag & bone. It also came in handy when she decided to branch out on her own. After generating an income and a social media following creating jewelry and remaking vintage clothing, Vazquez decided to open her own shop, Brightside. She chose Federal Hill in 2011, and many stores in Fells Point, Hampden, Annapolis, Washington, D.C., and Towson followed.

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“Love what I do,” she says. “I had this goal, this dream. And I wasn’t sure to do it. Now I’m sitting in that spot where I used to read fashion magazines. It’s crazy but also really amazing, because the biggest thing I felt was missing when I was a student was a place like Brightside. People want to go into a store, have an experience and feel really good about their purchase, like, Oh, I got it from Brightside.”
Rearview Mirror

ASK AN ARCHIVIST
Hey
Felicity...
Q: What was the Junior College?
A: For almost 100 years, the mission of the Maryland State Normal School (MSNS) and then the State Teachers College at Towson (STC) was to train teachers. However, just after World War II, the school created the Junior College, which was a way for students to earn general studies credits that they could then use to transfer to other educational institutions like Towson State College in 1963. Ultimately, it paved the way for STC's transition to Towson University.

Have a question for Felicity? Email her at fknox@towson.edu.

WHAT'S NEW
Bishop Collection
In spring 2022, Special Collections and University Archives received a donation of records from the family of John Joseph "Jack" Bishop Jr. and John Joseph Bishop III. Jack was a Maryland senator from 1966 until 1981, when he was named to the Court of Special Appeals by then-Gov. Harry R. Hughes. He served as a judge until his retirement in 1996. John served in the Maryland House of Delegates for District 9 from 1987 until 1995 and later ran for state Senate and Baltimore County executive. The records focus on political party issues, local matters of public concern, legislative work, court decisions and election materials and are rich with local history and research opportunities.

1866
Elementary classes were established by the Maryland State Normal School (MSNS) to teach young children using the most current methods as well as model proper teaching to MSNS students.

1934
The first building constructed expressly for use by the elementary school opened on campus. First known as the State Normal School campus building was named the Little Lee Tall School in 1942. The building is now known as Yan Buchanan Hall. By 1934, elementary school students were encouraged to participate in their own learning, creating student-led projects for the class, such as these students constructing a boat in their classroom.

1960
The new Lida Lee Tall School building opened. Besides being more modern in design, it also allowed researchers to observe classes in action. The elementary school ceased operations in 1991, and the building was demolished in 2006 to make way for the new College of Liberal Arts building.

1997
In My Queue
JOHN BENAM, CLASS OF 1997
At National Geographic, John Benam worked on documentaries starring insects like bees and ants. He loved it but switched course in 2009 when he became a filmmaker documentary filmmaker and director of photography (DP). "It was very much compelled by the advent of social justice documentaries," says Benam, who was the DP on the hit Netflix series The Keepers. "I'm very mission oriented. I choose projects now based on whether they have a clear mission of doing right by somebody."

In 1997...
Teaching—not filmmaking—was Benam’s focus when he came to TU, but that changed when he took a film course with a group of friends. These are among the documentaries that impacted him after he made the switch.

- **Hoop Dreams**
  - The amount of time they took to tell the story of these two young basketball players growing up. It was a commitment of years.

- **Baraka**
  - It follows the progression of how nature turns to modernism and industrialization. Basically, it’s about the scourge of humans on the planet. I think it’s one of the best documentaries ever.

- **The Biggest Little Farm**
  - It’s an ethnographic, but it’s very much a conservation film too. It follows a group of people bought an old farm, and they brought their entire lives. It feels like you’re on a journey of discovery with them.

- **Microcosmos**
  - I’ve always been a nature nerd. This is a very artistic and abstract move about nature.

- **Hearts of Darkness**
  - I think Kirsten Johnson is one of the living geniuses of the documentary world. It’s about her father starting to lose his mind to dementia. She tries to capture him in a way that feels like you’re on a journey of discovery with them.

In 2022...
These days, Benam is working on a documentary about a group of people in Baltimore who built a spaceship in their garage in the 1950s in the hopes of flying it to Venus. He’s also doing one for PBS about Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott.

- **Honeyland**
  - It follows the life of a beekeeper in Macedonia. It’s like an ethnographic, but it’s very much a conservation film too.

- **Spaceship Earth**
  - There’s this place in Bordeaux where they did a two-year test, putting people into a dome, and they were on Mars. Could we live in this dome cut off from everything and survive? It has a very intriguing political element as well.

- **Dick Johnson Is Dead**
  - I think Kirsten Johnson is one of the living geniuses of the documentary world. It’s about her father starting to lose his mind to dementia. She tries to capture him in a way that feels like you’re on a journey of discovery with them.
**CHARLOTTE’S STORY**

Charlotte (Ridgeway) Sikorski ’44

I visited Towson as a high schooler; it must have been around 2009. I took a tour, and there was a Q&A panel with current students after. Matt was on that panel. He was charming, very cute and made everyone laugh, so I immediately had a crush on him. But I had to apply to the school and got in, so it was years before I actually met him. We both ended up joining student government. I was a senator sophomore year, and he was president his senior year. We became really good friends, but we were both dating other people. I was a senator sophomore year, and he was president his senior year. I actually met him. We both ended up joining student government.

We were supposed to get married in September 2020, but we decided to push it back a year because of COVID. We got married in San Diego, so whenever we went anywhere, I got to talk to her. She has orange hair, so whenever I looked in the rearview mirror, I spotted her. We got to socialize a lot over the course of that school year. The first several years of our friendship, we were always dating other people, so we built a true friendship. I talked her for all of her community service. She helped in Haiti after the earthquake; she helped build a school in Nicaragua. She was just really interesting to be around.

For the proposal, I told her I had a scavenger hunt for her like our first anniversary, which wasn’t suspicious at all since I had done it before. I sent her around our neighborhood in San Diego to find enough time to prepare for the actual proposal when she got back to the apartment. She says that she didn’t really know I was going to propose until the last clue. I’m pretty proud that I was able to still make it a surprise even though we’d already talked about getting engaged at some point in the near future.

I think knowing her as just a person for four years before anything turned romantic allowed me to gain a really good friend who has similar interests, similar goals in life and those sorts of things. That was the best foundation we could have possibly built on for our relationship. We both say this if we had started dating in Towson when we first met, we’re not sure how things would have played out or whether we still would have gotten married. Our journey almost had to play out the way that it did for us to be where we’re at now.

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**MATT’S STORY**

Matt Sikorski ’12

As gorgeous as I think she is, I don’t remember seeing her in the crowd back when I was on the panel. My first memory of meeting her is when I was elected student government president, and she was an SGA senator. Before you start the school year, you go on an SGA retreat where you meet everyone. We had four, 12-person vans that drove to the retreat. I drove one of them, and she was in my van, so whenever we went anywhere, I got to talk to her. She has orange hair, so whenever I looked in the rearview mirror, I spotted her.

When he proposed, he made a scavenger hunt. He sent me around the neighborhood in San Diego where we lived. One of the clues was in my favorite book in our local library. It ended with me coming back to the apartment and him on one knee. It was very cute, but I didn’t even have my nails done. If I had suspected it, I would have had a manicure.

We were supposed to get married in September 2020, but we decided to push it back a year because of COVID. We got married in San Diego, and it was officiated by Chris Rindish, the student organizations coordinator at TU. He was the SGA advisor.

We went to Groove on our honeymoon. It was great—there was no one really there.

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**TU Launches New Giving Society**

The Tall-Wiedefeld Society, a new and growing collective that supports positive change through philanthropy and education, launched on March 8. It was no accident that the launch coincided with International Women’s Day. Named for two of TU’s exceptional past leaders—Lida Lee Tall and Mary Theresa Wiedefeld—the Tall-Wiedefeld Society combines knowledge and passion with a commitment to creating a permanent legacy that addresses the needs of women at TU.

“We want this society’s membership to grow beyond women philanthropists,” says Brian DeFilippis, vice president for university advancement. “We welcome all members and recognize our collective giving power and ability to make a difference for Towson University and our students.” The society will fund projects through a member-driven, competitive grant process to benefit innovative and creative thinking. Co-chairs of this new giving society are Tricia Turley Brandenburg, deputy director of athletics/SAW, and Dominie E. Brown ’91, ‘W, assistant director/chief of youth services in the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development in Baltimore. For more information on the society, or to join, visit towson.edu/womensgiving.

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**Philanthropy**

Through mid-March, the RISE campaign has raised more than $80 million toward its $100 million goal.

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**Meet the Society Namesakes**

Lida Lee Tall was the head of the Maryland State Normal School (MSNS) from 1920–38. After merging with the Baltimore Teacher’s Training School in 1924, MSNS was renamed as the largest educator of certified Maryland teachers, a distinction that TU still holds today. In 1924, the school was granted the ability to award four-year Bachelor of Science degrees in education and was renamed the Maryland State Teachers College at Towson (MSTC).

Mary Theresa Wiedefeld, a 1924 graduate of the MNS and beauty queen in the Model School, was named president of MSTC in 1918. She led the school through World War I, revitalizing the campus to support community members who were serving and created a campaign to raise money by buying war bonds for school projects. She also started a junior college (see page 42) to attract more individuals to continue on after the war, essentially creating TU’s liberal arts programs in the process.

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**3 Ways To Make a Gift**

1. Online using pre-paid envelope on towson.edu/donation

2. Phone 1-866-301-3375

3. Using pre-paid envelope on page 42
For the fourth consecutive year, the Towson University Foundation (TUF) has awarded nearly $100,000 in grants to TU projects. The foundation received 22 applications requesting more than $500,000 in funding. Established in 1970 as a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation, TUF enables donors to make tax-deductible contributions to TU scholarships and fellowships, faculty development, research, outreach projects and academic and other programs.

The 2022 grant recipients include projects focusing on secure elections, mental health awareness, curriculum preparation for Living Learning Communities and urban history/cultural teaching in today’s classroom.

**EMPOWERING SECURE ELECTIONS**

This project will research, develop and validate online training modules to educate more than 50,000 poll workers on the threats to real-world voting processes, enable them to identify and mitigate the threats and build stronger awareness of potential election threats and what is being done to protect the integrity of votes. Students will play a key role in the research. To date, 17 students have contributed to research efforts, and 10 have co-authored work.

“This grant support will provide students with authentic research experiences that directly contribute to the betterment of our local, state and national election processes.”

Josh Dehlinger, professor, Department of Computer & Information Sciences

**HEALTHY MINDS, HEALTHY TIGERS**

The project will educate the campus community on mental health awareness and response through mental health first aid (MHFA) training. It will also remove mental health stigmas and increase awareness and response through mental health first aid (MHFA) training. The project will educate the campus community on mental health awareness and response through mental health first aid (MHFA) training.

**COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH AN EDUCATION-BASED IMMERSION STUDY**

Understanding the impact of urban history in teaching cultural awareness is critical to learning at the K–12 and postsecondary levels. This project brings together K–12 educators from Baltimore City and County with TU faculty and students for remote workshops and in-person, immersive field trips and community experiences. The goal is to prepare seasoned K–12 teachers and TU faculty and students to teach issues of social justice, inclusion and equity.

“Increasing our awareness of the cultural richness of historic Black communities and businesses in Baltimore will transform our own classroom practices.”

Marna McBride, professor, Department of Elementary Education

**HOUSING & RESIDENCE LIFE LEARNING COMMUNITY**

An Office of Housing & Residence Life and Division of Academic Affairs partnership, this residential curriculum and reorienting process for new Living Learning Community will increase first-year student exposure to faculty and academic peers and improve academic performance, engagement and retention rates. Lessons learned will be applied to future operations with a goal of 50–60% of first-year residential students actively engaging in learning communities.

“We are committing the combined resources of academic affairs and student affairs to offer more high-impact, co-curricular living learning experiences for our residential students.”

Melissa Jenson, director of housing & residence life

**VOICES AND PLACES OF BALTIMORE: EXPLORING LIFE UNDER SEGREGATION AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH AN EDUCATION-BASED IMMERSION STUDY**

The project brings together K–12 educators from Baltimore City and County with TU faculty and students for remote workshops and in-person, immersive field trips and community experiences. The goal is to prepare seasoned K–12 teachers and TU faculty and students to teach issues of social justice, inclusion and equity.

“Increasing our awareness of the cultural richness of historic Black communities and businesses in Baltimore will transform our own classroom practices.”

Marna McBride, professor, Department of Elementary Education

**DONOR PROFILE**

**John Eubank IV ’09**

John Eubank IV is the youngest alumnus to endow a scholarship at TU. The vice president of cyber growth for Black Horse Solutions, Eubank says he is thankful for the people, experiences “and even the failures” that have been foundational to his success.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE YOUNGEST TU ALUM TO ENDOW A SCHOLARSHIP AT TU?**

Being the youngest has been a pattern in my life. I started college at 17, and, across my career and personal life, I have frequently been the youngest person in the room. This has shaped a lot of who I am. You don’t have to wait until later in life to make a difference; it is something that can be done throughout your life and career.

**YOUR FAMILY IS A TU LEGACY. DID THEIR DEEP CONNECTIONS TO TU INFLUENCE YOUR COLLEGE DECISION?**

The maternal side of my family goes back several generations to the original Maryland State Normal School. My older sister and younger brother attended TU. For me it was the dual degree in business administration and computer information systems that aligned with my career focus. And TU was affordable. I had to pay my own way through school, lived at home and commuted while working multiple jobs.

**HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR GIVING INFLUENCES OTHERS?**

I got through college thanks to scholarship and grants. In part, my current success is because of those who established scholarships. I want to provide that same opportunity to other students, and I hope that the success of my scholarship are one day in a place where they can also give back.

Read more about Eubank’s memories of TU and his views on success and life at towson.edu/BISE.
As the head park ranger at Lake Roland, Jonathan Wood's office is more than 500 acres of trails, water and woods that are home to deer, coyotes, beavers, otters and a bevy of birds. The park, which is operated by Baltimore County, attracts more than 300,000 people a year. They come to fish, hike, canoe, kayak or simply picnic. "You've got diversity of history, nature and recreation here," says Wood '11. "You get a diverse population of people who come here as well, which is awesome."
Make an Impact.

Philanthropic support is vital to helping our community reach its greatest potential. The TU Fund, with your support, fuels our momentum. This annual giving fund targets your gift where it’s needed most: the programs and people who are making a difference in every corner of our campus and beyond.

Every gift matters. Every day.

For more information, contact:

Nky McGinnis
Director of the Annual Campaign
PHONE | 410-704-3869
EMAIL | nmcginnis@towson.edu
SAVE THE DATES

VIRTUAL GLOBAL ALUMNI REUNION
Aug. 18 – Aug. 21

If you were an international student, study abroad participant or if you are an alum from the U.S. living abroad, join us for our first global reunion.

The weekend will feature a series of virtual events, including a tour of TU’s campus, Baltimore-themed cooking class, scavenger hunt and wine tasting as well as opportunities to network with other alumni and connect with TU’s international students.

Visit alumni.towson.edu/globalreunion to learn more.