

TC TODAY

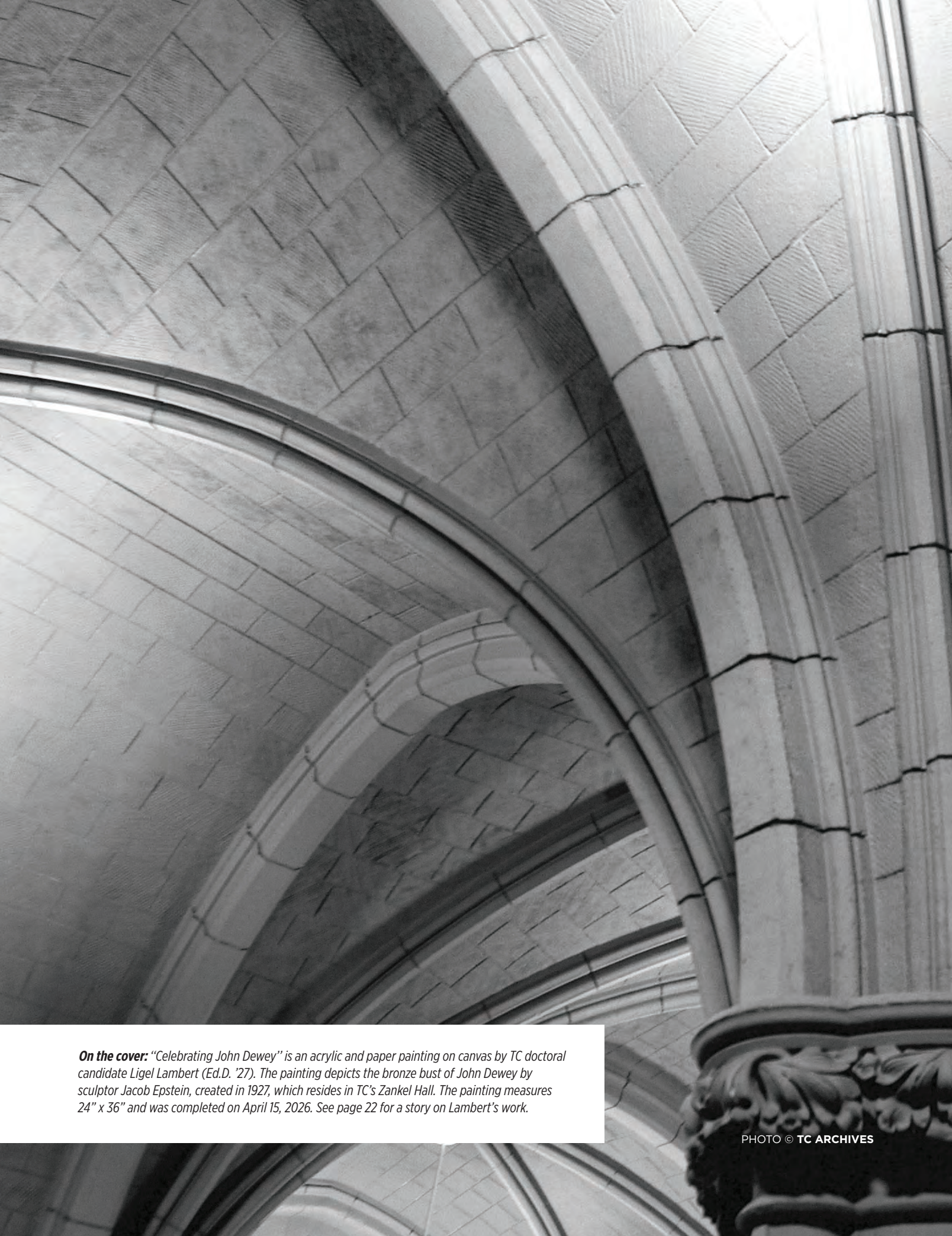


John Dewey &
TC's Global Impact

Special Education
Alumni Entrepreneurs
Field Study: Psychology

SUMMER 2026

Kged
April 15, 2016



On the cover: “Celebrating John Dewey” is an acrylic and paper painting on canvas by TC doctoral candidate Ligel Lambert (Ed.D. '27). The painting depicts the bronze bust of John Dewey by sculptor Jacob Epstein, created in 1927, which resides in TC’s Zankel Hall. The painting measures 24” x 36” and was completed on April 15, 2026. See page 22 for a story on Lambert’s work.

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Institutional Advancement

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Dear Readers,

Among the many towering figures across the history of Teachers College who have left their imprint on the College and the world, few are in the category of John Dewey. He remains as strong a presence today as he did in the early 1900s, when he graced our halls as a Professor of Philosophy, and shifted the very way that we approach education.

From Dewey's focus on experiential learning, to an emphasis on learner-centered classrooms, to his belief in schools and education as key drivers of a functioning democracy, to his value of global exchange and cross-cultural learning: we are still informed by his teaching and practice, his drive and his legacy.

And so I especially appreciate our *TC Today* cover treatment of John Dewey by TC Arts and Education doctoral candidate, Ligel Lambert. It is based on the bust that greets me every morning as I pass through Zankel Hall on the way to my office. Here he is in full color, which feels like a striking metaphor for where we are today: even as much has changed since his retirement in 1930, he is revered in our classrooms today for his focus on how we think, how we act and what we do to impact the world around us — still appropriate for our current times.

You can feel John Dewey's teachings in so many of the stories you will read in this issue: about our global reach, which grew substantially thanks to the many contacts Dewey made in China and Japan in the 1910s and 1920s, and our round-up of alumni entrepreneurs, who combined their schooling with their passions and "learned by doing," creating new endeavors just by connecting to larger ideas and being open to change.

You will also read about the expertise and latest efforts of some of our stellar TC faculty across disciplines, including different areas of psychology, special education, the history of education and more.

Throughout these pages, you will see a look back, to the origins of a given area, and a look forward as we continue to break new ground. There is always room for new colors on the patina of our past, new ideas that build on the foundation of who we are and our lifelong commitment to learning and the fundamentals of our democratic society. This is the story of Teachers College, and I am grateful for your part in it.

With best wishes,

Thomas Bailey
President

As Seen On TC Way

Dear readers, how remarkable it is to look back on yet another busy year at Teachers College. As the new season offers longer days and (hopefully) less hectic schedules, may we have the extra time to practice the wisdom at the crux of so much of our work: Flexibility is the key to success. Such agility is at the core of thought-provoking insight from Peter Coleman (Ph.D. '98), who rallied a community of scholars for an **insightful dialogue** on conflict resolution last fall (right).

Working together to tackle problems was also at the core of the meaningful practice at the heart of the **Midwinter Climate Institute** (below) and during TC's conference with our global partners at the **European University for Well-Being** (below), which convened hundreds of scholars at TC and the United Nations Plaza to discuss policy proposals to improve teacher well-being.

These are just a few highlights of what we saw on TC Way this past year. In the interest of following our own advice, we invite you to keep joining us in the work and imagining new possibilities. In this issue of *TC Today*, you'll read about the agility that keeps our faculty, students and alumni working to solve problems: from special education and global research to the private sector and beyond.

We hope to see you on TC Way soon.

— Morgan Gilbard Manore
TC Today Managing Editor



TC's annual **Midwinter Climate Institute**, co-hosted with the NYC Schools Office of Energy & Sustainability, attracted 500 K–12 educators eager to integrate climate education into their curricula. Pictured: Associate Professor Oren Pizmony-Levy, Director of TC's Center for Sustainable Futures, addresses attendees at the College's Joyce B. Cowin Auditorium.



Hundreds of scholars convened at Teachers College and the United Nations in February for a landmark conference on educator well-being as part of TC's ongoing partnership with the **European University for Well-Being**.



Teachers, school leaders and scholars gathered for thought-provoking professional development as part of the **Black Education Research Center's** (BERC) summer conference in June, building upon the Center's ongoing work to help educators implement its landmark Black Studies curriculum. Pictured: Sonya Douglass, BERC Founding Director and Professor of Education Leadership (center); Muhammad Khalifa, Professor of Educational Administration and Executive Director of Urban and Rural Initiatives at The Ohio State University (left); and Mark Gooden, Christian Johnson Endeavor Professor of Education Leadership at TC.

Peter T. Coleman (Ph.D. '98), Professor of Psychology and Education, discusses the **new executive education program** on conflict resolution with Debra Noumair, Professor of Psychology and Education, at the launch of the Conflict Intelligence Lab in November.



TC's Education for Persistence and Innovation Center (EPIC) convened Tony Award-winning producer Michael Price (right) and NBA champion Shane Battier (left) for a discussion on how their respective experiences with failure contributed to each of their success. Price also received EPIC's **Failing Forward Award**, the latest milestone in the center's work to help people more effectively leverage failure to support their goals.



The **Faculty Appreciation Awards** included honors for Cate Crowley (second from left), Professor of Practice of Communication Sciences and Disorders, and several other faculty recognized for contributions that included teaching, mentorship, leadership and service. Pictured from left to right: KerryAnn O'Meara, outgoing Provost; Crowley; Laura Smith, Interim Provost; and President Thomas Bailey.

TC Welcomes New Leaders

TC's Laura Smith Appointed Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost and Dean of the College

Teachers College has appointed Laura Smith, Professor of Psychology and Education in the Counseling Psychology Program and Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs, as Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost and Dean of the College. Smith assumed her new role on July 1, 2026.

Smith joined the TC faculty in the Department of Counseling & Clinical Psychology in 2005 and is a recognized leader at TC, having served as Chair of the Department of Counseling & Clinical Psychology from 2021 to 2025, and previously as Director of Clinical Training.

"I have gotten to know Dr. Smith well during my time as President and have appreciated her wise counsel and innovative contributions to our Public Good Initiative," President Thomas Bailey wrote to the community in announcing her appointment. "I know we will benefit from [Dr. Smith's] many talents, including her devotion to building on TC's historic contributions to the field, her strong relationships with faculty and administration and her demonstrated commitment to supporting TC's collegial culture and strategic vision."

Smith's research team, IncLab, studies and publishes on critical approaches to psychology, addressing the



Laura Smith

interface between psychological practice and social marginalization and the mapping of psychology's early engagement with artificial intelligence. Smith was previously the Director of Training for Pace University's Predoctoral Psychology Internship Program and the founding Director of the Rosemary Furman Counseling Center at Barnard College. She was also the Director of Psychological Services at the West Farms Center in the Bronx, where she provided services, training and programming within a multifaceted community-based organization. She is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association.

Smith received her B.A. in English and Psychology with High Distinction from the University of Virginia, and her M.S. and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University.



KerryAnn O'Meara

Special Thanks to KerryAnn O'Meara

The Teachers College community celebrated the contributions of Dr. KerryAnn O'Meara, who concluded her term as TC's Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean of the College on June 30th. O'Meara began serving as Fordham University's new Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs on July 1st.

"I am grateful for KerryAnn's leadership and development of deep connections in our community, which reinforced a culture of collaboration and shared purpose across the College," President Thomas Bailey shared in a message to the community.

TC Board of Trustees Appoints New Member Mary Edlow (M.A. '67)

Teachers College elected alumna Mary Edlow (M.A. '67) to its Board of Trustees at its May 2026 meeting. Edlow is a psychoanalyst who has been in private practice in New York City for almost 40 years.

“We are so fortunate to welcome alumna Mary Edlow as TC Board’s newest member,” said Leslie Morse Nelson, Chair of the Board. “Mary’s deep commitment to the TC community, and the expertise and insight she brings from her decades of practice and research as a psychoanalyst will add tremendous value to the TC Board of Trustees in our ongoing work to support the strength and success of the College.”

“Mary’s impressive professional accomplishments and reputation reflect her abiding dedication to children and their well-being, and it’s a point of pride for us that she got her start here at Teachers College,” said President Thomas Bailey. “I have appreciated many conversations with Mary about TC, and I know that her expertise in mental health, her wisdom and her passion for this great institution will benefit us enormously. I am thrilled to welcome her to the Board.”

Edlow is a Co-Director of the Edith Laufer Neuropsychanalytic Clinical Study Center (ELNCSC) at the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP), where she has been an active member for more than 25 years and teaches Psychoanalytic Theory of Early Childhood Development. Edlow’s research also focuses on topics involving psychoanalytic psychotherapy for brain injury, including co-authoring research on “Reparative Adaptation After Brain Injury Facilitated by Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy” in 2023.



Mary Edlow

Edlow holds her Ph.D. from New York University; M.S.W. from Hunter College; M.A. in Curriculum and Teaching from TC (1967); and an undergraduate degree from Simmons College (1966). Edlow joined the President’s Advisory Council in November 2025. She has also championed and supported the Edlow Reproductive Literacy Project at Teachers College, which focuses on reproductive identity formation and intentional pregnancy and parenting. Edlow is a current board member of The New York Historical and a former board member of Sanctuary for Families.

Edlow is a lifelong New Yorker. Her husband, Kenneth Edlow, is a trustee and treasurer of the American Numismatic Society. Edlow has two children and three grandchildren.



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

President Thomas Bailey's address to graduates affirmed that it is critical to lead with compassion and empathy, which TC cultivates in its students.

Celebrating the Class of 2026

Teachers College honored more than 1,900 graduates from the Class of 2026 during four ceremonies at the United Palace Theater in Washington Heights on May 18 and 19. Joining a global alumni community more than 100,000 strong, graduates celebrated alongside their families while emerging as the next generation of leading scholars in education, health and psychology.

In his address to the Class of 2026, President Thomas Bailey urged graduates to lead with compassion, integrity, and heart: "The world is messy, [and] the challenges are real. But you are ready. You will make the hard calls with integrity and compassion, assuming the risk of criticism and even failure. You will make an enormous difference because you have the ability and you also have the heart."



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

The Class of 2026 officially joined TC's robust alumni community as part of Convocation ceremonies in May.



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

Prudence L. Carter (M.A. '95), Sarah and Joseph Jr. Dowling Professor of Sociology at Brown University, received TC's Medal for Distinguished Service and addressed graduates from the Counseling & Clinical Psychology and Human Development departments.



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

Wanda Marie Holland Greene (Ed.M. '21, M.A. '92), Head of the Hamlin School in San Francisco, received the Medal for Distinguished Service and addressed graduates from the Mathematics, Science & Technology and Organization & Leadership departments.



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

Kate MacKenzie (M.S. '02), Executive Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy, received the Medal for Distinguished Service and addressed graduates in the Biobehavioral Sciences, Health Studies & Applied Educational Psychology, International & Transcultural Studies, and Education Policy & Social Analysis departments.



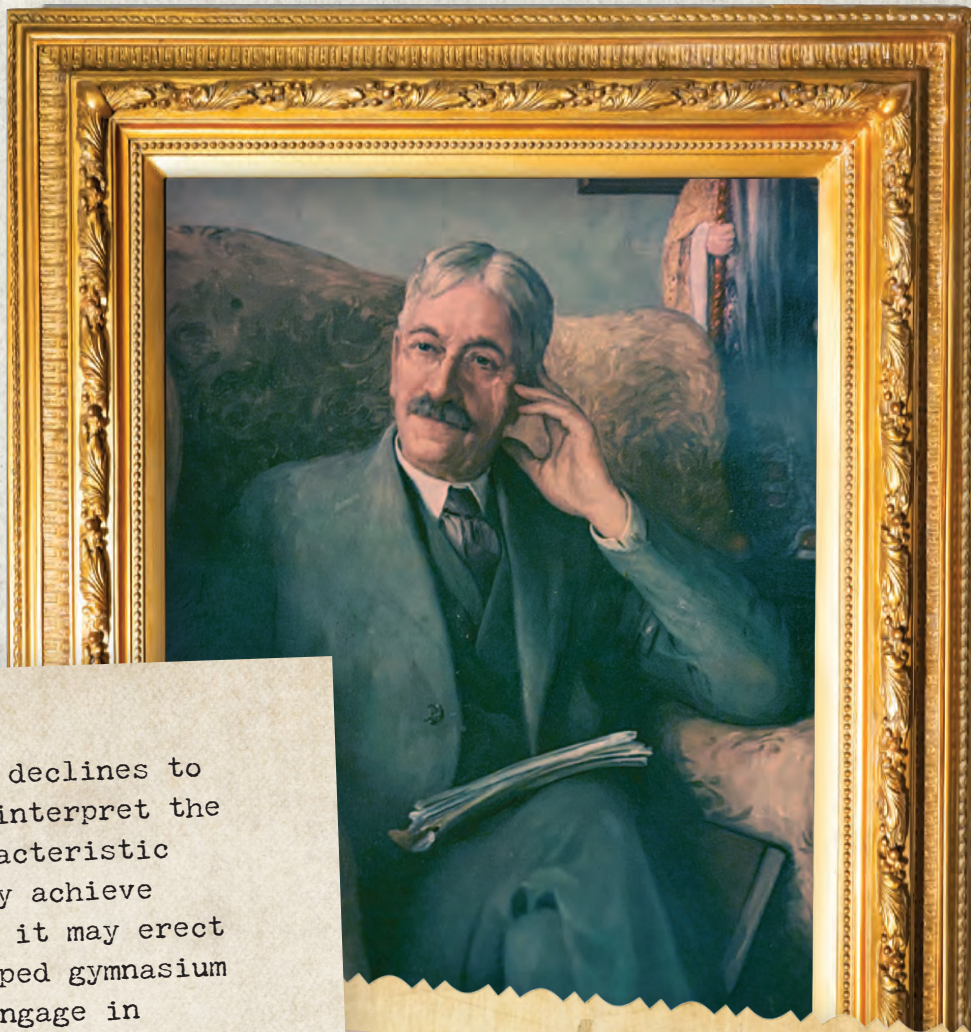
PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

Misty Copeland, world-renowned ballet dancer, author, educator and philanthropist, received the Medal for Distinguished Service in the final convocation ceremony and addressed graduates in the Arts & Humanities and Curriculum & Teaching programs.



The Class of 2026, alongside their friends and families, gathered at the United Palace Theater in Washington Heights for the Teachers College Convocation.





If philosophy declines to observe and interpret the new and characteristic scene, it may achieve scholarship; it may erect a well-equipped gymnasium wherein to engage in dialectical exercises; it may clothe itself in fine literary art. But it will not afford illumination or directions to our confused civilization. These can proceed only from the spirit that is interested in realities and that faces them frankly and sympathetically.

— John Dewey



Above, pictured clockwise: 1) A portrait of John Dewey painted by the late Edwin B. Child in 1929. 2) John Dewey (left) stands next to the bronze bust of his likeness, with William Heard Kilpatrick, TC Professor of Education. 3) An excerpt from Dewey's essay, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," published in 1917. (Images courtesy of Columbia Libraries)

Global Perspectives

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

From the founding of comparative education to John Dewey and 21st-century research, a look at the College's international reach across generations and continents

In the nearly 75 years since the death of John Dewey, TC's legendary professor of philosophy from 1904 to 1930, his work has continued to capture the public imagination of educators and scholars across the world.

Influential enough to inspire his own adjective ("Deweyan"), the TC giant conceived of education psychology principles that are now considered ubiquitous: experiential learning, class discussion and education's essential role in building thriving societies.

Would schools as we know them today exist without Dewey? Simply not explains David Hansen, the College's John L. & Sue Ann Weinberg Professor in Historical & Philosophical Foundations of Education, who has seen Dewey's "ever-contemporary philosophy" continue to resonate around the world. This impact is felt in scholarly and teacher education faculties in Europe, South America, Japan, South Korea and, of special note, in China, where Dewey's two-year sabbatical in 1919 inspired generations of additional scholarship and helped set the stage for the College's enduring commitment to academic exchange in China and elsewhere.

"It's remarkable how [Dewey's] voice continues to speak to a lot of people even though contexts have changed quite dramatically," says Hansen, whose extensive body of work includes numerous writings on the famed philosopher and educator. Across Hansen's many visits with colleagues in China, Dewey's scholarship remains foundational to how education leaders, teachers and scholars conceive of possibilities for their students. At home, Dewey remains a key draw

for scholars visiting the College, who may stop by to see his bust in Zankel Hall (depicted on this issue's cover) before conversing with those who have followed in his footsteps.

Dewey's lasting impact is a key component of TC's broader international story, which began just two years after the school's founding in 1887, when future TC President James Earl Russell (who served 1898–1926) offered the first course on comparative education. Thousands of international students would come to TC as a result, and the College established its International Institute — a hub for faculty research and scholarship abroad — in 1923. Led by Paul Monroe, another notable founder of progressive education, the Institute both supported education projects abroad and funded the education of international school leaders at Teachers College.

“

The future of education
is a global responsibility.

— Thomas Bailey, TC President



PHOTO © ROB DAVIDSON

TC's David Hansen, John L. & Sue Ann Weinberg Professor in Historical & Philosophical Foundations of Education (center), in conversation with Philosophy and Education doctoral students Jensen Okimoto (left) and Daniel Davis (right).

The College would go on to establish the first academic program for comparative and international education in the United States, and scholars such as Liping Bu largely credit TC with popularizing the field by the 1930s.

International academic exchange was, in Monroe's words, "the greatest advantage...in cultivating international understanding and goodwill" — a perspective that has endured at the College in the century since. As TC President Thomas Bailey said of the College's current work with international partners just this past February: "The future of education is a global responsibility."

So what has TC's international reach looked like in the years since Dewey? Over the next several decades, the College's international roots and diverse community (today composed of students from 74 countries) would serve as the foundation for additional partnerships to unfold, explains Portia Williams (Ed.D. '08), TC's Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Global Affairs.

"Teachers College, in particular, has a global history that just doesn't exist within many other institutions in the United States," explains Williams, who has been a leading force in TC's international work since 2008 and sees its expansive trajectory as interconnected throughout its history.

In other words, Teachers College didn't just happen to create the field of comparative education; its earliest international students and scholars created the conditions for the field to emerge. Similarly, TC did not just happen to embark on a slew of interesting projects for the remainder of the 20th century: infusing the concept of education as a human right into UNESCO's strategic reorientation post World War II; scaling scholarship into the enduring World Yearbook of Education; creating curriculum and textbooks in Afghanistan from 1954 to 1979; and helping the U.S. State Department prepare teachers in East Africa — to name just a few. TC scholars were (and continue to be) called upon.



The Teachers for East Africa program welcomes 150 educators to the region in 1961 for their service in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The program, one of the first international initiatives of President John F. Kennedy, would go on to place more than 600 educators in East African schools by 1972.

PHOTO © TC ARCHIVES

Did you know?

Dewey was partly inspired to travel to China by his TC pupil Xingzhi Tao, who later returned to his home country to build upon Dewey's philosophy and help improve education access in rural areas.



The Columbia China Education Research Association in 1916. Xingzhi Tao (second row, fifth from left), a doctoral student at TC from 1915–17, created educational opportunities for rural Chinese citizens, and inspired his mentors — John Dewey, Paul Monroe (third row, fourth from left) and William Heard Kilpatrick — to pursue research on education in China.



Students traveled to Paris in March to learn how global education agendas are set, coordinated, and challenged in today's shifting international landscape under the expertise of Gita Steiner-Khamsi, William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Comparative Education, and Jessica Riccio (Ed.D. '08, Ed.M. '02, M.A. '99), Associate Professor of Teaching (front row, center). The program is just one of the College's growing number of TC faculty-led study abroad offerings.

“Because of our history, we’ve always been steeped in this global outlook for education,” says Williams, who continues to oversee TC’s Office of Global Engagement, which is responsible for developing, coordinating and expanding the scope of the College’s international initiatives.

In recent years, faculty projects abroad have spanned continents and disciplines — from offering continuing education to English language teachers and students in countries outside of the U.S. to building capacity among local speech pathologists and mental health counselors to support refugees. Carrying on in the Deweyan tradition, scholars in China have remained strong partners through the work of TC’s Center on Chinese Education, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last year. A recent analysis conducted by the Department of International & Transcultural Studies quantifies TC’s international work, finding that the College significantly outpaces fellow graduate schools of education in the volume of faculty and programs focused internationally.

Regardless of the international partner or the project, the Office of Global Engagement’s work has always been rooted in relationships “grounded in mutual respect and shared benefit,” says Williams. Helping faculty and students support research and scholarship abroad, Williams and her team are called to “navigate complexity, to engage across differences with humility,

and to approach global work with an awareness of its ethical dimensions...We start with our one-on-one relationships, but our focus is to build those important relationships out so that we can build partnerships that are long-lasting with maximum impact.”

In addition to supporting faculty research and practice, the College has also created academic pathways for students to expand the field of international and comparative education. In 1994, former TC President Arthur Levine charged Clifford Hill, the late Arthur I. Gates Professor of Language and Education Emeritus, with creating, naming and leading a new International & Transcultural Studies Department (ITS), with a mission to address global challenges of equity, peace, human rights and sustainable development in education.

The department would help usher in what Gita Steiner-Khamsi, the William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Comparative Education, describes as a new “golden era” for international work at the College. When she joined the College in 1995, “it was like all the doors, all the opportunities to collaborate were open because we had important alumni all over the world,” says Steiner-Khamsi, who has since worked with the next generation of leading scholars in comparative education.

What International Students Say

“

Being part of the TC community has shaped who I am. It's about the experiences we bring as individuals — and how we use them to strengthen and give back to our community. It is never too early to start, and no action is too small to do the right thing.

— Yuang (Connor) Song, doctoral student from Beijing, China



Scholars affiliated with TC's International Institute visit a Baltimore school in 1930. The International Institute advanced much of TC's global work during the 20th century.



Portia Williams, Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Global Affairs, at the “Bridging Well-being and (Teacher) Education: A Globalized Perspective to Science Diplomacy” conference hosted at Teachers College and the UN Plaza in February with the European University for Well-Being.

One of her earliest doctoral cohorts established the field’s first online journal, *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary next year. Of the more than 70 TC doctoral students she has mentored, Steiner-Khamsi has witnessed the “unbelievable careers they have made and their contributions to the growth of our field.”

Nevertheless, graduates from across TC’s disciplines often go on to make contributions to their fields internationally — as economists, health policy officials, instructional designers, mental health experts and more. To be globally minded is embedded within the College itself.

“For graduate students, in particular, global education offers a framework for pursuing research and practice that is both contextually grounded and internationally informed,” says Williams, herself a doctoral graduate of TC’s International Educational Development program. “Their work often sits at the intersection of disciplines and geographies, requiring both analytical rigor and cultural fluency.”

To support students embarking on more of these experiences, the Office of Global Engagement launched study abroad programs in 2024 with offerings from Argentina to France, China and beyond. By implementing study abroad at the graduate level, the College has expanded existing partnerships and strategically unlocked opportunities for students and professionals to deepen their own research and practice while providing meaningful services to local partners. TC’s study abroad programs “bring real support” to communities, explains Amine Mechaal, TC’s Executive Director of Global Engagement. “Our partnerships are mutually beneficial, two-way streets.”

As TC continues its work around the world, Dewey’s famous bust in Zankel Hall will soon turn a century old. But the legend’s presence is most striking elsewhere. Hansen has experienced Dewey’s impact most profoundly in schools across the world, where he’s seen teachers embody Dewey’s most beloved principle: to embrace life as art to foster learning for its own sake.

“Dewey’s vision of learning remains very powerful. I think he’s absolutely right that if we’re doing everything we can to make learning artful, and we’re really immersed in the moment, then the future is taken care of,” says Hansen. “Dewey’s legacy is, in a wonderful, messy way, behind a lot of the good work that’s going on in schools everywhere.”

— Morgan Gilbard Manore





Mary Mendenhall, Associate Professor of International and Comparative Education (back row, fifth from left), with students last year in Morocco, where they explored the complex dynamics of refugee and migration policy within education systems as part of one of the College's robust faculty-led study abroad programs. They are joined by Portia Williams, Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Global Affairs (middle row, second from left) and Amine Mechaal, Executive Director of Global Engagement (bottom, second from left).



أَنبَادُ الْخَيْرِ نَعْسُهُ وَفُؤَادُ الْمَلِكِ
فَقَتَّ فِي الدَّرْعِ نَارَ الْمُلُوكِ الْمَرْعِيَّةِ
وَعَلَّافُ رِيحٍ مَا شَرَفَ مَا فِي السَّيِّئِ
وَعَرَّاسُ دُخَانٍ أَوْ مَالِ مُسْتَسِيحِ
سَادَ عَجْرِ الْحَسْرِ الْبَانِ أَمْسِ الْمَوْعِدِ
مَنْ جَمَعَهُ رِيحُ التَّمَكِّي وَالْفَتْحِ الْمَلِيحِ
وَإِذَا أَصْبَحَ النَّادُ وَمَعَاؤُهُ لَا تَرِيدُ
فَلَنَا لَعْلًا نَطْلُو بِسَلَامٍ أَمِينِ

PHOTO © TC ARCHIVES

The Art of Ligel

Inside the artistic vision of TC doctoral candidate Ligel Lambert (Ed.D. '27), this year's *TC Today* cover artist

"Portraits often speak louder than words, so too it is with Ligel Lambert's Fauvist-inspired artistic rendition of John Dewey. Lambert's use of sharp contours and strong colors insists on a dignified presence, not so much to the eye as to the activities of the contemplative mind," shares TC's Judy Burton, Macy Professor of Education and director of the Art & Art Education program, and Lambert's advisor. "His work invites us into a dialogue and, through the urgency of its strong brushwork, conjures memories remade in challenging times."

Celebrating John Dewey, an acrylic and paper painting on canvas, depicts the bronze bust of John Dewey by sculptor Jacob Epstein, created in 1927, which resides in the central corridor of TC's Zankel Hall.

Lambert is a doctoral candidate in TC's Art & Art Education program and serves as an adjunct professor at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design as well as an adjunct lecturer at Hunter College (CUNY). His interdisciplinary practice spans painting, drawing, printmaking, mixed media and sculpture. His art "seeks to capture the intricacies of the human experience through symbolic references, revealing how creativity, mentorship and expression shape the communities we build, where each piece created is a celebration, and each individual piece tells a unique story."

Born in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, and raised in Savannah, Georgia, Lambert developed an early passion for the fine arts and music. He attended Savannah Arts Academy during high school and briefly studied at the Savannah College of Art & Design before serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he was a musician in one of the Corps' 12 prestigious musical bands.

Following his military service, Lambert returned to college as a non-traditional student, utilizing the G.I. Bill to support his studies. After earning a bachelor's in fine arts with a concentration in graphic design (2011), he would go on to earn a master's in fine arts with a

concentration in painting (2013) and a master's degree in education with a specialization in curriculum and instruction (2021).

In his artistic practice, Lambert explores themes of celebration and sound, applying geometric abstraction and symbolism. His non-naturalistic use of color echoes the Fauves, particularly the painter André Derain, whose bold color palette continues to influence his work.

His early career included teaching and artistry in Savannah before teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in South Korea and Japan. Lambert taught visual art and graphic design in China from 2015 to 2018.



A Symbolic Representation of Glenn Ligon, Casein, acrylic, paper, flag, metal, and aluminum foil on a premium wooden panel, 36" x 48", 2026.



Ligel Lambert (Ed.D. '27)

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIGEL LAMBERT

Lambert in his art studio in the Bronx, captured in 2025, with the Fauvist-inspired portrait painting of Odili Donald Odita.

In 2018, Lambert continued teaching visual art and graphic design to high school students in New York City before applying to TC's doctoral program in Art & Art Education in 2021 in order to pursue teaching in higher education.

To explore his interpretation of sound, Lambert uses a wide array of surrealistic musical notations that he has created to further translate the meaning behind his sound-based works and paintings. "Music can also be sound," he shares, "but sound is not always music."

His newest collection of work, the "Black Male Artist Professor Series," celebrates visibility and accessibility in higher education, specifically within visual art

programs & art education progress in the United States. "I wanted to highlight Black male artist-professors in the field who have led with inclusivity and created a space for others to thrive." A show extending this series was featured this spring/summer (May 1st through June 30th) in TC's Offit Gallery in the Gottesman Libraries.

Learn more about Lambert and his work at:
www.ligel.com

— Jacqueline Teschon





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Reflecting on American Identity

As the U.S. — and the Declaration of Independence — turns 250 years old, a new project from TC faculty and students offers the public an opportunity to reflect on America's origins, historical narratives often overlooked and what we can learn from them

Imagining Liberty (noun):

“A call to action and active citizenship — challenging everyone in the U.S. to become makers of our history and our future each day.”

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Those words, which begin the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, are among the most important and oft cited in political history. They are front and center in the national consciousness as the nation celebrates the declaration's 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026.

For the Imagining Liberty Project, led by TC Professor Thomas James, “the ideas of liberty and the reality of who was included are a defining American conversation.” In exploring the changing conditions of education and experience during the Revolutionary era, the initiative helps students, educators and others examine how those shifts gave rise to the thinking found in the declaration and better understand the United States, its history and its challenges today.

Across a suite of commissioned papers, a podcast series, a professional development course, a conference and outreach and engagement with educational organizations, Imagining Liberty is designed as Socratic rather than didactic — leveraging the 250th anniversary of the declaration to spark meaningful inquiry and reflection. The project seeks to illuminate the Declaration of Independence as “a call to action and active citizenship — challenging everyone in the U.S. to become makers of our history and our future each day.”

“The Declaration of Independence was a crucially important action for the world,” says James, Professor of History & Education, who collaborated with a team of students across a variety of programs at TC as well as with scholars and educators from other universities and organizations.

Thomas James, Professor of History & Education (second from left), with student contributors to the Imagining Liberty project. Pictured from left to right: Katie Jonckheer (M.A. student, History & Education); James; Nairy Bzdigian (M.A. student, Anthropology & Education); Nick Shiffman (M.A. student, International & Comparative Education); Andrea Kim (doctoral candidate, Sociology & Education); and Aldo B. Martin Benros (M.A. student, History & Education).



James (left) with doctoral student Andrea Kim and master's student Aldo B. Martin Benros, hosts of the Imagining Liberty podcast, "To US, from US: A Public Response to the Declaration of Independence."

"The declaration created the United States — the first time in history that a colony or region proclaimed itself to be a sovereign nation with a written statement and reasons for its independence. At the same time, the declaration was flawed with regard to slavery, Indigenous people and the enfranchisement of women. We're living with resounding words expressing 'these truths,' but also with the reality that the rights and opportunities they promised were not extended to many people in society."

Imagining Liberty, funded by the Richard Lounsbery Foundation through a two-year grant to TC called "1776: Seedtime of American Education," is a multifaceted project that seeks to further the conversation about these contradictions rather than to definitively answer them — a task particularly well suited for a graduate school of education rooted in deep inquiry and dialogue.

This call to action includes engaging with the declaration's complexities, and the project aims to connect with individuals across the political spectrum.

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This is a moment for everyone to be part of the conversation.

— Thomas James, Professor of History & Education

“This is a moment for everyone to be part of the conversation,” says James, who believes that learners actively create understanding by taking initiative to connect new information and insight with knowledge derived from their past experiences.

Imagining Liberty looks at how different groups of people living in Revolutionary times constructed their own meanings from the declaration. It asks audiences to consider the ways in which grievances against King George III shaped how different groups of Americans experienced the changing economy and the politics of state and local governments. How might an enslaved person or member of an Indigenous nation view the issue of domestic insurrections? What classes of colonists might have been most affected by the suspension of trade with countries other than Great Britain? Who, in addition to “foreigners” coming to the colonies in rising numbers, might have had the greatest stake in a steady flow of immigration?

Imagining Liberty highlights the continued importance of engaging with the declaration 250 years after its appearance in 1776, attesting that the document “belongs to every generation that chooses to engage with it.”

“We have to use our political processes to come to an agreement on decisions. So, the project isn’t meant to promote optimism or pessimism,” says James, emphasizing the importance of civic engagement. “It’s about being an active citizen. That’s where greater happiness lies for everyone in this nation that was launched by the Declaration of Independence, even when people disagree as they always will about many things.”

Wherever you go, the desire for freedom is ubiquitous, and James believes it is innate: “Even though the declaration excluded many groups, it unleashed a hope for ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness’ in all kinds of people. This widely shared aspiration became a driving force in the history of the United States.”

— Joe Levine



Imagining Liberty

How to “Imagine Liberty”:

- Read commissioned papers by academic experts across history and education that include an exploration of the perspectives of 11 different constituencies during the Revolutionary Era, essays on “Liberty’s Children” and new kinds of schools in that era, a piece of historical fiction on the aspirations of women, and an account of the efforts of Thomas Jefferson, the declaration’s primary author, to promote the state’s role in support of science and higher education.
- Listen to a podcast series, “To US, from US: A Public Response to the Declaration of Independence,” featuring insights from the project’s scholars and the American public in response to the question, “What does the Declaration of Independence mean to you?”
- Learn through an asynchronous micro-credentialing course designed for educators seeking richer, more inclusive ways to teach the American Revolution as the nation celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.



tc.columbia.edu/imaginingliberty



AP PHOTO/SETH PERLMAN

Teacher Jennifer Haberkorn works with her fourth grade students at Ridgely Elementary School in Springfield, Ill. in 2009, when the state set aside \$1 billion in funding for special education and low-income schools.

Empowering Teachers and Embracing Learning Differences

In preparing educators to meet a variety of student needs, special education has transformed dramatically in the past 50 years. At a pivotal moment, *TC Today* looks back at the field's history and towards the future.

As she stood before 3,000 special educators, TC Professor Frances Connor (Ed.D. '53, M.A. '48), president of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), was set to address her colleagues at a critical moment for special education. It was 1964; half of the United States' children with learning differences lacked access to schooling, and states did not empower

teachers to meet student needs through individualized instruction. But society was changing rapidly across the country; civil rights activists would realize their hard work for a better future just a few months later with the passage of the Civil Rights Act — inspiring additional advocacy across women's, LGBTQ+ and disability rights. Now was the time to be bold.

In the grand ballroom of a downtown Chicago hotel, Connor presented what would become the most influential work of her 50-year career, setting into motion decades of special education policy, practice and scholarship that would change the lives of millions.

“Special educators are to be liberated, not ‘trained,’” said Connor, who called for a national transformation in teacher preparation that would allow educators to individualize support and prioritize student inclusion. Her paper, “The Sword and the Spirit,” outlined her policy focus for the next ten years. “Proposed here is increased emphasis on providing children with thoughtful, inquiring, receptive professional educators rather than with trained teachers concerned with forcing children to ‘hold still while being taught what has been specified,’ thus preventing the liberation of exceptional children capable of forging ahead intellectually.”

Connor’s work, among that of others such as her TC colleague Leonard Blackman, Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Education, led to Congress passing the bipartisan Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. The landmark bill, later expanded and renamed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), outlined that children with disabilities were entitled to a free, accessible education in the same schools as non-disabled children.

Alongside Connor, TC faculty and students were at the forefront of advancing rights for students with disabilities. Blackman notably helped forge the multidisciplinary practice that would help define the field and shape TC’s approach, while the late Linda Hickson, Professor Emerita of Special Education, who passed away in early 2025, advanced safety protections for individuals with disabilities.

“To be a graduate student in special education at TC at that time meant you were preparing for leadership and to make change,” reflects Michael J. Lewis (Ph.D. ’79), who went on to advance dual certification opportunities for special education teachers in California. “TC [not only] prepared us to step out — [but] expected it.”



Frances Connor (Ed.D. '53, M.A. '48) served as TC's Richard March Hoe Professor of Education and as the president of the Council for Exceptional Children. Connor (1919 – 2015) shaped the field of special education profoundly throughout her career.



PHOTO © BOB DAEMMRICH

A special education teacher works with a student in an Austin, Texas, classroom in 1988.

IDEA, enacted in 1999, would later fully realize Connor’s vision to empower teachers for individualized instruction with the help of disability advocates Ruth Christ Sullivan (Ph.D. ’53) and Susan Jay Spungin (Ed.D. ’75). The bill would go on to transform the opportunities available to students with disabilities, and the possibilities of the field itself, in the U.S. and around the world.

“Those who came before us in the field — through their advocacy for student opportunities and empowerment of educators — made it possible for the field to be what it is today. We are now at a moment

where we think about neurodiversity from an identity-affirming perspective and honor the voices of members of that community,” says Laudan Jahromi, Professor of Psychology and Education and Director of the College’s Intellectual Disability/Autism program.

For Jahromi, that progress is apparent in the work happening every day at TC, citing her colleague Matt Zajic, Assistant Professor of Intellectual Disability/Autism, for his research on writing development and literacy in autistic students, and Maithri Sivaraman, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Education, whose research focuses on interventions to support

language, social, and life skills development in students with learning differences. “In many ways,” Jahromi says, “Teachers College has always been forward-thinking in helping special education practice innovate in meaningful ways.”

Across TC’s multiple special education programs, educators and practitioners today are prepared to adapt and apply evidence-based practices to meet a broad variety of student needs. The College offers five distinct specialties — encompassing intellectual disability/autism, elementary inclusive education, bilingual/bicultural education, applied behavior analysis, and deaf and hard of hearing. As part of TC’s

unrivaled breadth and depth, graduate students can earn dual certification across key areas to meet the moment. After all, the U.S. estimated in 2022 that approximately 12 percent of the country’s students served by IDEA were also English Language Learners (ELLs).

“We’re not preparing teachers to serve a small portion of the world’s student population. We’re really preparing teachers who can individualize and accommodate the needs of all learners,” Jahromi says of the College’s five distinct specialties. “Having options is a very important element of what makes TC unique.”



PHOTO © DAVID GROSSMAN

Brooklyn elementary school students celebrate Autism Awareness Month in 2018.

So what do TC graduates passionate about teaching people with learning differences have in common? Often, they embody Connor's original vision that she outlined more than 60 years ago: the preparation to be exceptional problem solvers.

"Being resourceful is really the name of the game for a great special ed teacher . . . they have to be really creative, come up with innovative strategies, and be flexible and ready to adapt as they go. It keeps them incredibly present, and a lot of graduates love that aspect of the work," says Jahromi.

For faculty and students in the Elementary Inclusive Education program, the diversity of learner profiles within classrooms today offers an opportunity to rethink the interconnected process of teaching and learning. Inclusive education begins not by focusing on the student's presumed difference but in understanding how teaching-learning conditions might create those differences in the first place. In viewing disability as part of normal human variation, graduates learn to question how we come to understand what is accepted as "normal." Rejecting deficit ways of framing disability and hierarchical notions of ability, they learn to support a diverse array of students in any setting — general ed or special ed.

"Those additional supports become less stigmatizing when the inevitable diversity among student capacities is recognized," explains Srikala Naraian, Professor of Education in the Elementary Inclusive Education program, who notes that the ethos of a school is relevant in understanding what happens in the classroom. Inclusive ed graduates are prepared to work collaboratively with others to ask, she says: "How can we help educators and families figure out a solution in a way that's respectful of the child?"

As the field continues to grow, it must also contend with difficult questions. According to Tamara Handy, Assistant Professor in the Elementary Inclusive Education program, the "disproportional representation of students of color in specific disability categories is an intractable problem" in special education. TC's Inclusive Education graduates understand that to work against this means to both recognize the importance of services for students with disabilities while also being vigilant about how race, gender, linguistic ability and other social markers can influence how those services are delivered. Faculty in the program carefully curate course and field work experiences to help preservice teachers develop these skills.



AP PHOTO/LYNNE SLADKY

A special education class at Amelia Earhart Elementary School in Hialeah, Fla. in 2012.



PHOTO © ISTOCK

More broadly, recent milestones for the special education field at Teachers College include building a developmental disabilities program that provides interdisciplinary preparation to connect special education to other disciplines (e.g., psychology) and the establishment of an online degree program in special education, which can help make this critical preparation more accessible as the United States continues to face a teacher shortage. Officials report that nearly half of all public schools reported special education teaching positions as vacant between 2022 and 2024.

In late 2024, Amanda Mazin (Ph.D. '11), Associate Professor of Teaching in the Intellectual Disability/Autism program, testified for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights on the issue to help inform their fall 2025 report. Addressed to the Trump administration and Congress, the report leveraged expert testimony to inform key policy recommendations: namely, fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and supporting teacher preparation initiatives to increase the number of educators able to adequately support students with disabilities.

“Teacher issues are student issues. Higher class size, violations of [Free Appropriate Public Education] and [Individualized Education Plans], underdiagnosis and delayed classification are directly related to the lack of special education teachers,” Mazin said in the testimony that helped inform the report. “Support for

initiatives to directly address areas of recruitment, retention and respect for teachers would change the landscape of quality special education.”

Despite insight from experts like Mazin, special education in the United States — much like public education more broadly — stands at a crossroads amid significant funding cuts and changes at the Department of Education. Naraian says that students with learning differences are still too often separated from their peers unnecessarily, and Jahromi also believes there is more that educators need to do to build authentic, inclusive partnerships with families to further promote student success. This deeper, collaborative, student- and family-centered work is TC’s strategic focus in preparing educators and school leaders at a time when their expertise is needed more than ever.

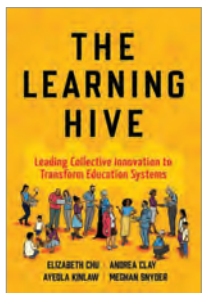
“The outlook I absorbed at TC was that all children can learn, and that my role as an educator is to figure out how that learning can happen,” said Claudia V. Schrader (Ed.D. '02, Ed.M. '01, M.A. '92), sharing how she translated her special education scholarship at TC into numerous school leadership roles in 2018 and was recognized for her impact with the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2024. “It’s up to us to figure out how to help [all students]. That’s been my approach wherever I’ve worked, with students of all ages.”

— Morgan Gilbard Manore



What We're Reading

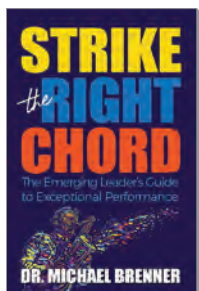
New, hot titles by TC alumni



The Learning Hive: Leading Collective Innovation to Transform Education Systems

by Liz Chu (Ph.D. '14) and Meghan Snyder (M.A. '18)

TC alumnae Elizabeth Chu (Ph.D. '14) and Meghan Snyder (M.A. '18), along with co-authors Andrea Clay and Ayeola Kinlaw, explore a new vision of leadership and educational system design organized around dynamic “learning hives” at Columbia University’s Center for Public Research & Leadership. Through case studies, practical tools and real-life stories from years of research, readers are introduced to how educational leaders transform their organizations into thriving ecosystems where each student can learn, grow and succeed.



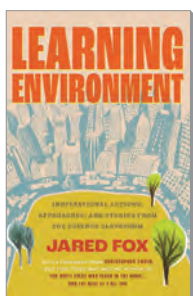
Strike the Right Chord: The Emerging Leader's Guide to Exceptional Performance

by Michael Brenner (Ed.D. '10)

TC alumnus Michael Brenner (Ed.D. '10) offers a practical framework to help rising leaders build stronger foundations in communication, accountability and respect while inspiring their team in creating harmonious relationships. Drawing on his background as both a leadership expert and professional musician, Brenner introduces his CHORDS Model™, a unique approach to elevating leadership skills intended to help readers “strike the right chord” in professional discussions.



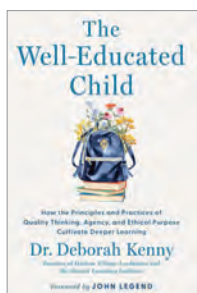
PHOTO © HAMMERMAN



Learning Environment: Inspirational Actions, Approaches, and Stories from the Science Classroom

by Jared Fox (Ph.D. '15)

In this love letter to the classroom, award-winning educator and TC alumnus Jared Fox (Ph.D. '15) shares an actionable, behind-the-scenes guide of his teaching methods. Through anecdotes about the energizing effect of project-based learning, Fox invites readers on a journey to explore how educators can create dynamic and community-centered educational opportunities that transform the student experience.



The Well-Educated Child: How the Principles and Practices of Quality Thinking, Agency, and Ethical Purpose Cultivate Deeper Learning

by Deborah Kenny (Ph.D. '94, M.A. '86)

Building on decades of experience working with students, Kenny explores how parents and teachers can enrich the lives of young people by cultivating their critical thinking skills and supporting their moral growth. Kenny, founder of Harlem Village Academies and the Deeper Learning Institute, offers warmth and wisdom in this book that “will change the way you think not only about education but about life,” in the words of actor Hugh Jackman.

Giving Community Colleges Their Due

TC's Community College Research Center celebrates 30 years of expanding educational opportunity

Expanding access to higher education is an unapologetically democratic act. And yet, despite the millions of students attending America's nearly 1,000 community colleges each year, these institutions remained underexamined and poorly understood before 1996, when the Community College Research Center (CCRC) was founded at Teachers College, bringing much-needed attention to public two-year colleges.

CCRC celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, at a time when community colleges are among the most trusted institutions of higher education — a place where high school students can get their first taste of college, students seeking bachelor's degrees can get a more affordable start, current workers can train and retrain, and adult students can find the support they need to start and finish programs that earn them a useful credential.

Founded by Teachers College President Thomas Bailey, the George & Abby O'Neill Professor of Economics & Education, who led the Center for 22 years, CCRC has conducted critical research on student outcomes and institutional innovation that has shaped policy and

practice nationwide, all while training generations of TC students in rigorous analytical methods. Led by Director and Research Professor Thomas Brock since 2018, the Center's research has been a cornerstone of the community college student success movement.

"Advancing accessibility and student success at the community college level remains integral to helping all people thrive," said President Bailey. "CCRC's research and scholarship have played a critical role in these efforts. I am deeply proud of our work together and the efforts that my colleague Professor Brock continues to champion."

CCRC's mission has long been to uncover the obstacles that block community college students from reaching their educational and career goals and to explore new structures, policies and practices that move more students through to graduation and beyond. The research tackles important questions such as: How can community colleges ensure students learn the English and math skills needed for college? How can they help more students earn college degrees? How can they prepare students for rewarding careers?

CCRC's groundbreaking research unlocked a paradigm shift in 2015 with the introduction of the guided pathways framework, described in the book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* by Bailey, Shanna Smith Jaggars and Davis Jenkins. The book ushered in a new era of community college reform nationally that helped transform student opportunity with stronger onboarding, structured academic plans and more intensive support.

Ten years later, hundreds of community colleges have participated in guided pathways initiatives and worked to adopt a framework that supports student success from application to graduation. CCRC's latest book,

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The next frontier is to ensure programs are worth completing by focusing on post-college success.

— Thomas Brock, Director of CCRC and Research Professor

More Essential Than Ever: Community College Pathways to Educational and Career Success, published last fall, introduces the next frontiers of CCRC's guided pathways research and guidance.

"CCRC's research on guided pathways found that colleges can improve momentum into and through college by removing barriers to completion," Brock said. "The next frontier is to ensure programs are worth completing by focusing on post-college success. This means helping students choose programs of study that lead to good jobs and successful transfer to four-year colleges and universities."

Over the past three decades, CCRC and its partners have produced more than 500 publications, worked with dozens of faculty experts and students across economics, education and policy, and contributed to legislation and policy innovations across the country. Among the highlights:

- CCRC identified dual enrollment as a strategy to open the door to college for more students and make it more affordable. Its Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP) framework promotes proactive

strategies to help colleges address declining enrollment and to provide critical outreach and support to underrepresented students and families.

- After groundbreaking research led by President Bailey showing that students were getting stuck in developmental (aka remedial) education, CCRC began investigating ways to help more students pass gateway math and English more quickly. CCRC research on multiple measures assessment (MMA) helped lead a movement to eliminate the overreliance on standardized tests to place students in their first math and English courses.
- CCRC is investigating the impact of Federal Work-Study on student outcomes in the first rigorous evaluation of this \$1 billion program since it was introduced in the mid-1960s during the War on Poverty.

While CCRC's research — in partnership with innovative colleges, state systems, and student success organizations — has helped lead to real progress for community colleges, the work continues.



Captured in 2012, staff from the Community College Research Center, including Thomas Brock (first row, second from left), current CCRC Director and Research Professor, and President Thomas Bailey (first row, second from right), George and Abby O'Neill Professor of Economics and Education, who served as Director of CCRC until 2018.

LESSONS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Scaling a promising idea into a viable business with longevity is no easy feat. And yet, innovation is in the ethos and history of Teachers College — from faculty establishing disciplines like nutrition education to Frank W. Cyr (Ph.D. '33) developing the yellow school bus in 1939. That spirit for discovery continues to flow through our halls and across our community partnerships, and key variables for success — like problem-solving, persistence and the ability to learn — are deeply embedded in what it means to study and graduate from TC. So it's no surprise that among the important contributions that TC alumni make across education, health, psychology and beyond, a handful of graduates forge their own paths to build something of their own.

So what makes a successful entrepreneur? Four TC alumni who have surmounted the mountaintop in mission-driven ways across ed tech, food and fashion share their journeys with *TC Today*.





“Think entrepreneurially, not corporately.”

— Lida Orzeck (Ph.D. '72)
Founder of Hanky Panky

ILLUSTRATION © ISTOCK



Monica Von Thun Calderón (M.Phil. '97)

PHOTO © JD CLOSSER

How Monica Von Thun Calderón (M.Phil. '97) Made It

The founder and owner of New York City's Grandaisy Bakery, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year, reflects on applying anthropology in the kitchen and forging her own path

A *crostata di zucca* — a squash tart — from Monica Von Thun Calderón's Grandaisy Bakery travels from New York City to Japan on a 14-hour flight every Thanksgiving. It's a family tradition so beloved, the man in line tells Von Thun Calderón that he can't make the trip without one.

Such a compliment transcends what any foodie could ever hope for, but bringing people together through baked goods is exactly what Von Thun Calderón set out to do when she started Grandaisy in 2006. Twenty years later, the TC alumna has built something that is more than just hers. Grandaisy — a bright, unassuming gem in TriBeCa — belongs to the community that turns to Von Thun Calderón and her skilled team of 50 for pastries to warm cold mornings, challah to start Shabbat dinners, and her famous Roman pizza (lauded by *New York* magazine), because eating well is about more than just having what you need but savoring what you want.

And while Von Thun Calderón herself is not a baker, her journey to running a successful small business is deeply informed by her background in TC's Anthropology & Education program, through which she researched the ties between coca leaf production and education in her family's home country of Bolivia.

"Once you're an anthropologist, you're always an anthropologist," says Von Thun Calderón, who has prioritized the education and well-being of the

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You make something good, you treat people well, people come and enjoy it, and then you keep going.

— Von Thun Calderón

Grandaisy team as part of her people-first approach to both life and business. "That [perspective] wasn't obvious or popular when we were talking about this twenty years ago. . . . You make something good, you treat people well, people come and enjoy it, and then you can keep going."

So how does one build a thriving, community-driven bakery in a competitive market? Von Thun Calderón sat down with *TC Today* to give us the recipe.

Ingredients

- ▶ Hands-on, global experience as an anthropology researcher & scholar
- ▶ Passion for handcrafted bread and how it brings people together
- ▶ A business model that puts people first
- ▶ An inspiring grandmother
- ▶ Butter, flour and vision

Step 1

Find inspiration in your truth. Von Thun Calderón's earliest memories of baking and cooking took place in her grandmother Daisy's kitchen, where the matriarch baked torta de capas (a layered coconut cake) and cookies for "every kid on the block." When the family relocated to Denver, Colo., after living in Bolivia for years, Von Thun Calderón and her brother re-learned English, and with their Spanish accents, "grandmother" was challenging to say. The nickname 'Grandaisy' was born, and Von Thun Calderón honors her grandmother with the bakery, where her family's torta de capas recipe is a notable favorite.

Step 2

Be open to possibilities. While teaching English as a second language for her first job after college, Von Thun Calderón noticed her students excelled in their language practice when they could engage with their passions in the classroom. Anthropology, Von Thun Calderón believed, could unlock new possibilities as an ESL teacher, and so she embarked on her graduate work at Teachers College with the intention of teaching ESL at the community college level.

While at TC, a job with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) brought her to Italy for a year to conduct research on the children of immigrants. There, Italy's culture around community and food captivated Von Thun Calderón, and when she returned to New York, she helped start Sullivan Street Bakery in 1994.

Step 3

Work hard at what you love. Von Thun Calderón's life consisted of 18-hour days in the early years of her small business journey. But she wasn't exhausted; she was invigorated. "If you're going to make something work, you have to be ready to work a lot," says the TC alumna. "And so it has to be something you like."

Was Von Thun Calderón ever afraid it wouldn't work out? "Even to this day, if anything isn't working, it just means I need to work more on some level."

Step 4

Build a strong team. Over the past 20 years, Von Thun Calderón has scaled Grandaisy through restaurant wholesale while remaining true to her vision of building a community-first bakery. When asked what advice she has for aspiring business owners, Von Thun Calderón is resolute: "Hire people who are smarter and better than you at everything that you can. Hire people who can help you fill the gaps of what you can't do."

Step 5

Stay nimble and keep going. As Grandaisy celebrates its 20th anniversary, Von Thun Calderón is looking to expand the business's restaurant clientele. She's hoping to travel to Bolivia with her mother, now in her 80s, and she's learning about "emergent strategy" — a framework by Adrienne Maree Brown that suggests humans can learn from the natural world how to handle change more effectively. Navigating shifts is not something new to Von Thun Calderón. ("You have to be really resilient," she says.) But it's that openness to change that leads you to the most unexpected of places — like hearing about a customer taking your tart on a plane to Japan.

— Morgan Gilbard Manore



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If you're going to make something work, you have to be ready to work a lot. And so it has to be something you like.

— Von Thun Calderón



Grandaisy Bakery honors the grandmother of owner Monica Von Thun Calderón (M.Phil. '97) by bringing people together with handcrafted goods.

The Grandaisy Cake

Grandaisy Bakery's most iconic pastry, this almond pound cake with orange and lemon essences was lovingly developed by Grandaisy Bakery's pastry chef, Margaret "Peggy" Jacobs, in 2006, and adapted from The Simple Art of Perfect Baking by Flo Braker. Makes one cake of eight to ten servings.

For Glaze

- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 cup granulated sugar

Place all ingredients in a saucepan set over low heat, stirring the mixture until the sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and set aside.

For Cake

- 1 ½ cups cake flour
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup almond paste
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled and cubed
- 7 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons orange zest
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Step 1

Heat oven to 350 degrees

Step 2

Sift flour, baking powder and salt into a bowl three times. Set aside

Step 3

Beat almond paste and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment until mealy. Gradually add butter, beating after each addition until light and fluffy. Increase mixer speed to high, then add eggs, zests and vanilla, scraping down sides of the bowl as needed. Reduce mixer speed to low, then add the reserved flour mixture. Pour batter into an 8-cup decorative cake pan and bake until golden (about 70 minutes).

Step 4

To serve, drizzle warm cake with glaze. Cool completely and cut into slices.





PHOTO © JD CLOSSER



Lida Orzeck (Ph.D. '72)

PHOTO © ROB DAVIDSON

Five Lessons from a CEO

Lida Orzeck (Ph.D. '72)

A trailblazer for women in business, the longtime chief executive officer and founder of best-selling intimates brand Hanky Panky crystallizes nearly 50 years of insight

In 1977, Lida Orzeck (Ph.D. '72) returned to Teachers College to meet with her mentor, Morton Deutsch. One of the world's foremost social psychologists, he would certainly have an opinion about what Orzeck needed to tell him: After her years of scholarship in social psychology and her tenure as an analyst for the New York Police Department, Orzeck was on the precipice of a major career change.

She wanted to leave the field and apply her analytical skills to launching a business with her best friend, Gale Epstein, who had gifted the TC grad a handmade lingerie set for her birthday. The pair realized that they could team up to fulfill an unmet need for women: stylish, yet comfortable undergarments.

Orzeck couldn't imagine how Deutsch, whose opinion she valued deeply, would react. He didn't hesitate in telling her to go for it, giving Orzeck his "blessing" and the "best sendoff" she could have imagined before she and Epstein established their company, Hanky Panky.

Today, Hanky Panky has sold more than 45 million pairs of underwear in 70 countries around the globe — about one pair every ten seconds. Their innovative designs, loved by stars like Jennifer Aniston, set a new standard for what customers want, and captivated the zeitgeist in *Vogue*, *Women's Wear Daily*, and yes, even on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*.

"It was a dream come true for anybody in business that we would have that kind of attention paid," explains Orzeck, who has stayed connected with Teachers College amid Hanky Panky's rise. Close with Deutsch throughout his life, the TC alumna has supported social-organizational psychology students at Teachers College through the Lida A. Orzeck Scholarship since 2016.

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Think entrepreneurially,
not corporately,
which is something
that we did for most
of our history.

— Orzeck

Now, Orzeck stands on the precipice of another new chapter. While Orzeck stepped down as the company's CEO in 2021, she will reflect on her entrepreneurial journey in a new book set for publication next year, Hanky Panky's 50th anniversary. In the interim, she spoke with *TC Today* about finding the perfect fit in business.

1. Make bold choices. Success was not guaranteed when Orzeck brought her analytical skills from the research lab to the fashion industry. One retail veteran even discouraged Orzeck and her business partner from pursuing the company altogether. They didn't listen, and committed all of their free time to building Hanky Panky — with Epstein sewing merchandise while Orzeck pitched department store buyers during her lunch breaks and hand-delivered their first order to Lord & Taylor. As she looks back, Orzeck sees that tenacity along uncharted territory as the key to their success. "Think entrepreneurially," she says, "not corporately, which is something that we did for most of our history."

2. Choose your business partner wisely. Hanky Panky's female founders had been friends for 12 years when they launched the company. Orzeck says it is their complementary skills and shared values that have allowed "the company to blossom and thrive" and kept their friendship intact for nearly 60 years. "Make sure that your value system is the same in how you treat people, your work ethic, your ideas about growth, working together and time off, just everything," Orzeck advises.

3. Know your customer. Women making intimate apparel for other women set Hanky Panky apart from the very beginning. Applying Orzeck's research background, the business partners collaborated with women of all shapes and sizes in developing their pieces — long before inclusive sizing was the norm. "The business is built on sisterhood," explains Orzeck. "We were so close to our customers at the beginning, and there was just no space between the product and the end user."

4. Stay in the loop. As Hanky Panky grew, Orzeck remained committed to knowing as much about the business as possible. For many years, she opened, read and managed every piece of mail. Every bill. Every order. Every potential problem. "I learned so much about the business from doing that," says Orzeck, who admits that she likely did not delegate as much as she



PHOTO © TC ARCHIVES
Lida Orzeck (Ph.D. '72) living the hands-on experience at Hanky Panky in 2017.

could have. "I own up to the fact that that is how I lived my life ... It absolutely leads to a lot of stress, a lot of angst, a lot of worry. But you know, I'm that type-A personality, and that is the only way I was really able to run the company."

5. Be open to change. In December, after 48 years, Orzeck and Epstein sold Hanky Panky to Crown Brands Group, a private equity company. The best friends remain advisors at Hanky Panky as its new ownership sets the stage for the next chapter — one that will include diversifying the business's offerings to grow its market share. The change is "bittersweet," Orzeck explains, but she now has time for other passions: her extensive philanthropic work, line dancing and her community choir. At their next concert, they will fittingly sing "Dreams" by the Cranberries — the 90s classic about life's unpredictable beauty. As for Orzeck's dreams, she is not done yet. After all, her former mentor Morton Deutsch would tell her to "go for it."

— Morgan Gilbard Manore



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PHOTO © BRUCE GILBERT

Bradford Manning (M.A. '10) (left) and his brother Bryan Manning (right)

Elevating the Definition of 'Mission-Driven'

TC alumnus Bradford Manning (M.A. '10) advances community support and research to help cure blindness through his apparel brand, Two Blind Brothers

On the social media pages of Two Blind Brothers — the mission-driven apparel brand created by TC alumnus Bradford Manning (M.A. '10) and his brother Bryan — you'll meet everyone from passionate athletes to kids navigating big life milestones.

The examples are emblematic of the way the TC psychology alumnus approaches life and the brothers' shared goal: to encourage fellow individuals and families affected by visual impairment to fully embrace life's opportunities despite their challenges and move forward.

"There are tons of examples, not just Bryan and [me], of people who have been really successful, who are super well-adjusted, who are competing at the highest level of society across industries and in every facet," Manning told their followers in a 2019 video about "thriving, not coping" with visual impairment. "The truth is that this condition is not an excuse for poor psychology."

When both Manning and Bryan were diagnosed as children with Stargardt Disease, which degenerates one's central vision, their parents emphasized that the condition could not prevent them from pursuing their goals and aspirations.

That tenacity is now evident in Two Blind Brothers, which combines fashion and purpose to support research to cure blindness. Founded in 2016, the brothers conceived of the company after they accidentally selected the same shirt at Bloomingdale's based on its softness.

Their own clothing line would go on to prioritize comfort and address key accessibility issues in the fashion space by integrating braille into its design, which allows individuals with visual impairment to more easily and independently select their own outfits and match colors. Celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, Two Blind Brothers is now a nonprofit and has built a community of more than one million supporters who connect deeply with the brand.

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It's so rare in life to get a tailwind on something you're so passionate about that has a lot of purpose for you.

— Manning

“Bryan and I would have done this regardless of success,” says Manning, who TC honored in 2018 with the Early Career Award. “It’s so rare in life to get a tailwind on something you’re so passionate about that has a lot of purpose for you. And we just thought: ‘This is so unique. We have to do as much as we can with this.’”

The past ten years have included numerous milestones for Two Blind Brothers, such as the brand’s first licensing deal, support from corporate partners like AT&T and Brawny, and features on news channels such as CBS and NBC. For the 2021 Paralympic Games, Two Blind Brothers even teamed up with Puma to design the French Blind Football team’s uniforms.

So what does it take to build a successful, mission-driven organization? It is this question that illuminates Manning’s background in psychology most clearly and underscores the role emotional intelligence has played in his journey.

“If you are not enthusiastic and passionate, you’re just not going to win at the highest levels because your heart won’t be in it as much as the people who are enthusiastic and passionate about it,” says Manning, a graduate of the College’s Psychology in Education program. “We have to be practical about decisions, but as part of that practical question, you have to ask yourself: Do you love this more than most people? Because if that’s the case, you’ll put in the extra hours, thought and creativity that will make you succeed.”

That passion also drove Manning to study at TC, which he credits with imparting key lessons in listening, teaching others and relationship building that have served him both in life and his professional endeavors. “Alone we can go fast, but together we can go far,” Manning says, referencing the famous proverb.

As for what’s next for the Mannings, they remain committed to scaling Two Blind Brothers and continuing to support people who are visually impaired. Currently, numerous clinical trials and studies are examining how to slow or stop Stargardt’s progression, with the American Academy of Ophthalmology believing that a breakthrough is on the horizon.



More than 630,000 people have participated in the Shop Blind Challenge, in which customers purchase a mystery box of Two Blind Brothers merchandise to support the blind community.

But regardless of what the ultimate research trajectory may be, the Mannings are focused on their mission and the community they’ve built. Each year, the brothers receive thousands of questions from individuals and families affected by visual impairment about how to navigate life after the diagnosis. The advice is often the same: Keep going, and don’t let it hold you back.

“The big irony is,” Manning said in their 2018 TEDx Talk, “that vision impairment has actually given more to us than it has taken away.”





PHOTO © TWO BLIND BROTHERS

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Alone we can go fast, but together we can go far.

— Manning

Building Human-Centered AI Tools for a New Era of Education

Education technology founder Luyen Chou's (M.A. '07) newest organization is using AI to support learning in classrooms and beyond

Since ChatGPT took the world by storm in 2022, large language models and generative artificial intelligence have upended how we learn, how we work and how we relate to each other.

As we push further into an AI-powered world, for TC alumnus Luyen Chou (M.A. '07), an ed tech founder and investor of nearly 40 years, this new class of AI tools represents an opportunity to finally center the expertise of educators while iterating on a technology that, “at its root, learns.” As part of his commitment to human-centered ed tech solutions, in early 2025, Chou launched DeweyLearn, a multimodal, AI-powered learning platform that supports instruction through expert-driven insights for teachers and learners.

Named after TC's own John Dewey — the seminal philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer, who encouraged Chou's grandmother to study teaching at the University of Chicago during his trip to China from 1919 to 1921 — DeweyLearn goes beyond chatbots and leverages agentic AI, autonomous systems that can execute complex tasks with minimal human supervision, to help instructors and learners master the science of education through analysis of classroom instruction. While it was initially used in K-12 classrooms, DeweyLearn can support education in all contexts. “The ability to democratize access to human expertise and mentorship at scale is something that I think is really exciting [about] DeweyLearn,” explains Chou.

Just over a year since its launch, DeweyLearn is already being leveraged across multiple disciplines. More than 2,000 culinary students are receiving targeted feedback; consultants are leveraging the tool to identify corporate competencies and measure skill attainment; clinical therapists-in-training use DeweyLearn to evaluate their application of therapeutic interventions; and clinical assessors are getting support from DeweyLearn to conduct behavioral assessments.

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The best applications of AI are the ones that continue to put humans in the loop.

— Chou



Luyen Chou (M.A. '07)

PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

Luyen Chou (M.A. '07) demonstrating the art of creating human-centered AI learning applications.

Driven by a desire to expand access to a high-quality education, Chou has been developing innovative ed tech solutions since 1989 in his first role at the Dalton School, his alma mater, working under the late Frank Moretti (Ph.D. '83), who served on the TC faculty as Professor of Communications. Moretti was an early ed tech pioneer who — alongside his colleague Robbie McClintock (Ph.D. '68), Professor Emeritus in Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education at TC, with support from Chou — brought computers into the school and created a groundbreaking local server network that connected classrooms to Dalton's multimedia library as well as to NYC cultural institutions.

Chou credits this experience working alongside two “luminaries in the history of ed tech” as a major inspiration to pursue his own vision for education in the modern world and “accelerate the value delivery of these paradigmatic shifts in technology to learners.”

When Chou enrolled in the master's program in educational leadership at TC's Klingenstein Center in 2005, he was the founding associate head of the newly opened School at Columbia University, an endeavor he embarked on after more than 10 years at the helm of Learn Technologies, Inc., an ed tech company founded by Moretti. While Chou was already deeply immersed in the world of education technology, his time at the Center — led at the time by the late Pearl Rock Kane, a former Dalton teacher and a beloved mentor for the entrepreneur — provided Chou with a valuable “competitive advantage” that he uses to craft learning solutions that stand the test of time.

“People coming out of TC have an instinctive understanding of what this complex market needs and what will actually be possible,” says Chou, who also founded the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School network in 2009 with fellow Klingenstein alumnus, Daniel Rubenstein (M.Ed. '07). Chou's TC education and an early-adopter mindset are central aspects of his approach to “engineer solutions for better learning.”

The advent of powerful large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT is another force transforming the field of education, and there is considerable debate about what role, if any, they should play in the classroom. For Chou, however, the key to unlocking the value of this new generation of AI tools is to center the expertise of educators.

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People coming out of TC have an instinctive understanding of what this complex market needs and what will actually be possible.

— Chou

“The best applications of AI are the ones that continue to put humans in the loop,” he says. “If we continue to have that human-machine relationship, we can work together to build a model of learning that is better than either humans or machines could do on their own.”

Chou's latest solution, DeweyLearn, comes at a time when ideas about education are in flux, something he sees as an opportunity to move the field forward. “The world is beginning to think of education as a lifetime continuum rather than as something that's delivered within the walls of particular institutions,” says Chou. “The value is in the learner's achievement of their learning goals; it's not in the success or failure of institutions.”

— Sherri Gardner



FIELD STUDY PSYCHOLOGY

For more than a century, Teachers College faculty and alumni have stood at the forefront of advancements in psychology, human development and well-being. Today, we're still unlocking possibilities — with faculty working to improve mental health systems, workplace dynamics, how schools support mental health and more.

Beyond TC Way, TC alumni are translating that knowledge into practice — developing innovative interventions, informing policy, leading mental health initiatives and improving learning environments around the world. United by a commitment to rigorous research and real-world impact, Teachers College's psychology community continues to expand our understanding of how people learn, adapt, connect and flourish throughout their lives.

As part of this issue of *TC Today*, we take a closer look at this research, and connect with education psychologist Alice Wilder (Ed.D. '98) for a unique glimpse at the ethos driving her work in children's television.

Veronica Kim from the Class of 2026 receives their doctoral hood from Melanie Brewster, Professor of Counseling Psychology.



PHOTO © PAULO BASSETO

Courtyard Conversations

Changing the Script on Trauma and Resilience

What allows someone to overcome the visceral pain that too often accompanies life itself? For more than three decades, George Bonanno — Professor of Clinical Psychology — has reframed the narrative about individual responses to trauma, loss and grief.

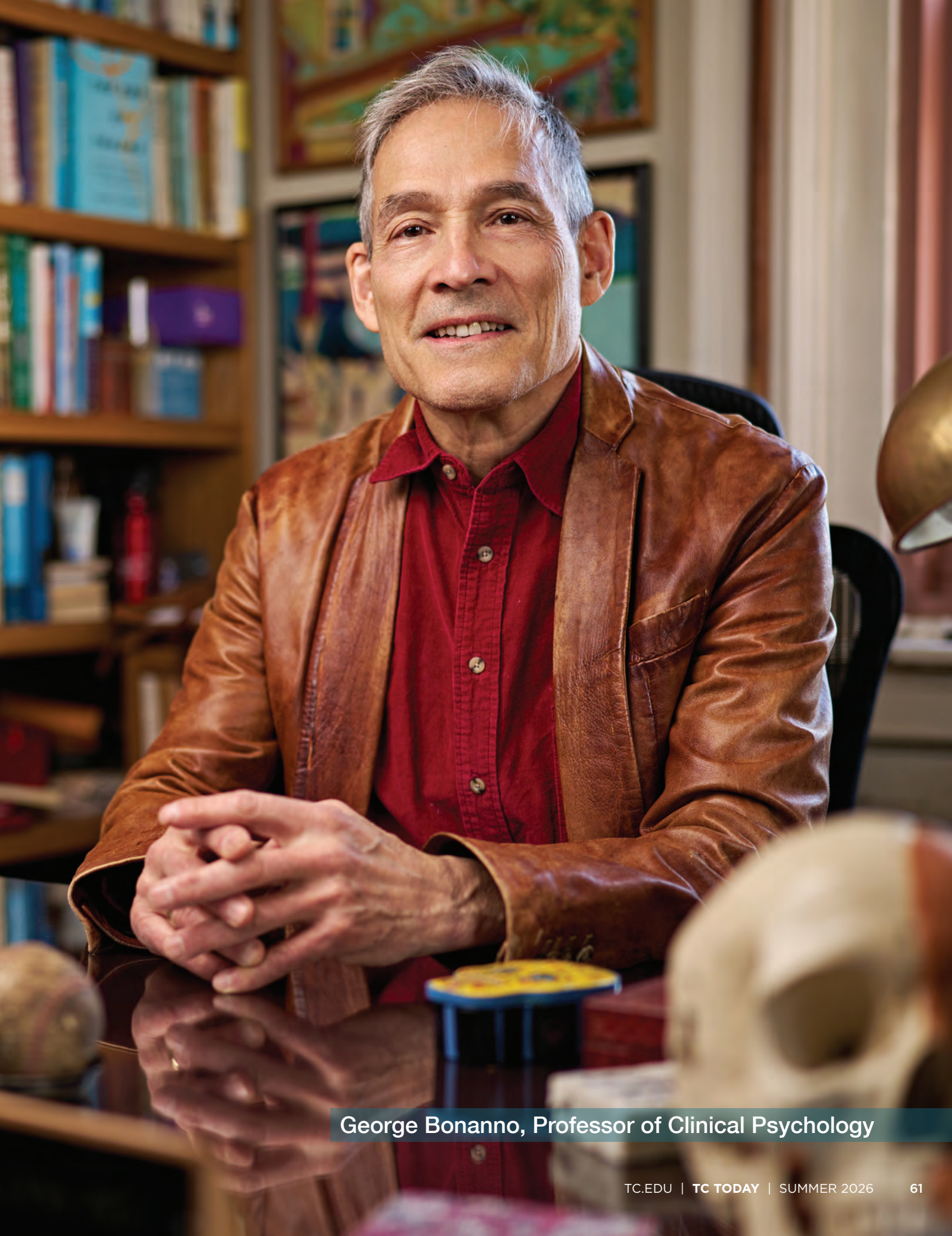
This spring, the American Association for the Advancement of Science named him a fellow, one of the most distinct honors in the scientific community. But before the expert broke new ground in his TC research labs, Bonanno ventured on a nonlinear path to his academic career that may have subliminally influenced his later research pursuits. In his youth, the future psychologist spent a decade hitchhiking from his native Illinois to the West, working as a farmhand, factory cleaner and itinerant fruit picker.

“I left home at 17 to see the world and be something different,” says Bonanno. “At the time, my life was fairly bleak. I had barely graduated [from] high school.”

Raised in a Chicago suburb in what he describes as a troubled and sometimes violent home, he has only recently realized how his interest in resilience may have had roots in those early adventures. Paradoxically, the hardships he experienced on the road yielded a surprising insight that Bonanno acknowledges lay dormant for a while. While on the road with his dog, one morning, “I woke up and felt ‘everything’s just fine. The universe is okay, and you’re fine.’”

There was more to come.

“A few years later, I was in a small town in Washington State,” recalls Bonanno, who is currently working on a book that is part autobiography and part science. “I went to a park to sleep in the bushes. I had no money, and I was hungry. There was a restaurant nearby, and I offered to help and clean up in exchange for food. They gave me a meal, and the next day I found work picking fruit. I realized I’ll always be okay; I’ll always be able to find a solution and do it. That was my very own epiphany.”



George Bonanno, Professor of Clinical Psychology

“

Do self-talk to get yourself focusing on what’s happening right now, what can I do about it, and what tools I can use.

— Bonanno

Insight on Bereavement and Trauma

Bonanno, whose honors also include lifetime achievement awards from the Association for Psychological Science and the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, has gone on to study 9/11 survivors and veterans, to assess the impact of their traumas. He advances this research at TC’s Loss, Trauma and Emotion Lab as well as at the College’s Resilience Center for Veterans and Families, which supports veterans and their families in their transition to civilian life. Both ventures allow Bonanno to also support the next generation of clinical psychologists — TC doctoral and master’s students — in building hands-on experience in research and patient care to support resilience amid trauma.

Resilience — including its defining attributes and the conditions that allow it to flourish — has come to captivate Bonanno and those who see his research as a pathway to understanding human survival itself. This work began when Bonanno was a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of California in San Francisco, where Bonanno interrogated the then-popular concept of ‘delayed grief.’

“I came from a different perspective — that people were assuming grief where there isn’t any,” says Bonanno, who used big data sets to counter the concept of delayed grief.

Challenging the norms around grief and trauma were not initially embraced, he recalls.

“Those who were resilient, in grief, were ignored” by a prevailing narrative among professionals who studied grief that there was an expected response, explains Bonanno. “People didn’t want [our findings on resilience] to be true... we got pushback. The trauma world was openly disdainful.”

Uncovering why some people responded to loss and trauma in more resilient ways than was predicted became a question that intrigued Bonanno and led him to further investigation.

“When you try to figure out what resilient people do, you’re looking at how they do problem-solving, regulating their emotions — lots and lots of things,” says Bonanno. “The resilience paradox is that you can’t predict it. What works in one situation won’t necessarily work in another. Every time there’s a challenge, an individual has to identify what’s happening, what can I try, and correct as needed. Not everything always works, and not everything doesn’t work all the time. You need to understand what it is — break the challenge into different pieces, and see ‘this piece works for this,’ and put together a model. It’s a way of thinking.”

Reflecting on Flexibility

What Bonanno and his team at the TC Loss, Trauma and Emotion Lab discovered was that resilience wasn’t static. Individuals who in one traumatic situation responded in a particular way didn’t necessarily respond the same way to a different challenge.

In one study, working with veterans and people who had a diagnosed psychopathology, Bonanno and Mark Shuquan Chen (Ph.D. ’24), now at Harvard, texted participants four times a day for three weeks to give rapid responses to how they handled difficult challenges.

“There are three major components: Tell us what you did, did it work, and what did you do if it didn’t work,” says Bonanno. “Instead of thinking about the large picture — about PTSD, anxiety — it’s thinking: ‘What’s the problem? What’s the solution? What’s the actual problem to solve?’ It’s like a decision tree. Do self-talk to get yourself focusing on what’s happening right now, what can I do about it, and what tools I can use.”

Received wisdom around resilience was that those who demonstrated this quality were always able to access this ability.

Not exactly. Nor is resilience pre-wired into some humans’ genetic code.

“The big difference [in my research] is the correction part,” says Bonanno. “We’ve done the only research on the correction part, of trying something else. Even healthy people use trial and error. The myth about a resilient person is that they don’t correct.”

— Merri Rosenberg



PHOTO COURTESY OF BONANNO
George Bonanno in Paris, captured in 1980.

“

The resilience paradox is that you can’t predict it. What works in one situation won’t necessarily work in another. Every time there’s a challenge, an individual has to identify what’s happening, what can I try, and correct as needed. Not everything always works, and not everything doesn’t work all the time.

— Bonanno



Pictured left to right: Professors Patricia Hewlin, Ayorkor Gaba, Ben Lovett

Research in Brief

How TC is Driving Advancements in Psychology

TC faculty's research in psychology helps to improve mental health outcomes and transform pathways for all people across schools, communities and organizations. Among those leading that critical work are **Ayorkor Gaba**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology; **Patricia Hewlin**, Professor of Social-Organizational Psychology; and **Ben Lovett**, Professor of Psychology and Education, who offered us a closer look at their scholarship.

Improving Mental Health Systems

While more than 61 million Americans are struggling with their mental health, barriers to access mean that just 52 percent of that population receive any care. For many individuals, untreated symptoms and limited access to care end in incarceration. To help address these challenges, Ayorkor Gaba, Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, is reimagining how we think about co-occurring disorders as well as behavioral and mental health interventions for people in the criminal legal system.

Community input is central to Gaba's research, which seeks to create more effective interventions. "The people who are being served are maybe consulted for a focus group, but they are [often] left out of the experience of developing interventions, policies or practices," says Gaba, founding director of the Behavioral Health Equity Advancement Lab (B-HEAL). "[So] it's important to me to make sure that community members are part of the life of a project."

Why It Matters

For Gaba, addressing structural challenges is key to combating the mental health crisis and reducing recidivism. "Individual clinical work is amazing. It has a great impact. But if you're not looking at the larger structural issues that are causing people to be 'sick,'" says Gaba, "it's almost like you're putting a Band-Aid on a larger wound."

What's Next

Gaba is currently part of a project funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that will create a triage system for at-risk youth designed to provide behavioral health support through partnerships with several New York City community organizations. She is also designing a statewide training for Massachusetts specialty courts to identify where and how inequity and bias are impacting the legal system.

In addition to teaching and mentoring the next generation of mental health professionals, Gaba is also supporting development of sustainable interventions for marginalized youth. She is one of several faculty leading a new, community-rooted collaborative project to help young people access preventative mental health support in NYC schools as part of TC's Public Good Initiative.

In the future, Gaba plans to examine the rising use of AI for mental health support as well as the relationship between substance use, mental health and physical health disorders.

Creating More Authentic Workplaces

In a time of greater and more pervasive political polarization, how can someone effectively navigate the pressures to both conform to an office culture and be authentic to their own worldview? This question is the core of *Staying True to You*, a forthcoming book from Professor of Social-Organizational Psychology Patricia Hewlin, which expands upon her decades-long research on authenticity and self-expression in the workplace and introduces the concept of a “middle self,” or finding a balance between authenticity and conformity. “Authenticity is not always good, and conformity is not always bad,” says Hewlin, who has studied this relationship across industries in the U.S., Canada and several countries in Asia. “Understanding how we can thrive in the middle allows us to not only enhance our well-being, but it can enhance the well-being of others.”

Why It Matters

Hewlin’s research has shown that suppressing one’s values and perspectives in order to “survive and succeed” in the workplace, what she calls “creating facades of conformity,” is emotionally exhausting, reduces engagement at work and increases attrition. While authentic self-expression is found to boost general life satisfaction, Hewlin has also observed that, for marginalized groups, being fully authentic can cause harm if their expression is considered unprofessional. “Certain authentic expressions of people who are considered racial or cultural minorities — such as cultural or religious attire, hairstyles and speech patterns — can receive a backlash,” says Hewlin. “[While] it is critical for organizations to foster environments for authentic self-expression, being true to oneself also requires discernment and selecting contexts and relationships that safeguard our psychological and emotional reserves.”

What’s Next

As she continues to explore “the middle self” through her research and organizational consulting roles, Hewlin plans to expand her scholarship to include K–12 students’ perspectives in order to help young people avoid the challenges adults face as they navigate the balance between conformity and authenticity.

Finding Better Solutions for Test Anxiety

Feeling nervous before taking a test is common, but for some students, the fear of failure is overwhelming. In an attempt to help, many schools have implemented avoidance-focused accommodations where students can opt out of the stressor. However, these accommodations may end up worsening anxiety rather than improving it, according to Ben Lovett, Professor of Psychology and Education, who is developing more effective support measures for anxious students. His 2025 book *Overcoming Test Anxiety*, co-authored with Harvard’s Alex Jordan, offered evidence-based interventions for mental health providers and educators to help students build motivation in school while finding ways to manage their anxiety.

Lovett, associate director for the Education for Persistence and Innovation Center (EPIC), is now expanding that scholarship to understand how students believe anxiety affects their performance. While research suggests that feelings of anxiety don’t have direct negative effects on performance, there is little scholarship examining how students think about that relationship, a gap that Lovett and his doctoral student, Hayley Landman, are seeking to fill.

Why It Matters

Gaining a stronger understanding of students’ perceptions is a key element of creating more effective psychological interventions so that practitioners can better support students who are struggling. “Often people come to treatment with beliefs about anxiety that might not be accurate or rational,” says Lovett. “Systematically examining the perceptions of high school students, college students and even parents will give us ideas about what we can target in therapy.”

What’s Next

While Lovett is continuing to develop interventions for test anxiety, he is also part of an Institute of Education Sciences research grant project examining testing accommodations for National Assessment of Educational Progress exams to better tailor them to students’ needs and reduce interruptions in instruction. He is also currently working on projects related to the Woodcock-Johnson Battery, a collection of tests commonly used to diagnose learning disabilities.

— Sherri Gardner





PHOTO © JD CLOSSER

Teachers College students regularly work alongside faculty — including Gaba, Hewlin and Lovett. In supporting their research on campus and beyond, students help advance key findings — and build their own expertise.



PHOTO © CHELSEA LOREN

Alice Wilder (Ed.D. '98)

Building a Learner's Mindset

Listening, Encouragement, Questions and Storytelling

A guest essay by educational television vanguard Alice Wilder (Ed.D. '98, Educational Psychology), who's helped launch childhood classics like *Blue's Clues* and more

Growing up, I didn't see myself as a learner.

As a student, I lacked passion for school, mostly earning Cs. I quietly decided that “real learners” were the kids who aced tests and raised their hands without hesitation. I was curious but shy, and school felt abstract and unrelatable.

That all changed during my freshman year at Skidmore College, when my psychology professor, Mary Ann Foley, told me, “I like the questions you ask.”

With a few words, she transformed my life, recognizing and naming how my mind worked as a strength.

She invited me to work in her memory and cognition lab. Sitting with elementary-age kids, asking questions and listening to their answers, I felt something: deep engagement.

From that moment, I became a lifelong learner.

When I say learner, I don't simply mean a student in a classroom. Learners are thinkers, explorers and risk-takers who see themselves as curious, capable and continually growing. They believe their ideas matter.

A learner's mindset begins with feeling seen and heard and confidence in who they are and what makes them distinctly themselves.

As I've helped design curricula for children's television, one belief has guided my work: To make anything for children, we must truly see them. How do we get there? By asking for their opinions and listening — not by assuming what they know, believe or feel. Most adults simply don't remember what it's like to be a child.

“

Learners are thinkers, explorers and risk-takers who see themselves as curious, capable and continually growing. They believe their ideas matter.

— Wilder

The same is true for parents and teachers. When we jump in to fix things, explain everything or assume we know what a child means, we can accidentally talk over the very thinking we want to nurture. When we slow down, ask questions and listen, we learn — and become better guides in their learning.

My undergraduate experiences — and the movie *Big* — helped me see myself differently. Watching Tom Hanks's character Josh explain kids to adults, I realized I wanted to be that adult in the room — one who thought like a kid, helping writers, creators and producers remember what it was like to be our audience's age.

That mission led me to Teachers College, where the Educational Psychology* program provided the tools to create educational products for kids using children's voices, child development, instructional design and research methods.

In Joanna Williams's reading and language lab, I learned by studying children, speaking with 12 to 14-year-old nonreaders, asking questions and discovering their interests.

I studied the science of learning, including the effectiveness of storytelling, emotion, scaffolding, repetition, metacognitive “wrap-ups,” hands-on exploration and concrete examples. I learned how strong instructional design can transform abstract ideas into meaningful understanding.

As adults, we can design experiences for positive impact by using the science of learning. It starts with a mission and setting specific goals. Then, ask questions and listen to understand your audience — reflecting their input into relatable, developmentally appropriate, emotional stories.

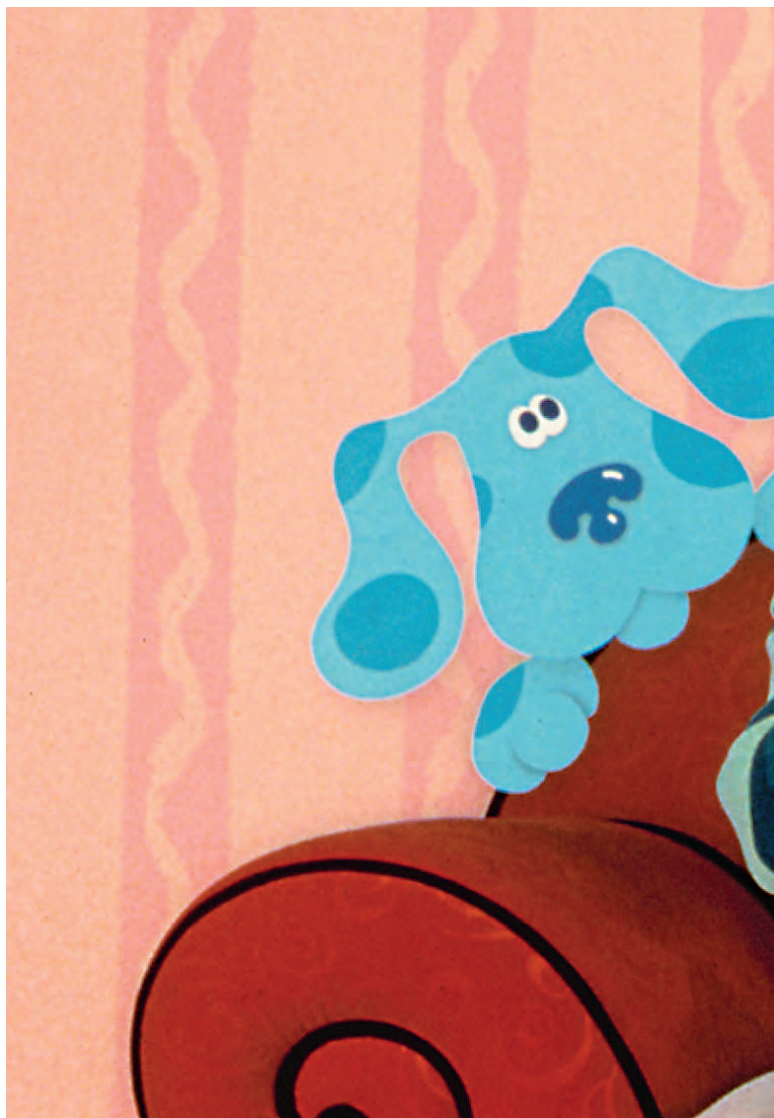
On shows like *Blue's Clues* and *Super Why!*, we didn't just rely on academic research; we brought scripts, animatics, and finished episodes to children before they aired, assessing what they liked, where they got stuck, and their learning.

But the ultimate test happens after the screen goes off: How do children transfer what they've learned to real life? In one session, a preschooler watched an episode with a shape game. Later, they pointed to a light switch plate on the wall, identifying it as a rectangle. That transfer — from screen to real life — is the ultimate form of learning.

If a child thinks, “They get me. I understand this. I can figure things out,” we've succeeded.

Tumble Leaf, where quirky characters explore and experiment in nature, promoted curiosity and modeled learning science through play. We repeated the phrase “Let me figure this out!” as a way to encourage preschoolers to use the phrase when they encountered an obstacle in real life.

For *Cha-Ching: Money Smart Kids*, we asked children about money and learned that many financial concepts, like earning and spending, are abstract, so we created episodes to make those ideas concrete. One showed every object in a house labeled with a price tag, making the cost of living tangible and relatable.



When we invite children into the process, something powerful happens: They feel like they matter. They become empowered and open to seeing themselves as learners. That's the real magic.

Learning, at its best, is energizing — it's dopamine. Whether kids are watching high-quality educational TV, playing outside or sitting in a classroom, adults can help recognize and ignite the learners children already are.

I know what it feels like to move through school without that identity — and how powerful it is when an adult listens and recognizes your thinking as valuable.

My experiences sparked a lasting conviction: No child should grow up thinking they are not a learner.



Wilder helped make learning fun on Blue's Clues, which aired from 1996 to 2006 to 13.7 million viewers each week in the U.S. and across 60 countries.

“When we invite children into the process, something powerful happens: They feel like they matter. They become empowered and open to seeing themselves as learners. That’s the real magic.

— Wilder

Alice Wilder (Ed.D. '98, Educational Psychology*) has more than three decades of experience in children’s educational programming as a producer and head of research.

**Editor’s Note:* Teachers College has since renamed this program Psychology in Education.



Get Involved

Make new friends and network through volunteer opportunities with the TC Alumni Association, which is convening expertise, impact and fun in NYC, cities near you and online.

Join one of our committees, including:

The Alumni Experience Committee, which collaborates to develop engaging alumni programming for our community, including professional networking and service opportunities

The Young Alumni and Student Engagement Committee, which works to welcome graduating TC students into the next stage of their TC experience

The Regional and Affinity Groups Committee, which helps cultivate local and interest-based relationships

Plus, check out:

Silver Roundtable, TC's affinity group for those approaching or in retirement

TC NEXT's Alumni Mentorship Program, which connects TC students with alumni for meaningful, one-on-one mentorship grounded in career exploration, professional development and community building. Interested in getting involved?

Email TCNEXT@tc.columbia.edu



**Learn more about getting involved
with the TC Alumni Association.**

tc.columbia.edu/alumni/connect

Alumni Council

During my first year as president of TC's Alumni Council, I have enjoyed the privilege of connecting (and reconnecting) with alumni across generations, marveling at their unique experiences across backgrounds, geographies and academic interests.

Across these rich and varied professional paths taken since graduation, we continue to share the powerful TC experience. I have heard wonderful variations on the same theme — an influential professor, an impactful class, a cohort of peers turned friends. TC welcomes us as curious, eager students and sends us out into the world prepared to make a real difference as part of a remarkable network of 100,000 alumni around the globe.

Building these connections is the most rewarding component of my work with the Alumni Council, and we saw this past year how the enthusiasm of TC alumni doubled the number of active regional groups. Alumni-led regional engagement can be found on Long Island, California, Florida, Chicago, Hawaii, Brazil, China and beyond. In addition to my service on the Alumni Council, I am especially pleased to be part of the new Silver Roundtable, an affinity group designed expressly for alumni in or approaching retirement, which is flourishing after its inaugural year.

Wherever we go following graduation, the impact of the TC experience remains with us as we return — time and time again — to a shared purpose of creating positive change in the world. I encourage you to join us and keep the powerful alumni connection going.

Warm regards,



Jane Elizabeth Brown (M.A. '10)
President of the TC Alumni Council

PHOTO © SIRIN SAMMAN

Alumni Happenings

Impact Day

TC's fifth annual Impact Day, the College's signature day of giving and service, was on March 5th, and brought together more than 300 alumni in New York City and cities around the world. Alumni prepared food for people battling serious illness, volunteered with a veterans organization, cleaned up trash in their communities (below right, in San Francisco) and hosted a book drive (below left, on Long Island). More than \$776,000 was raised to support critical priorities across the College, and community members wrote more than 2,000 thank-you cards to TC donors.



Morningside Park Beautification

Coming together as stewards of our planet on Earth Day, TC students, alumni and staff got together in the neighborhood's beloved Morningside Park to garden and clean-up the grounds.





Silver Roundtable Tea

TC's Silver Roundtable, an affinity group for alumni in or approaching retirement, convened in December for a holiday tea. The festivities included a book talk with renowned author and TC alumna Dale V. Atkins (M.A. '72), moderated by Patricia Vardin (Ed.D. '84, M.A. '72).

Federal Policy Institute Reception

As part of the Federal Policy Institute's annual trip to Washington, D.C., more than 100 alumni joined students in January at the National Press Club for an evening of engaging conversation. The class, led by Lynn Kagan, Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Early Childhood and Family Policy, visits D.C. each year as part of the rigorous course on policy. In addition to remarks from TC President Thomas Bailey and Kagan, guests enjoyed a keynote address from Ted Mitchell, President of the American Council on Education, followed by a reception.



\$1.3 Million Raised for Student Scholarships at Teachers College Gala

The Gala honored alumnus and SUNY Chancellor John B. King Jr. and celebrated the impact of supporting students pursuing careers in education, health and psychology.

This spring, Teachers College raised \$1.3 million at the TC Gala to support student scholarships. Held on May 5th at New York's iconic Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Center, the evening celebrated the incredible impact of supporting students preparing to lead across the fields of education, health and psychology. Nearly 300 alumni, partners and faculty attended the sold-out event, which honored Teachers College alumnus John B. King Jr. (Ed.D. '08, M.A. '97), Chancellor of the State University of New York (SUNY) and former U.S. Secretary of Education under President Barack Obama. The event was co-chaired by Valerie Rockefeller (M.A. '98), William D. Rueckert and David P. O'Connor, members of the Teachers College Board of Trustees, led by Board Chair Leslie Morse Nelson.



PHOTO © JARED SISKIN/GETTY IMAGES



Gala

TO SUPPORT SCHOLARSHIPS



Gala Co-chair and TC Trustee William D. Rueckert served as the evening's emcee.



PHOTO © JARED SISKIN/GETTY IMAGES

Pictured left to right: John B. King Jr. (Ed.D. '08, M.A. '97), TC alumnus and SUNY Chancellor; Judy Woodruff, PBS NewsHour Senior Correspondent; Thomas Bailey, Teachers College President; Leslie Morse Nelson, Teachers College Board Chair; and Valerie Rockefeller (M.A. '98) and William D. Rueckert, members of the Teachers College Board of Trustees, who co-chaired the gala with TC board member David P. O'Connor.

“At a moment when expanding access to education has never been more urgent, this gala helps ensure that more students can obtain the professional preparation needed to build careers in education, health and psychology that strengthen communities and improve lives,” said President Bailey in his remarks. “You have contributed to the great success of our event, but more importantly, you are contributing to the lives of our students and the many thousands more they will impact through their scholarship, research and practice.”



PHOTO © JARED SISKIN/GETTY IMAGES

President Thomas Bailey (right) presents honoree John B. King Jr. (Ed.D. '08, M.A. '97), alumnus and SUNY Chancellor, with the 2026 TC Gala to Support Scholarships Award.

Teachers College’s impact was highlighted by Chancellor King, who underscored the importance of supporting access to education. “My experience at Teachers College helped shape my path in public service and my commitment to expanding opportunity for others,” said King, who, at the helm of SUNY, has advanced a system-wide agenda focused on student success, research, equity and economic mobility. “I’m honored to be recognized by Teachers College and grateful for its continued commitment to student scholarships. Scholarships are critical to ensuring that more students can access that same preparation and go on to serve their communities.”



PHOTO © JARED SISKIN/GETTY IMAGES

Judy Woodruff, Senior Correspondent, PBS NewsHour (left), and John B. King Jr., Chancellor, State University of New York (SUNY).

As part of the evening’s program, King joined special guest *PBS NewsHour*’s Judy Woodruff for a wide-ranging conversation on the current education landscape. When asked by Woodruff what “teachers need to be focusing on right now in order to educate and support the next generation of young people,” King responded: “Teachers need to know how to help students read better, how to help a student do math better, but they also have to understand how to build relationships, how to build connection, how to create a classroom environment characterized by love — you have to create that. If teachers hadn’t done that for me, I wouldn’t be sitting here today.”

TC student Victoria Dumas shared a powerful testimonial about the significance of the “TC family’s” support as she pursues her doctoral degree in English Education: “[Teachers College] was built by people who believed, collectively, that education — when theory, research and practice come together — could transform society,” said Dumas.



PHOTO © BRANDON VALLEJO

“Tonight, you [the ‘TC family’] have the opportunity to carry that legacy forward. Every time you invest in a student, you are saying: ‘I may not sit in your classroom. I may not write your thesis or dissertation. But I will make sure you have the opportunity to do both.’”

– Victoria Dumas

TC doctoral student Victoria Dumas.



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Teachers College, Columbia University

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Alumni, share your news

Spread the word about your latest project, book or role with our community. Scan the code to learn more about your fellow alumni and share your updates.



tc.columbia.edu/alumni/news

See you at the library

Resources from TC's Gottesman Libraries are among the benefits available to our TC alumni community. Access:

- Online databases and collections
- Print materials
- Study spaces
- & more



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Plus, all TC alumni receive 10% off their purchase



“Become the person who builds capacity, not just solves problems. By mentoring others, you are more likely to feel fulfilled – and it sends a strong signal that you are ready for broader influence and impact.”

— Ruth Gotian (Ed.D. '17) on optimizing your career in *Psychology Today*

“When you own a company, the title ‘CEO’ means do anything and everything it takes, whether it’s running FedEx, making a cold call, taking the garbage out, doing a deal with the bank....In order to get to the success that you want to see, you have to be willing to be on the front lines.”

— Tracy Holland (M.A. '00) on the “Strategic Advisor Board” podcast

“It’s so important for me to give back to kids because I want to be the person I needed at that age.”

— Brandon Martin (M.A. '16), discussing his nonprofit to support young Black male students on *Today with Jenna & Friends*

“[Educators] can reclaim their role as civic incubators, teaching students how to move between dialogue, debate, and action in ways that strengthen our social fabric.”

— Peter T. Coleman (Ph.D. '98), Professor of Psychology and Education, in an op-ed for *The Boston Globe*

“[Teaching is] all about fostering that sense of inquiry. Science is fundamentally about taking risks, and we navigate the challenges of sense-making together.”

— Aarti Mallya (Ph.D. '09), who was named the 2025 Teacher of the Year in Bergen County, NJ

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a stronger future.



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SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, October 3, 2026

Join us for TC Alumni Day to connect with fellow alumni, celebrate the 2026 Alumni Awardees, and enjoy engaging programming.



Scan the code or go to tc.edu/alumniaday to learn more.