

COMMENCEMENT 2012



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President addresses Barnard graduates

Obama highlights women's rights in commencement speech

BY YASMIN GAGNE AND SAMMY ROTH
Spectator Senior Staff Writers

President Barack Obama urged Barnard graduates to fight for women's rights and pursue leadership roles on Monday afternoon at a commencement ceremony marked by high security and high emotions across campus. It was his first appearance at Columbia since becoming president.

Obama, CC '83, largely avoided campaign rhetoric in his keynote address, focusing on women's rights during an election year in which women's issues have increasingly entered into the political dialogue. He stressed the importance of female leaders in society.

"Don't just get involved—fight for your seat at the table," he told Barnard students. "Better yet, fight for a seat at the head of the table."

Obama also touched on the sometimes strained relationship between Barnard and Columbia. But he didn't address the campus controversy caused by his decision to speak at Barnard's graduation instead of his alma mater's.

And even though he wasn't giving his usual stump speech, Obama didn't shy away from talking about other hot-button issues, including gay marriage and the economy. He referred several times to his recent endorsement of same-sex marriage rights, eliciting loud cheers.

"The trajectory of this country should give you hope. Previous generations should give you hope ... That's how we achieved women's rights," he said. "That's how we achieved voting rights. That's how we

achieved workers' rights. That's how we achieved gay rights."

Barnard graduate Liza Darvin said that even if "some of it was political rhetoric," she enjoyed Obama's personal anecdotes. Another graduate, Laurie Kladky, said she appreciated Obama's sense of humor.

"I expected it to be more campaign-y," Kladky said. "He only told us to vote once."

WOMEN AND POLITICS

While addressing graduates, Obama also described the women "who shaped my life," including his mother Stanley Ann Dunham, his wife Michelle, and his half-sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, BC '93. He told Barnard students to "ignore our pop culture obsession over beauty and fashion, and focus instead on studying, inventing, competing, and leading."

"We are better off when women are treated fairly and equally in every aspect of American life, whether it's the salary you earn or the health decisions you make," he said.

He joked that his wife would have something slightly different to say about beauty and fashion, though.

"Michelle will say, 'Nothing wrong with caring about it a little bit,'" Obama said. "You can be stylish and powerful too."

But for all the time Obama spent discussing women's issues during his half-hour address, he didn't explain why he chose to speak at Barnard rather than Columbia College, his alma mater. The March announcement that he would speak at Barnard prompted hundreds of online comments, many of them sexist and misogynistic, on *Spectator* and *Bwog*, and highlighted the tension that sometimes



SPEAKER-IN-CHIEF | Clockwise from top left: Obama delivers his commencement address; Barnard students take part in the ceremony; senior Britney Wilson talks to her classmates; Obama chats with Barnard President Debora Spar; graduates applaud and cheer.

exists between Barnard and Columbia—a tension that Obama referred to only tangentially.

"I will begin by telling a hard truth," Obama joked. "I'm a Columbia College graduate. I know there can be a little bit of a sibling rivalry here."

He did talk briefly about his time at Columbia College, pointing out that women were first admitted to CC in 1983, the year he graduated.

He added that music at the time "was all about Michael [Jackson] and the moonwalk," although he responded to cries of "do it!" from the crowd by saying there would be "no moonwalking today." He also noted that in 1983, Columbia's neighborhood was more dangerous than it is

now, and that Times Square was "not a family destination."

"But for all the differences, the class of 1983 actually had a lot in common with all of you," Obama said. "For we, too, were heading out into a world at a moment when our country was still recovering from a particularly severe economic recession."

"This country would be better off if more Americans got the kind of education you receive here at Barnard," he added.

'ORGANIC AND RESONANT'

Obama arrived on South Lawn for the ceremony at around noon, when his motorcade turned from Amsterdam Avenue on to College Walk. Barnard seniors, as well as students from other undergraduate schools who won tickets for the event in a lottery, greeted him with ecstatic applause.

"I'm so excited. I can't believe he's actually coming," Barnard senior Elizabeth Goodman said before the ceremony. "I'm really honored to be part of Barnard today."

Barnard graduate Julia Feld said before the ceremony that she avoided watching videos of Obama's past commencement speeches, worried that, if they were too similar to his address on Monday, she might feel that his appearance at Columbia "isn't special."

"I just want it to come as it comes, to kind of really enjoy it,"

she said.

Reaction to Obama's speech was largely positive—and not just among current students. Andrea Hochland, BC '75, who watched Obama's address at a viewing party for Barnard alumnae at the Midtown Executive Club, said he gave a "fantastic commencement address."

"It wasn't filled with platitudes—it was organic and resonant to what Barnard represents," Hochland said. "He's a male speaker, but he's someone who understands the woman's situation in this country."

Barnard President Debora Spar, who donated a total of \$1,250 to Obama in 2007 and 2008, awarded Obama with a Barnard Medal of Distinction. She took on a political tone as she introduced Obama, praising many of his policies and calling his speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention "as brilliant as it was decisive."

"You have led the way on preventing hate crimes and promoting affordable health care, on reforming student loan programs, credit card and financial regulation," Spar said.

CAMPUS LOCKED DOWN

Obama's speech was only part of the story on Monday, when campus was turned upside-down by security procedures.

Security concerns first entered the campus conversation

late last month when administrators made the controversial decision to reschedule the School of General Studies' Class Day, which was originally scheduled for Monday morning. The decision prompted outrage among students, many of whom said that their families and friends would no longer be able to attend the ceremony.

GS Dean Peter Awn said that if the ceremony hadn't been rescheduled for Sunday, GS students and their guests would have had to arrive at campus at 5:30 a.m. due to heightened security procedures. That heightened security finally hit campus on Sunday, when residents of all dorms bordering South Lawn had to vacate their rooms by 4 p.m.

Lower campus was completely locked down from midnight on Sunday night until Obama departed at about 2 p.m. Only people attending the ceremony could access lower campus during that time, and all buildings south of Low Library were closed.

By 8 a.m., many Barnard seniors had lined up outside Lerner Hall to go through metal detectors. At times, the line stretched for more than a block, but by 10 a.m. most of the students had made it into Roone Arledge Auditorium, where they waited until the procession began at noon.

SEE OBAMA, page 5

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LOCKED DOWN | Campus was turned upside-down by security procedures on Monday. Lower campus shut down at midnight Sunday night, there were snipers on the roofs of Butler and Low libraries, and commencement attendees had to wait for hours to go through security checkpoints.



HATS OFF | MacArthur talks to graduates (center). Clockwise from top left: Amirah Sequeira and Erik Nook receive awards; senior class president Sarah Chai speaks; students process across the quad.

Harper’s exec talks to CC grads

BY LILLIAN CHEN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Harper’s Magazine publisher Rick MacArthur, CC ’78, opened his Columbia College Class Day address with a joke.

“I realize that many among you are disappointed that I am not the president of the United States,” he said. “I want you to know, I share your disappointment.”

CC’s Tuesday morning class day ceremony was a much quieter affair than Barnard’s Monday commencement ceremony, where President Barack Obama, CC ’83, was the keynote speaker.

But that didn’t stop the college’s more than 1,000 graduates from celebrating their graduation and looking back on their time at Columbia. Senior class president Sarah Chai said that the experiences “that are most quintessentially Columbia” are those “not advertised by admissions officers,” describing her first time eating a slice of Koronet pizza.

“Columbia has undoubtedly become a place of many firsts for us,” she said.

MacArthur’s speech in many ways reflected the Core Curriculum, as he spent much of it “analyzing texts,” as he put it. He described his difficulties reading the “Marx-Engels Reader,” a Contemporary Civilization text, quoting Karl Marx extensively.

“I was trying, really trying to understand, but the German Ideology Part 1 was more than I had bargained for,” he said.

After quoting a particularly dense passage, he said, “I went back to the text, as I know all of you do, and reread the whole damn thing.”

MacArthur, a former Spectator news editor and a member of Spectator’s board of trustees, also discussed Obama, saying that the president misread former Columbia English professor Edward Said. According to a recent biography of Obama, the president once

called Said a “flake” more interested in literary theory than actual text, an assessment with which MacArthur disagreed.

“As a Protestant-baptized Palestinian-American who attended British colonial and American schools, Said was himself decontextualized as an Arab, permanently out of place,” MacArthur said. “Said’s sense of deracination, of never quite knowing where he came from, is something Barack Obama should know all about.”

Continuing his analysis,

“We do forge citizens, scholars, scientists, artists, writers, and leaders.”

—James Valentini,
Columbia College interim dean

though, MacArthur said that he ultimately does not believe Obama considered Said a flake, because “the grown-up Obama is a serious, intelligent person who attended Columbia College, where he learned how to read past the obvious and the superficial.”

“My hope is that none of you seniors would shrink from such a reading assignment or such a political risk because of your exceptional Columbia College education,” he continued. “The role of the intellectual, a Columbia intellectual, is to be prepared to tackle any text.”

“My advice to all of you today ... is to absorb, to question, to challenge, to refute any author on any subject—or for that matter, any politician or commencement speaker,” he added.

Graduate Kalasi Huggins said that while MacArthur’s address wasn’t his “ideal graduation

speech,” it was “well-executed.”

“I thought it was relevant, and it definitely addressed the Obama issue, and he did it in a comical way which offset the animosity and the tension,” Huggins said.

MacArthur’s discussion of Core texts served to highlight a point made by Columbia College Alumni Association president Kyra Tirana Barry, CC ’87.

“The Columbia experience is very powerful,” Barry said. “It spans the years and generations.”

There were several speakers besides MacArthur, including Barry, Chai, University President Lee Bollinger, Columbia College Interim Dean James Valentini, and salutatorian Zachary Levine. Valentini referenced a tagline once used by Jeep: “The things we make, make us.”

“At Columbia, we are not manufacturers,” he said. “But we do forge citizens, scholars, scientists, artists, writers, and leaders.”

Levine thanked his classmates for making him “feel comfortable” in his own identity after he came out, discussing the ways that Columbia orients and disorients students.

“What we believe and know is dependent on how we were raised, relationships we’ve formed, accomplishments and accidents and blessings that we’ve had along the way,” he said. “The presence of a queer community ... made the disorientation, the dizziness, feel good and beautiful, and uncomfortable in the best sense.”

“This is a familiar story to each of us,” he added.

Chai encouraged her classmates to keep their peers in mind as they “continue to take chances and take charge.”

“It’s the people that you met here at Columbia who have helped shape you into an even more incredible person than you were when you first came to Morningside Heights,” she said.

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Kevin Zhai, CC

BY LILLIAN CHEN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Going into senior year, Kevin Zhai wanted to shift his priorities. In his previous three years, he had put in a lot of time and effort as the chair of the Asian American Alliance, as a Sigma Nu brother and treasurer, and as a varsity swimmer.

“I wanted to focus on academics this year, which I definitely haven’t been able to do,” he said.

Instead, he spent most of his time this year heavily involved in student life again, mainly working on finance initiatives like student project grants as the Columbia College Student Council vice president of finance.

When he was approached about being on a CCSC executive board ticket, he debated what to do. But ultimately, it was such a “unique opportunity” that he couldn’t pass it up, he said.

After working on the organizational level as the chair of AAA and then on the board level as an Activities Board at Columbia representative, Zhai said he wanted the chance to work on the council level.

“I had already kind of planned out my life, and I really wasn’t anticipating this part,” he said of CCSC.

A busy four years at Columbia is partially why he’s decided to turn down a paralegal job at a law firm downtown next year in favor of moving back to his hometown near Seattle, applying to Ph.D. programs, and working on personal goals.

“I’ve spent the past four years running around like a chicken with its head cut off,” he said.

He hopes to accomplish practical goals, like learning to cook and working on a lifelong habit of staying fit, as well as “more whimsical” goals, like learning how to drive stick shift and practicing French with a pen pal.

Zhai transferred from the School of Engineering and Applied Science to Columbia College after his sophomore

year to become a philosophy major, although he continued to pursue science by concentrating in physics. He had sold himself as a math and science student when he applied to college, but he ultimately realized that physics was the only math or science field that appealed to him.

“It was a huge turning point in my life,” he said of the transfer. “The whole point of these four years in my life is for me to develop myself as a person.”

“My dream is to go into academia,” he said, though he added that “it’s definitely not an easy road.” He said that getting into a top Ph.D. program and getting a job afterward are both incredibly tough.

“Ultimately, I think it’s the one thing I really, really care about and can see myself doing,” Zhai said, adding that he’s mainly interested in Eastern philosophy. “It gives me the freedom to really explore a lot of things and ask whatever questions I want to ask.”

Other defining experiences of his college career were spending four years on the varsity men’s swim team and being a brother of the Sigma Nu

fraternity.

Zhai initially pledged Sigma Nu because “it was like the ‘swimmer fraternity.’” Since then, more recruiting has been done outside of the swim team, which has given him the opportunity to form friendships he wouldn’t have otherwise had.

“My main social group is still the swim team ... That definitely provides the most stability,” he said. But “there were also a lot of opportunities in Sigma Nu where I could meet other people that weren’t on the swim team,” he said.

College was also a place of personal discovery for Zhai, and he said that being honest with himself and others by coming out has added depth to his friendships.

“Once you get to a certain age and a certain point in your life, the deferral of your own happiness no longer becomes a sustainable endeavor,” Zhai said. “You have to do things now that make you happy. If you’re going to sit and wait for happiness to come to you, it never will.”

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BUSY BEE | Zhai was president of the Asian American Alliance, a varsity swimmer, a Sigma Nu brother, and a CCSC VP.



ZARA CASTANY / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Xerox CEO tells SEAS graduates to ‘do some good in the world’

BY YASMIN GAGNE
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Speakers at the School of Engineering and Applied Science Class Day had one message for graduates on Monday afternoon: Use your skills to make a difference in the world.

Keynote speaker Ursula Burns, the chief executive officer of Xerox, told students to “do some good for the world.”

“We need your help. When your life journey ends, you won’t care about the money you’ve made,” Burns, who received a master’s degree from SEAS in 1981, said. “If you haven’t made world a better place, you will feel there will be an empty spot in your life.”

“You don’t have to travel around the world to find these problems,” she added. “You can go a couple of blocks in either direction, within a mile or so of this beautiful place, to find a bit of it.”

Burns grew up on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, the daughter of a single mother. Despite living in poverty, her mother was determined to send all her children to private school.

“Her highest income in any year was \$4,400, and with that she sent me and my siblings to private Catholic schools,” Burns said. “My mother saw education as a way up and out of the projects.”

Burns was the speaker at the South Lawn class day ceremony, which honored both undergraduate and graduate students. The ceremony immediately followed Barnard’s

commencement, where President Barack Obama, CC ’83, delivered the keynote address.

University President Lee Bollinger also spoke at SEAS Class Day. He discussed educators’ increasing focus on getting more students involved in science, technology, engineering, and math.

“The world has great problems ... and every one of these problems involves science and engineering at their root,” he said. “All of this knowledge must be pursued and applied with a deep humanistic intelligence. Otherwise, it will be misguided.”

Bollinger also emphasized how the SEAS curriculum’s grounding in humanities sets graduates apart from those at other engineering schools.

“An education deeply embodied in liberal arts education makes you uniquely prepared for these problems,” he said.

Burns urged graduates to help address what she called one of America’s great needs: finding more women and people of color to pursue careers in science and engineering.

“I’m an anomaly ... why?” said Burns, who is black. “I was not the number one person in the class. I happened to be pretty good and a woman and black.”

She encouraged students to “embrace change,” find a career that they’re passionate about, and be true to their values.

“Don’t do anything that wouldn’t make your mother proud,” she said.

Undergraduate valedictorian Yuan Jochen Kang, the recipient



PETER BOHNHOF FOR SPECTATOR

ENGINEERS | Clockwise from top left: Xerox CEO Ursula Burns speaks to graduates; a SEAS graduate smiles; an cappella group performs; an engineering graduate looks on; SEAS Dean Feniosky Peña-Mora addresses the class of 2012.

of the Illig Medal, gave a humorous speech, joking about the engineering curriculum.

“I would wish you all good luck, but I think we have it covered,” he said. “I’m sure we’ll meet again, and if the world ends, we’ll just meet sooner and rebuild it!”

After the ceremony, students looked back on their four years at Columbia.

“All those all-nighters finally paid off ... I see Columbia in a new light,” Julio Herrera, an applied mathematics major, said. “There’s more nostalgia now.” He added that Burns gave

a “very wise speech about how to adapt.”

Jim Huang, a computer science major, said that the ceremony put him into a reflective mood.

“Initially I thought, ‘Let’s just get it over with,’ he said. “But then in the procession, I realized, ‘Wow, this is it.’”

At the end of her speech, Burns quoted the Bible: “To those to whom much is given, much is expected.”

“You guys are the talented tenth of the world of whom much is expected,” she said.

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Spectator class of 2012

Spectator would like to congratulate its graduates from the class of 2012:

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Nontraditional students, veterans hailed at GS Class Day

BY STEPHEN SNOWDER
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

After weeks of controversy and confusion, the School of General Studies Class Day ceremony went off without a hitch Sunday morning, a day earlier than originally planned.

The ceremony was initially scheduled for Monday morning, but it was moved back to Sunday due to security measures surrounding President Barack Obama’s decision to speak at Barnard’s commencement ceremony Monday afternoon. GS graduates and their guests would have had to go through security at 5:30 a.m. on Monday.

The April 23 announcement that the ceremony would be moved sparked outrage. Many GS seniors said that their families would not be able to attend the rescheduled ceremony, although the University established a small fund to help families change their travel plans. GS graduate Kayran Abasali said that Columbia paid for her cousin’s plane ticket from Trinidad to New York.

“In the grand scheme of things, the GS faculty really handled it well,” Abasali said.

The University held a separate reception for GS graduates and their families on Monday at 4 p.m. at the Columbia Club in midtown. Between 150 and 175 graduates and their guests attended the reception, according to a GS spokesperson.

In his opening remarks, University President Lee Bollinger noted that the weather forecast predicted rain on Monday—the original day of the ceremony—which Bollinger joked “shows we’re not as dumb as you might think.”

Bollinger and GS Dean Peter Awn hailed the achievements of

the school’s 364 graduating seniors. Awn noted that the valedictorian, Maxwell Bertolero, is a former Motocross racer, and that the salutatorian, Aliza Minogue-Nachison, worked in Hollywood before coming to Columbia.

“What makes GS unique is that we actively recruit students who had taken a nontraditional path,” Awn said.

Bertolero, a philosophy and psychology major, also praised the nontraditional nature of the GS student body.

“Think back to what you were doing nine years ago,” he said. “None of the memories you conjured up forecast graduating from Columbia today.”

“You represent and epitomize what is best about America.”

—George Casey, retired Army general

Bertolero went on to detail his battle with depression as a high school student. He said he was kicked out of his high school, after which he turned to racing dirt bikes.

“All of our convoluted, complicated, and messy paths to Columbia are far from recommended,” he said, adding, “We made it here because GS knows that progress most often results from deviation from the norm.”

Bertolero spent much of his speech talking about what he called “the myth of free will,” encouraging graduates to let go of that myth in order to understand



JOSE GIRALT / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

NONTRADITIONAL TRADITION | Thomas Reardon (top left), who graduated from the School of General Studies in 2008, gives the keynote address at Sunday’s Class Day ceremony. He played a key role in the development of the Internet Explorer web browser.

reality better.

“We are all forced screaming into this world, with random genetics, set upon a path we didn’t even choose,” he said.

Several speakers highlighted GS’s significant and growing population of military veterans. In recognition of the 41 veterans graduating from GS this year, retired Army General George Casey spoke at the ceremony.

“You represent and epitomize what is best about America,” Casey said.

Casey also praised Columbia for its efforts to recruit veterans.

“Congratulations on setting

the standard for the Ivy League,” he said.

The keynote speaker was Thomas Reardon, GS ’08, who was one of the key players in the development of Microsoft’s Internet Explorer web browser. Reardon spoke to the class of 2012 about the value of an unconventional life, pointing to pioneers like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs and drawing examples from his own life.

Reardon, who has 17 siblings, forged his own birth certificate at the age of 15 in order to get a job. After graduating high school and a brief flirtation with

college, he started working for Microsoft, where he came up with some of the key ideas for Internet Explorer through a “random interaction with a friend in the music industry,” he said.


After the ceremony, graduating seniors expressed a mixture of relief and joy. GS graduate Lydia Chan, a Singapore native, said she feels “happy and tired” now that it’s all over, and Abasali said she enjoyed her time at Columbia, “minus the \$180,000 debt.”

GS graduate Ben Wirtshafter said he was “relieved” to be


done—even though he still has to finish a paper for one of his classes by Wednesday.

“I was really intrigued by the concept of people who’ve taken some time off from school, who’ve tried to learn another vocation or learn something outside of the academic realm, and getting to be in classes with people like that,” Wirtshafter said of his time at GS. “And also being able to be around a bunch of 18- to 20-year-olds who are brilliant and genius in their own way.”

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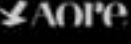



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GRADUATION DAY | Graduates of the School of General Studies celebrated their Class Day on Sunday. The graduating class comprised 364 seniors, including 41 veterans.

Lower campus locked down for Obama appearance

OBAMA from front page

For most students, though, the excitement of getting the chance to see Obama—and receive their diplomas—outweighed any frustration with the intense security.

Natasha Cline-Thomas was the last Barnard student in the line to get into Lerner. She was unperturbed by the security measures, saying that they were necessary and that the line was “moving pretty quickly.”

“As long as I get in, I’ll be happy,” Cline-Thomas said.

Feld, one of the last students in line, said that while she was excited to hear Obama, students should have been given staggered arrival times.

“They should have understood how to deal with lines in a more efficient way,” she said.

Soon-to-be graduates’ families and friends, as well as lottery-winning students from CC, GS, and the School of Engineering and Applied Science, packed 114th Street. That line spanned the block between Broadway and Amsterdam several times over, as guests and students were funneled through security checkpoints at the Carman and John Jay gates.

North campus remained open before and during the ceremony, but south campus was inundated by secret service agents, police officers, and

public safety officers. There were snipers on the roofs of Low and Butler libraries, and there was heavy security around some buildings with views of South Lawn.

While waiting to go through security at Lerner, English professor Helen Pilinovsky said she appreciated the security measures, adding “better safe than sorry.”

“I think it’s going to make our next trip to the airport look like cake,” she said.

AWARDS AND GIFTS

Obama was far from the only speaker at the ceremony. Spar, Student Government Association President Jessica Blank, Senior Class President Jaclyn D’Aversa, and Barnard board of trustees chair Jolyne Caruso-FitzGerald, BC ’81, among others, also addressed graduates.

After building some suspense, Spar opened an envelope to reveal that Barnard seniors had voted Madalena Provo as the winner of the Frank Gilbert Bryson Prize, which is given each year to a senior who “has given conspicuous evidence of unselfishness and who has made the greatest contribution to Barnard during the college years.”

Provo, an improv comedian and an SGA representative to Barnard’s board of trustees, was

shocked by the announcement. She tried with great difficulty to figure out how to walk up to the stage before realizing that she was supposed to stay seated, and she ultimately stood up in her seat and waved to her cheering classmates.

Before presenting Obama with his Medal of Distinction, Spar gave Obama two gifts: a collection of books written by Barnard alumnae and signed by their authors, and a book containing wisdom from the class of 2012 for Obama’s daughters, Sasha and Malia, who Spar said are “welcome at Barnard any time.”

For most students, hearing from Obama was the highlight of commencement. Cline-Thomas called it “the icing on the cake.”

Obama ended his address on a hopeful note.

“If you’re willing to reach up and close that gap between what America is and what America should be, I want you to know that I will be right there with you,” he said. “If you are ready to fight for that brilliant, radically simple idea of America—that no matter who you are or what you look like, no matter who you love or what God you worship, you can still pursue your own happiness—I will join you every step of the way.”

Finn Vigeland and Andrea Shang contributed reporting.
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mel's burger



bar

Congratulations
to the Brew Crew
Class of 2012

RJ

Joe W.

Alyson C.

Megan S.

Wesley Y.

Anogie

Zach G.

Evan M.

Esteban L.

Willie A.

Jessica C.

Arianna S.

Megan C.

Hilary S.

Dylan M.

Anthony B.

Julie S.

Zach M.

Kyle R.

Tammy L.

Campbell M.

Rachael E.

Peter H.G.

Archie A.

Jiwoo L.

Thomas T.

Your beer is on the
house today
R.H.I.P.

IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS...

Students in the class of 2012 started and ended their time at Columbia with two high-profile events featuring Barack Obama, both of which brought together students from across campus in unprecedented ways. During the four years in between, Columbia faced a string of administrative shake-ups and made significant progress in its local and global expansion plans. And with a steady stream of controversies, the class of 2012 grew accustomed to seeing its school make national headlines.

—Leah Greenbaum and Sam Levin

McCain Obama Debate



In the first major on-campus event for the class of 2012, presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain discussed national service in a Sept. 11, 2008 forum at Lerner Hall. Thousands of students packed Low Steps to watch the speeches on a Jumbotron while a hundred lucky students, chosen by a lottery, watched the event inside. The event was organized by ServiceNation, a nonpartisan group.

Diana Comes to Barnard



The design of Barnard's campus changed dramatically with the construction of the new student center, the Diana. The modernist building opened for business in January 2010 as a new space for classes, activities, events, and dining, replacing the previous McIntosh Student Center and a cumbersome construction site that had been in place for years.

CC Increases Enrollment

Dean of Student Affairs Kevin Shollenberger announced that Columbia College would grow by 50 students, in what was ultimately the first of several 50-student enrollment jumps. To accommodate the first increase, the University opened a new undergraduate dormitory—Harmony Hall, which had previously housed only graduate students—on 110th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue.

Manhattanville OK'd



The University was engaged in a two-year legal battle to greenlight its 17-acre campus expansion into Manhattanville, a fight between the state, which was looking to seize land on behalf of the University, and several local property owners in West Harlem, who refused to sell to Columbia. In June 2010, the New York State Court of Appeals overturned an earlier ruling, paving the way for construction. The University has made progress on the Jerome L. Greene Science Center and the Lenfest Center for the Arts, which are scheduled to open in 2016.

2008

2010

2009

Obama Elected

On Nov. 4, 2008, Barack Obama, CC '83, became the first Columbia graduate to be elected president of the United States—giving students across campus another reason to come together in masses. On that Tuesday night, students celebrated throughout campus and rushed in large groups to Harlem, where residents from across the city filled the streets with cheers.



A New Dean for CC

English professor Austin Quigley stepped down as Columbia College dean after 14 years, making way for the hiring of Columbia College's first African-American dean, philosophy professor Michele Moody-Adams. Quigley was known as a champion fundraiser and an eloquent speaker, though he had very little personal contact with students. Moody-Adams, who came to Columbia from Cornell, also had very little contact with students, and she ultimately spent most of her two years on the job getting to know the University. She resigned abruptly in August 2011.



Baker Field Renovation



In fall 2009, Columbia announced its plans to redevelop the Baker Athletics Complex in Inwood. The project includes a new building for training rooms, coaches' offices, and other facilities for Columbia's varsity athletics programs. The University also promised to create a public waterfront park around its boathouse. The announcement led to complaints from northern Manhattan residents concerned about the impact of the project on the surrounding neighborhood, but the debate was not nearly as heated as that over Manhattanville construction.

Global Centers Open



Columbia began rolling out its network of global centers, part of University President Lee Bollinger's push to increase the University's international presence. The first two centers, which are meant to provide research opportunities throughout the world, opened in Beijing and Amman in March. The University has opened or is planning a total of eight centers so far.

Steele Becomes Provost

In September, Claude Steele became Columbia's provost, replacing history professor Alan Brinkley. Steele, who was previously the chair of Stanford University's psychology department, was Columbia's first African-American provost. In his tenure as provost, he spearheaded a number of initiatives, including a task force that recommended scaling back fringe benefits for University employees. He stepped down unexpectedly in June 2011.



ADMIN TURMOIL

Columbia saw significant administrative turnover in 2011, as Provost Claude Steele and Columbia College Dean Michele Moody-Adams both resigned abruptly. Steele left to become the dean of Stanford University’s School of Education, but Moody-Adams resigned for more controversial reasons. In an email to alumni, she alleged that impending changes to the University’s structure would “ultimately compromise the College’s academic quality and financial health.” There was much speculation that she stepped down after the consulting firm McKinsey and Company recommended administrative restructuring in the Arts and Sciences, but most of McKinsey’s suggestions ultimately were not implemented, and University President Lee Bollinger described the firm’s report as “a kind of red herring.” Chemistry professor James Valentini has been serving as Columbia College’s interim dean since September, and a search committee composed of professors and students is expected to send Bollinger a list of three candidates for permanent dean by the end of this month. Former School of International and Public Affairs Dean John Coatsworth was named as permanent provost in April after serving as interim provost for eight months.

OCCUPY COLUMBIA

A new wave of Columbia activists tried to revive the spirit of 1968 this year as the Occupy Wall Street movement swept the nation. But even as protests against economic inequality flowered in Zuccotti Park, the Occupy movement never secured the same kind of foothold in Morningside Heights as it did at other college campuses. In October, hundreds of students joined a citywide walkout to protest, among other concerns, the student debt crisis that has left many young borrowers struggling to pay for school. Later that month, members of the Columbia University College Democrats spent a night in Zuccotti Park after protesters were told they would have to leave the next morning. Some Columbia students continue to align themselves with the protests against economic inequality, but their numbers and zeal have, by and large, faded with the national movement.



OPEN HOUSING
POLICY BEGINS



Administrators approved a housing program that allows any two students to live together in doubles, regardless of their genders. Students had been advocating for open housing since 2009, when a discussion at Barnard about gender-nonconforming students sparked interest in more inclusive housing options. After a pilot program, open housing is being expanded to all upperclassmen dorms in fall 2012.

ROTC RETURNS

Exactly four months after President Barack Obama signed the repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which had barred openly gay men and women from serving in the military, Columbia officially recognized an ROTC program for the first time in over 40 years. The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps had not been recognized by Columbia since 1969, when protests over the Vietnam War led to the dissolution of its long-standing Naval ROTC program. But following a campus-wide debate during the spring, the University Senate voted overwhelmingly to support the program’s return, disappointing some students and professors who opposed any military presence on campus. For advocates on both sides of the debate, the University’s decision to recognize an NROTC program marked a shift in its identity.

OBAMA AT BARNARD

Barnard announced in March that President Barack Obama, CC ’83, would speak at its commencement. Many students were upset that Obama chose to come to campus but not to speak at his alma mater, and some wrote misogynistic and sexist online comments about Barnard. The planned security for Obama’s appearance also prompted the late-April rescheduling of the School of General Studies’ Class Day, sparking outrage among GS students. Obama discussed women’s rights in his commencement address.



DEAN PENA-MORA
UNDER FIRE

In December of 2011, the New York Times reported that most of the senior faculty at the School of Engineering and Applied Science had signed a letter to Provost John Coatsworth demanding that Feniosky Peña-Mora be replaced as SEAS dean, writing that “The morale of the faculty and their trust in Dean Peña-Mora are reaching an all-time low.” Despite the central administration’s efforts to address professors’ concerns, many SEAS professors still believe that Peña-Mora needs to step down.



2012



2011

BARNARD ADMIN TURNOVER



At Barnard, longtime administrators have been replaced by younger counterparts and the school has focused increasingly on growing its brand and hauling in bigger donations. In her first weeks as president in 2008, Debora Spar said the school must promote and expand the value of women’s education. Barnard’s goal, she said, involves “probing to understand both the options that women now face and their capacity to choose and maneuver among them.” Avis Hinkson, BC ’84, replaced Barnard’s dean of 17 years, Dorothy Denburg, in February 2011 after Denburg was asked to serve instead as the vice president for college relations. Barnard’s provost, Elizabeth Boylan, also left her post of 16 years, to serve as program director of a non-profit. Linda Bell, currently the provost of Haverford College, will take over on Oct. 1, 2012.

ADMINS MEET THE 21ST CENTURY

As first-years, many in the class of 2012 had probably never used Twitter. But as the years have gone by there are few students who don’t follow @lee_bollinger, the satirical Twitter account that purports to be written by the University president. This year, administrators (the real ones) have looked increasingly to the Internet to make themselves more visible. Columbia College Dean James Valentini has written personal emails, recorded videos outlining his priorities, and interacted with students in the comments section of Bwog, representing an unprecedented level of digital engagement for an administrator of his stature. Dean of Student Affairs Kevin Shollenberger and Dean of Multicultural Affairs Terry Martinez both joined Twitter this year to publicize their offices’ initiatives and connect with students. Columbia and Barnard have significantly expanded their communications arms, in attempts to further the schools’ global presence and better control branding.

NEW FOOTBALL COACH

Columbia football head coach Pete Mangurian was brought in to replace former head coach Norries Wilson, who was fired just a day after the Lions defeated Brown in an emotional double overtime thriller. That win was the team’s first of the season, and after six seasons Wilson was relieved of his duties. Wilson’s six-year tenure ended with a 17-43 record. Mangurian brings great promise as he has pledged to bring a “winning culture” back to Morningside Heights.



DEATH OF TINA BU

Interest in mental health grew after Tina Bu, CC ’13, committed suicide on Oct. 23 in her Columbia residence hall. Peers remember Bu as a kind, thoughtful friend who always had time to lend a helping hand. Bu took a year off, but entered Columbia as a member of the class of 2012. An unprecedented number of grassroots student projects examined wellness this year in the wake of her death and growing concerns about stress culture in the Ivy League. This past semester, groups like the Student Wellness Project, Active Minds, the Student Forum, and the Student Space Initiative made community-building on campus a priority and received broad support from administrators and students.

DRUG BUST



After a five-month investigation, five Columbia students were arrested in December 2010 for selling thousands of dollars’ worth of drugs out of fraternity houses and dorm rooms. Alpha Epsilon Pi, Pi Kappa Alpha, and Psi Upsilon, the fraternities that four of the students belonged to, were stripped of their brownstones on 114th Street for at least three years. Four of the students involved would have graduated with the class of 2012. They were each prosecuted criminally. Each fraternity has continued to operate at Columbia. Since the beginning of 2011, all Greek organizations have been required to meet certain standards for philanthropy, academics, and leadership development, to maintain their University recognition and housing.

RECORD 94 MILVETS GRADUATE

A record 94 military veterans graduated from Columbia this year, following aggressive recruiting and impressive benefits packages from the post-9/11 GI Bill. There were roughly 500 veterans enrolled at Columbia this year, up from 30 a decade earlier. The School of General Studies was founded with soldiers returning from World War II in mind, and the leadership of the school decided to pursue that mandate with renewed fervor following Sept. 11, 2011. But veterans’ presence on campus may start to decrease in the coming years, because revisions to the post-9/11 GI Bill have left veterans with less funding to pursue higher education at expensive schools like Columbia.

Adam Iseman, SEAS

BY MICHAEL ZHONG
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Adam Iseman has been building gadgets for years, from a model of the neuron structure of a scorpion's brain to a device that simulates human hearing. Of all his projects, though, Iseman is most proud of the robotic swarm that he and three other engineering students showcased at the Cornell Cup at Disney World earlier this month.

The robotic swarm, which was also the group's senior design project, deploys four navigator robots called grunts, which collectively scan any surface for hazardous materials and report back to the main robot. The main robot then reports whether or not the surface is safe.

"It was just really cool to see my original idea actually implemented and working," Iseman, an electrical engineering major, said. "I was really proud of that."

Iseman's group applied for the Cornell Cup earlier this year and was one of 15 teams to be accepted. The four students were given an all-expenses-paid trip to Disney World to present the robot, and they ultimately earned an honorable mention.

The robotic swarm has its roots in Iseman's upbringing in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., where he was first exposed to constructing gadgets in his high school shop class. Iseman took several industrial design classes, and some of the toolkits he used in his shop class ended up in the swarm, mainly in the machinery used to

mobilize the grunts.

"I'd just hang out in the shop and build robots after school," he said.

Iseman was not initially interested in attending college in New York City because his two sisters had bad experiences at Fordham and New York University. However, he liked that Columbia offered a liberal arts education through the Core Curriculum, and that—along with a taste of New York pizza—compelled him to enroll in Columbia.

"It sort of sucks when they're making you take it," Iseman said, referring to the Core. "But the different ways that you learn and the different things that you learn, rather than being strictly locked in as a technical

person, really intrigued me about Columbia."

In addition to building robots, Iseman plays chess and was the captain of the Ultimate frisbee team, which he described as a positive change of pace from wrestling in high school. He was also a member of the Columbia Bartending Agency for four years.

"Even before I was even allowed to drink, I was serving people," he said.

After graduation, Iseman will head west to Seattle to work as a test engineer at Boeing, where he held an internship last summer. At Boeing, he will design systems that monitor the individual components of airplanes.

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ZARA CASTANY / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

GADGETS | Iseman built robotics at Columbia and was the captain of the Ultimate frisbee team.

Maddie Provo, BC

BY ABBY ABRAMS
Spectator Staff Writer

Asked how she would describe herself, Maddie Provo turned to her friends for help. She received answers ranging from "weird," to "sings a lot," to "the Ruth Bader Ginsburg of making people feel good."

This eclectic mix of responses reflects Provo's many different roles on campus. She was a representative to Barnard's Board of Trustees for the college's Student Government Association, she helped found an improv group, and she served as a Barnard Speaking Fellow, a Constellation Leader, president of the Yiddish Club, and morale co-chair for Dance Marathon.

At Barnard's Commencement on Monday, Provo won the Frank Gilbert Bryson Prize, which is voted on each year by Barnard seniors. The award is meant for a student who "has given conspicuous evidence of unselfishness and who has made the greatest contribution to Barnard during the college years," according to Barnard's website.

In addition to her participation in the improv group, Control Top, Provo acted in and worked on shows for King's Crown Shakespeare Troupe and Columbia University Players. She said some of her best memories of Barnard include the "funny ladies" she's worked with in Control Top and the team's coach, Justin Grace, a former Columbia student whom team members call "Poppa Bear."

"Doing improv, and especially doing improv with our coach, has given me a new approach to analyzing a lot of the things that I see," Provo said. "He's just really caring and compassionate and really giving of his time and his energies with us."

During her time on SGA, Provo worked on issues like Greek life and campus space constraints. She said that being a representative to the board of trustees opened her eyes to the inner workings of the college.

"As students I think it's really easy for us to be like ... 'This

institution exists for me, for me,' which is true on a lot of levels, but it's also important to be like, 'Oh, administrators also work here, and faculty work here,'" Provo said. "It's cool to be forced to think about something that isn't just yourself, while at the same time repping students hard and trying to make our voices heard on that front."

Considering her many interests and activities, Provo said she "really just lucked into" finding her majors, psychology and Yiddish. She declared her psychology major sophomore year, thinking she might want to be a psychologist, but she soon discovered that her real passion was Yiddish, and she designed a Yiddish major for herself.

"I've always been really interested in religion, particularly Judaism, even though I'm not Jewish," Provo said. "I had a friend who was going to be taking a Yiddish class and she asked me if I wanted to join her, and so I did."

This summer Provo will work as a research assistant, helping Barnard English professor Pam Cobrin with a book, before heading off on what she called "one of those obligatory post-college Europe visits."

Provo plans to spend time with her grandmother in South Carolina in the fall before returning to New York.

"I'm going to get a day job of sorts, and I'm going to try to do theater," she said. "I've finally admitted to myself that I want to do theater, and I've given myself a sort of three-year limit."

Provo said that one of her favorite parts of being a college student was "being surrounded by awesome, kick-ass women and men."

"I'm definitely going to miss the people. But I want to put it on the record that I think this is the real world," she said, referring to college. "I don't like it when people are like, 'What's it gonna be like in the real world?' Am I in purgatory right now? This is something. I don't know how real or unreal it is, but it's not unreal."

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ZARA CASTANY / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

COMEDIENNE | Provo helped found an improv group, Control Top, acted in numerous shows with King's Crown Shakespeare Troupe, and designed her own Yiddish major.

BY MADINA TOURE
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Jacqueline Thong, who has been president of the General Studies Student Council for two years, arrived at Columbia a classically trained ballet dancer. She had begun taking dance classes at the age of five, and she eventually danced with a contemporary ballet company, traveling to countries including Australia, China, and Singapore.

"My mom was a dance teacher, so ever since I was young I was surrounded by dancing and studios," Thong said.

Thong was born and raised in Ipoh, a small town in Malaysia, and she initially struggled to adapt to American culture.

"I didn't understand any of the cultural references or the sports references," she said. "I didn't know which team belonged to which city, and that

was challenging as an international student."

Thong said that despite New York City's fast pace and high cost of living, there is something transformative about the city—you can try new things and go to fancy parties, she said, but you can also "take a stroll in the park and lie on the lawns at Columbia and read a book."

Before coming to GS in 2008, Thong spent two years dancing in Montreal, where she met her future fiancée, Chris, a graduate of the School of Engineering and Applied Science. She made a deal with him—if he would walk her through the application process for GS, she would reward him with a dinner date.

"Chris encouraged me to come to school," she said.

Thong took a few dance classes at Columbia, and she was a member of the ballroom dance team her first semester,



ZARA CASTANY / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LEADER | Thong was president of the General Studies Student Council for two years.

Jacqueline Thong, GS

but she didn't pursue dancing because of an injury that prevented her from dancing the way she had before. She is majoring in sustainable development, a topic she became interested in after learning about the development of Third World countries in a class with economics professor Xavier Sala-i-Martin.

"I tried out so many different things—economics to art history, even architecture—and then one day, it just came to me," she said. "Columbia just offered sustainable development [as a major] two years ago, so it just appeared, and I knew that was what I wanted to study."

Thong served as computer program coordinator for adult education at Community Impact during her first two years at GS, but she spent all four years as a member of GSSC.

Michael Rain, who was

GSSC's vice president of policy when Thong got to Columbia, suggested that she join the council after she voiced concerns about the American Language Program. She was GSSC's international students representative during her first year and vice president of finance during her sophomore year.

Thong said that as GSSC president, she tried to connect GS students to one another, while also helping GS students become more connected to the overall University. She cited the other undergraduate student councils' support during the recent rescheduling of GS Class Day as a sign of improved cross-school relationships.

"I'm proud of how far we've come ever since I've joined GSSC," she said. "We're taking little steps, but I think every year we're building on something else. One day we will get to a much more integrated community on campus."

After graduation, Thong will continue working with a few friends on an entrepreneurship venture called Advisoray, an online platform that connects users with experts in different fields around the world. The group, which is working out of Thong's apartment in the Financial District, launched the venture a few weeks ago.

"We've been working on it for a few months, especially the development phase," Thong said. "The beta version of the site is already live and we have real users testing it right now. I don't know where it's going to take me, but I'm excited."

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Daniel Alonso, CC

BY BEN GITTELSON
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Daniel Alonso has been involved with Occupy Wall Street since day one.

Alonso made his first trip to Zuccotti Park on Sept. 17—the first day protesters arrived there—and within two weeks he had been arrested and featured in a clip on MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann." He eventually helped run general assemblies and the protesters' kitchen at Zuccotti Park.

Alonso said that he was drawn to Columbia by its "radical legacy," and that he first got involved with campus activism during the debate last spring over whether the Reserve Officers' Training Corps should return to Columbia. The Occupy movement "invigorated and captured" him so intensely, he said, that he became a founding member of Occupy Columbia, which has protested issues ranging from Columbia's expansion into Manhattanville to funding cuts in the ethnic studies department. Alonso added that the Occupy movement has been "very much a fulfillment of what my education has been."

"For me, it was actually applying all the critical thinking, the principles of a liberal arts education, putting it into practice as far as how I was approaching

myself as a student, as a member of this institution and of the city," he said.

Alonso also volunteers at a community center in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, teaching computer literacy and basic English skills to the neighborhood's predominantly Mexican residents—an opportunity he found through the Occupy movement. He said this work has been a much more "holistic" service experience than the volunteer work he's done on Columbia's campus.

"It's been really rich talking to people who have never been to Manhattan, who don't even know Columbia exists, who have a completely different lifestyle from the ones we've had," he said.

Alonso, whose parents are Mexican immigrants, said the stories he's heard at the community center have resonated with him.

"It's those kind of everyday stories that really carry a lot of weight that perhaps you won't get in the classroom," Alonso said. "You feel the heart in it, and it really stays with you. It's experiences like that that have really molded how I'm approaching myself and the future."

Next year, Alonso will traverse the globe with Columbia's inaugural fifth-year fellows program, conducting research on how indigenous communities approach global education. He



COURTESY OF DANIEL ALONSO

PROTESTER | Alonso was arrested within two weeks of the beginning of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

said he applied for the program after becoming "disillusioned" with academia and having trouble finding an academic job.

"It [the fifth-year program] was very much framed as a chance to do some traveling, which is crucial for people our age, and about having a transformative experience that can really guide you, as far as how you frame yourself in relationship to this institution and the rest of the world," Alonso said.

Future Columbia students, Alonso said, should follow their instincts and get their "hands dirty doing something you really feel passionate about." But

he believes that the most important part of the Columbia experience happens outside of the University's gates.

"Meet people. Meet working-class people," he said. "Really become versed in people's stories and experiences, because that's the most valuable thing about going to school at Columbia."

Alonso has high hopes for the Occupy Columbia movement after he graduates.

"It could change names, appearances, and that's good," he said. "It's not going to go away for a while."

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Sara Snedeker, BC

BY AVANTIKA KUMAR
Spectator Staff Writer

Sara Snedeker was a tour guide for the Barnard admissions department, a Delta Gamma sister, and a member of Barnard's Student Government Association. But she said that serving two years as Barnard's only student representative in the University Senate was "the most satisfying thing I've ever done at college."

"I've just had the opportunity to meet people from the Business School, from the Law School, from the medical school, from the Journalism School, and, you know, every school that people have probably never heard of," Snedeker said. "I just think it's such an amazing thing to see all these students come together and work together towards universal goals that apply

to the whole community."

Snedeker was instrumental in pushing the senate to endorse public course evaluations, which it did in a 44-12 vote last month. Snedeker helped lead a Student Affairs Committee effort to develop and draft a course evaluations resolution, a yearlong initiative that required faculty, administrative, and student support.

"People were listening to what we were saying and were taking us seriously, and I was just so proud of being able to do that for students," she said.

Snedeker also focused on building community as a Barnard tour guide, a job she's had since she was a first-year.

Giving tours allows her to "give people a window into what makes Barnard so special," she said.

"I remember that my visit to Barnard just made such a big

difference in where I decided to apply to school," she said. "It wasn't really something that was on my radar—I ended up coming here and just loving it, and I kind of hope I've done the same for students."

Snedeker added that four years of being a tour guide have helped her to grow as a public speaker.

She is also a four-year member of Delta Gamma, a sorority she pledged to "on a whim" in her first year but one that she now considers a tight-knit network of friends.

"I just have a very distinctive memory of joining my first year and, on Bid Day, feeling like this was a great decision," Snedeker said. "Because I just wasn't sure if I would like it, and I just remember feeling this enormous sense of welcoming and pride and happiness, and just feeling like, 'OK, I'm never going to be bored again.'"



ZARA CASTANY / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

INVOLVED | Snedeker served as Barnard's lone student representative in the University Senate, working this year to get faculty and student support to publicize course evaluations.

Sarah Dion, CC

BY YASMIN GAGNE
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Sarah Dion calls herself "someone who's really drawn to tradition and family." With the people she's mentored or helped at Columbia, that family is pretty large.

Dion was a coordinator of the Columbia Outdoor Orientation Program, organizing five days of programming for hundreds of first-years, and a volunteer for Columbia University Emergency Medical Services, providing medical assistance around Morningside.

The Columbia College senior served as a leader for BOP, the biking program, before becoming coordinator in her junior year. She described being a leader and taking new students on the four-day trip in August as "the best thing ever."

Dion said she identifies with COÖP because it's one of the places she made most of her friends. "I can point to the person in COÖP who was like, 'This is the thing I was involved in, this is really cool, you should check it out.'"



NAOMI COHEN FOR SPECTATOR

HELPING HAND | Dion was a coordinator of the biking program of COÖP and a crew chief for CU-EMS.

She was also involved for the last two years with CU-EMS, formerly known as CAVA, and served as a crew chief for the past year.

"COÖP and CAVA have been a huge part of my Columbia experience. They were my most formative experiences at Columbia," she said.

Dion is staying on campus for some of the summer to work for CU-EMS. "It's a group of people I definitely care a lot about," she said. "It's been a really interesting way to be part of the campus community" as well as the city, as non-Columbia affiliates who live in Morningside Heights frequently make use of the service, too.

Dion said she has learned that it can often be hard for students to find their place on campus. "It's baptism by fire here in a lot of ways, especially if you're trying to be a part of an organization," she said.

If students communicate with each other, she said, it can make that process easier. "When you see someone who you know, say hello, smile at them, wave whatever," she said. "If I'm in a

grumpy mood I totally want to talk to someone else."

She said she would advise students to "do your academics. There's so much that people get out of here that I didn't do."

"I wasn't really loving the classes I was taking," Dion, a biology major, said. "I was always more interested in the classes my friends were talking about, and I think I should have actually done something about that."

She has developed strong friendships through COÖP and CAVA, one of the reasons she said she loved her time at Columbia. "I just like being on Low Steps and watching everyone go by and saying hi to people. That's the thing I'll miss the most," she said.

"As much as academics are important, make time to just hang out with people, if someone comes up to you and says, 'Hey, do you want to get lunch?' ... do it. It's always time well spent," she said.

Having lived in the Living and Learning Center her first year, she said she thinks taking that time to have lunch with students in different class years is invaluable. "Being a freshman and being a little naïve is pretty great," she said.

But now that she's a senior, she said, "you have so many opportunities to think about what the last year has been. There's so much opportunity for feeling really happy and nostalgic."

Dion said the thing she will miss most from Columbia is the daily interaction with her classmates. "It won't happen anymore when we go into the real world," she said, "but it'll be good, it'll be different."

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Vincent Nguyen, GS

BY EMILY NEIL
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Raised by his grandmother in Vietnam after his mother immigrated to the United States, Vincent Nguyen nearly died from malaria in 2004. He came to Dallas at age 18 to see his mother—even though he didn't speak any English—but their relationship then "deteriorated," and he left home.

After being homeless and living with a friend's family for several months in order to finish high school, Nguyen won a scholarship to the Collin College, where he earned an associate degree in science and graduated magna cum laude.

It was a long journey to Columbia, but in fall 2009, he began studying chemistry at the School of General Studies as a premed student, unsure of whether he would be able to make it financially despite the support of the University's financial aid department and various scholarships. He spent his first semester trying to adapt to life in New York, fighting sickness and self-doubt.

"I have to admit, I am a man, but I do cry—from loneliness, the first semester, and then other things, and I thought, 'What are you doing here?'" Nguyen recalled.

Nguyen said it was the friends he made who helped him to get through the difficulties of coming to the city alone.

"At Columbia you make friends, amazing people, and I look at my friends and how amazing they are, and that is what helped me get through first semester," Nguyen said.

He said his gratitude for those who have supported him in his life has also led him to a deep

desire to give back to Columbia and New York.

"Columbia changes you in a holistic way. It's not just making myself become a chemistry major but it gives you something more—something of the world and myself and my place in it, and how I can do something more," he said.

During his three years at Columbia, Nguyen did "something more" by serving as treasurer of the Vietnamese Students Association, which he cites as his "best experience." He also volunteered with various Community Impact groups, including Partnership for the Homeless, which was important to him because he spent a period of his life homeless.

"At Columbia, you may see all the grandeur of an Ivy League, and everything is so polished, but you know, we live in New York City ... There are people who don't have a place to sleep," Nguyen said.

Nguyen, a lifelong Christian, said that his faith has also played an important role in his life, and that he recently converted to Catholicism with his

wife of one year.

For now, Nguyen is planning to move back to Texas with his wife after graduation to develop his limited liability company, VCNIA, which he will first launch in his home country. VCNIA is a medical technology export company, Nguyen said.

"I am using Vietnam as my ground zero where I am starting the venture," he said. "And Vietnam is on the other side of the world, so if it can work there, it can grow to other countries."

Nguyen has another dream, though: to see the world and learn about other cultures. He enthusiastically described the prospect of visiting an Amish household with friends or sharing in a Hanukkah ceremony with one of his mentors.

"Part of it is I want to learn about other culture and write about other cultures," he said. "Maybe my life hobby is to come and see other cultures and do some collecting thing and exhibit that so others can see the beauty of those cultures ... that is something I would truly love to do."

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YAN CONG / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

GIVING BACK | Nguyen who was once homeless, volunteered with a homeless organization under Community Impact.

Sadie Zukowski, SEAS

BY RAKHI AGRAWAL AND FINN VIGELAND
Spectator Staff Writers

Civil engineering major Sadie Zukowski loves architecture. So it's only fitting that a few nights before graduating, she and her friends took pictures from the top of every building on campus.

Zukowski, who grew up in a small town in Connecticut, said she knew from an early age that she wanted to apply to Columbia. She discovered an appreciation for engineering's practical applications, so she applied early to the School of Engineering and Applied Science.

When she arrived on campus, she realized she had a "fundamental interest in architecture and the way that buildings and structure take shape," she said, motivating her to major in civil engineering.

But as she got more involved with civil engineering, she started to find it "a bit restricting," she said. While still fulfilling the requirements for the civil engineering major, Zukowski began exploring computer vision, artificial intelligence, and music interpretation on the side.

But even though she'll be pursuing a master's in artificial intelligence at the University of Colorado, Boulder, next year, she said that if she could redo her four years at Columbia, she'd still major in civil engineering.

"The kids in that major were

so great to be around and are now some of my closest friends here," she said.

Zukowski stressed that her friendships were the best part of her college years.

"Columbia taught me how to interact with people—I very much fit the stereotype of the awkward engineer," she said.

But she hasn't formed relationships just with her peers. "All of the chefs at John Jay know me very well because of my food allergies," she added with a smile.

Over the last four years, Zukowski was heavily involved in musical groups, playing the French horn with the Columbia University Orchestra and several chamber groups. She has performed at Carnegie Hall twice, and she was the secretary of the Tae Kwon Do club team last year.

Academically, Zukowski is proud of the work she did to redesign the roof of the



HENRY WILLSON / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

STRUCTURAL CHANGES | "Columbia taught me how to interact with people," Zukowski said.

Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center's drainage system in the West Bronx. She took on this project with a few classmates in her first-year Gateway class.

As a junior, Zukowski received the DAAD Research Internships in Science and Engineering fellowship, which allowed her to spend the summer in Germany studying construction safety and radio-frequency identification.

Zukowski urged students to get to know their peers better and to "go and talk with your friends outside, at night, around campus." And that's her best advice—unless you're trying to take pictures from the top of various buildings, and structures, around Columbia.

"My advice to anyone who is going to take a picture on top of 'The Thinker': Hold on to his hand and behind the calf and pull yourself up," she said.

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Arts & Entertainment

Including the founders of the Lexicography Society and the Writers House, the savior of Postcrypt Coffeehouse, and the creator of “SPEARS,” the Class of 2012 had groundbreaking students in the arts.

Yin Yin Lu, CC

BY STEFAN COUNTRYMAN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “lexicographer” as “a writer or compiler of a dictionary.” Yin Yin Lu, in her own act of lexicography, might expand the meaning to include amateurs, or logophiles, like herself. Though she hasn’t compiled her own dictionary (yet), she is the founder of the Lexicography Society.

Note that “Columbia” appears nowhere in the group’s title—it would be redundant, since the Lexicography Society is unique to Columbia. Lu first got the idea while working as editorial director at Cavalier Literary Couture, a publisher for emerging writers. It developed further during her year abroad at Oxford, where her tutor—the Potteresquely named Lynda Mugglestone—happened to be an expert in dictionaries.

“I actually went to visit the Oxford English Dictionary offices myself,” Lu said. She got in contact with high-ranking editors from the OED. “When I came back to Columbia, I had about, I think, 20 or 30 contacts who were faculty slash professionals in the field ... The first meeting was in November, and there were like 30 people there, which was pretty awesome, given that I didn’t think the dictionary society would attract even a small handful.”

Lu explained how her interest in lexicography developed. “It kind of happened by accident ... It’s ultimately because I love words. I’m a writer,” Lu said. “The point was the words. I think a good writer needs to be able to fully understand the meanings of words ... My definition of a true writer is someone for whom every

single word counts.”

She is graduating from Columbia College with a major in English and comparative literature, and unsurprisingly, a concentration in linguistics.

Her work at the Lexicography Society, however, is being recognized nationwide—Michael Adams, president-elect of the Dictionary Society of North America, contacted her recently. “He emailed me to ask if I would organize and host their 2015 biennial conference.”

Lu’s college career hasn’t been confined to lexicography, though. Among other things, she was an associate editor for books at Spectator and editor in chief at “Inside New York” for the 2011 issue.

As editor in chief, she took the guidebook in a novel direction. “I really wanted to highlight the ethnic neighborhoods of New York,” Lu said. “I wanted to highlight more outer borough venues, and that’s unlike any other New York City guidebook.”

She faced difficulties putting it together. “There were a lot of stories in which the managers didn’t speak a word of English, and if you can’t communicate with them, you can’t write the interview.” Nonetheless, she considers the 2011 issue the best to date.

Lu’s extensive accomplishments have kept her busy. “My schedule is basically booked,” she said. She’s looking forward to a change of pace in the coming weeks, when she moves to Astoria. She got to know it and other boroughs intimately during her time with “Inside New York.” Her hard work there is being rewarded, conveniently enough, with a perfect place to relax.

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TRUE LEXICOGRAPHER | Lu was the first student in the country to found a club dedicated to lexicography, and made connections with professionals in the field.



KATE SCARBROUGH / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

WORDS, WORDS | In her time at Columbia, Weaver founded the Writers House and was the recipient of the Arthur E. Ford Prize for best poetry by a CC senior.

Erica Weaver, CC

BY LESLEY THULIN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Words, words, words are the matter for Erica Weaver, CC ’12, of Virginia Beach, Va.. A self-described lover of dead languages, yoga, and travel, she will be graduating with a double major in English and Medieval Studies.

“I like to think that I have divided my time equally between creative and critical writing,” Weaver wrote in an email. “I am not sure if I can really separate creative and critical writing; for me, being a practicing poet has honed my critical thinking about poetry and poetics, just as my reading for English classes has improved my own poetry—but maybe that’s just what I tell myself.”

Weaver is the recipient of this year’s Arthur E. Ford Prize for best poetry by a CC senior and the John Vincent Hickey Prize for excellence in writing about poetry, and has served on the boards of student-run literary magazines, the Columbia Review and Tablet.

Most of Weaver’s creative writing education has stemmed from weekly workshops in Writers House, combined with English seminars “on the great poets of the past.”

Although she was inclined to study English before entering Columbia, Weaver integrated her passion for Latin and Romance languages in her studies.

“In high school, I always thought I would major in English, but I must admit that I flirted briefly with comparative literature during my sophomore year at Columbia, since I wanted to combine my love of English with intensive study in Latin, German, and French,” she wrote.

But an introductory Old English course changed her mind, helping her realize “that it

was possible to explore such influences without leaving the English department.”

“In Old English, I had found the perfect combination of Latin learning, German linguistics, and unfamiliar poetics, melded in such a way as to make the combination irresistible. When I was forced to choose between the mandatory Intro. Comp. Lit. seminar and a course on ‘Beowulf,’ my decision was clear, and it’s a good thing, too, since I wound up writing my senior thesis on the poem. Then, Medieval Studies was an obvious addition, since I had already fulfilled the requirements.”

In the spring of 2009 she co-founded Writers House, a special interest community based in Harmony Hall that hosts biannual dinners with notable authors including Mark Strand, Orhan Pamuk, and Paul Auster. Those receptions, she joked, were met with “varying degrees of success.” Weaver explained that they “may or may not have accidentally given Paul Auster food poisoning.”

But beyond the dinners, Weaver said that she was proud of the community that grew out of the suite in Harmony.

“I feel so lucky to have spent the last three years befriending and learning from some of Columbia’s best writers, and I will definitely miss this community, where it is perfectly acceptable to put on a pot of tea at any hour of the day and complaints about sestinas are universally understood,” she said.

After “a summer of reading, writing, and traveling,” Weaver will start a Ph.D. in English at Harvard University. With the hopes of becoming a professor, she plans to focus on Old English and Anglo-Latin poetry, poetics, and manuscript culture.

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Pat Blute, CC

BY JADE BONACOLTA
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Pat Blute is a name often associated with extravagant weather videos on Bwog or with “SPEARS: The Gospel According to Britney,” a rendition of the Bible story told through Britney Spears lyrics. But Blute is better known as the type of person whose energy charges an entire room the moment he enters.

Blute has been very involved in the entertainment scene at Columbia over the past four years, from acting out a cultish COÖP leader in the Varsity Show to producing a short film for the Columbia College Senior Fund. He has created over 30 videos for different departments at Columbia, including admissions, philosophy, anthropology, and the senior Commencement video currently viewable on Bwog.

“I dodge around all different arenas of the creative world. I’m comfortable both on stage and behind the camera—I try not to pigeon-hole myself and have tried out all different capacities to be the best at what I do,” Blute said.

Blute is graduating from Columbia College with a concentration in anthropology and sustainable development.

One of his greatest achievements has been “SPEARS.” While working on “SPEARS,” Blute said he had many “moments when you realize it’s a life-changing experience for everyone involved. So many people from different corners of campus came together for this show instead of staying in their isolated groups.”

In addition to his accomplishments on campus, Blute tried to gain experience outside the gates. “I’m a freelancer for National Geographic and have worked on the Travel

Channel,” Blute said. He is currently working on a documentary of the Statue of Liberty for National Geographic. The graduate grew up in Cape Cod, Mass. and since coming to New York, has traveled widely. At the end of May, Blute leaves for Bangkok, his next adventure. He recalls having been to Bangkok once before: “I went in a cage with a tiger ... and lived.” For the next two years, he will be giving tours to high school students as well as managing a photograph and video archive.

“I went in a cage with a tiger ... and lived.”

—Pat Blute, CC ’12

Blute has made much of an effort to create a sense of community at Columbia. “Everyone here can teach you something ... I wish everyone could stop for a second and realize how incredible their achievements already are. People have written musical scores, have been featured in the New York Times, but there’s still this feeling that they haven’t made it yet. It’s a competitive environment and people don’t take enough credit for everything they have contributed to this college.”

As Blute leaves Columbia to travel the East Asian coast, he is overwhelmed with memories. “There are so many emotions running, but I’m just so thankful to have had this experience. I would tell any incoming Columbia student to be prepared to have your mind blown about what a college experience could and would and should be.”

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PHOTO COURTESY OF PAT BLUTE

CAMPUS CHARACTER | Blute has made a name for himself as a videographer and as the mastermind behind the Bible/Britney mash up, “SPEARS: The Gospel According to Britney.”

Galen Boone, CC

BY CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Four years ago, Galen Boone completed exactly one college application.

“I only applied to Barnard early admission,” she said, “and I’d never seen the school. I think it was perfect because for me, I really needed to see a community of women doing well. Being surrounded by strong, beautiful, intelligent people helped me break out of my shell.”

An anthropology major and art history minor, Boone’s experiences at Barnard have powerfully shaped her—she even spent last summer in New Mexico excavating a hippie commune with Columbia professor Severin Fowles.

“They investigated and it turns out we were just drinking beer and listening to folk music and behaving well.”

—Galen Boone, CC ’12

As a sophomore, Boone assumed the typically non-controversial mantle of Postcrypt manager, helping the long-running campus coffeehouse along in its operations. However, early in 2010 an anonymous Bwog comment accused the venue of selling alcohol to minors, provoking University interest in the organization.

“They investigated and it turns out we were just drinking beer and listening to folk music and behaving well,” Boone said.

The venue was continuing a 45-year-long tradition of selling beer, and paid two University alcohol proctors to ensure its legality. However,

the administration still pressured the organization, attempting to mandate an additional security guard in the premises, which has a capacity of 30 people.

“There was no way in hell we would be able to pay the 10 grand a year to support the security guard,” Boone said. Instead, the organization fought back, gaining the support of students and the Office of Student Action and Engagement. “I was a pitbull for Postcrypt.”

Though the financial aspect of the conflict threatened the very existence of Postcrypt, Boone and the Postcrypt board eventually won out, preserving the tradition of folk music in the basement of St. Paul’s—albeit with a few changes, such as a dry environment.

“Unfortunately Postcrypt is not the same music venue it was when I came to this school,” she said. “It’s kind of a different vibe, but I think it can be more valuable to the school as this venue bringing amazing folk music to the Upper West Side. It’s still got a long life ahead of it.”

Defining as the conflict was in Postcrypt’s history, it also presented Boone with her own period of growth.

“Working with Sev Fowles in New Mexico, and trying to lead it [Postcrypt]—I assumed command when I was a sophomore, and I nearly shit myself. I was so terrified,” Boone said. “But I learned. If I didn’t have those two experiences, I’d be in a very different place. And less fearless. Or more fearful, I think would be a better way to put it.”

Following graduation, Boone plans to spend the summer in the same hippie commune she helped excavate, and is hoping to land an internship with the Museum of Natural History. But that doesn’t mean she isn’t open to other ideas.

“What I want to do in the short term is make furniture out of animal bones,” she said. “That’s just kind of where I am right now.”

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HENRY WILLSON / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

“POSTCRYPT’S PITBULL” | When Postcrypt Coffeehouse was in jeopardy of closing down over allegations of underage drinking, Boone stepped forward to save it.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA COOPERBERG

BRINGING COUTURE TO CU | Cooperberg, who has interned at Vogue and ELLE, was one of the founding members of Hoot, Columbia’s student-produced fashion magazine.

Anna Cooperberg, CC

BY ALISON HERMAN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

When Anna Cooperberg arrived on Columbia’s campus from Durham, N.C., she knew she wanted to get involved in the journalism community on campus. “I spent about half my youth trying every single individual sport from figure skating to gymnastics ... and the other half reading and writing,” Cooperberg said in an email. By the spring semester of her first year, Cooperberg was a member of the founding editorial board of Columbia’s undergraduate fashion magazine, Hoot.

Known around campus for its photo shoots and cover stories on alumni like author Melissa de la Cruz, Hoot began in spring 2009 as the editorial board of campus fashion organization CU Couture. Cooperberg, a comparative literature and society major, said she joined the group because of its unique combination of her passions.

“Practicing an art takes discipline, and I find that this transfers to anything else I do.”

—Anna Cooperberg, CC ’12

“I became interested in CU Couture from a background in writing and journalism in high school and later, writing style articles for Spec, and I wanted to meet people with similar interests,” she said.

This year, Cooperberg succeeded Noel Duan, also CC ’12, as editor in chief of Hoot.

Cooperberg stresses the magazine’s role in building her skills as both a leader and a journalist. “Leading Hoot this past year has shown me the challenges of managing a large organization, but has ultimately proved to be one of my most valuable experiences during my time at Columbia,” Cooperberg said.

Cooperberg has also built experience in fashion writing off campus through internships at prestigious publications like ELLE and Vogue, and will be interning once again for Harper’s Bazaar this summer. Cooperberg describes her internship experience as “incredible,” noting that “even though fetching coffee may be part of the job, there’s no substitute for being in the workplace.” Interning also allowed Cooperberg to receive advice from industry professionals and observe different management styles across workplaces.

Outside of fashion, Cooperberg is also involved in circus arts, a talent she has been practicing for nearly a decade. Cooperberg specializes in contortion and also has experience with aerial fabric, and she praises circus arts for cultivating her work ethic. “Practicing an art takes discipline, and I find that this transfers to anything else I do,” she said.

After she finishes her internship at Harper’s Bazaar, Cooperberg will return to Columbia to begin earning a master’s degree in magazine journalism at the Journalism School. Cooperberg said her experience at Hoot has made her open to roles as both a writer and an editor in the field of fashion journalism.

Reflecting on her experiences at Columbia and Hoot, Cooperberg emphasized the influence of her peers.

“I’ve met amazing people in my four years here—all of my best friends, many of them from my freshman floor, are so talented and driven. It’s impossible to not be inspired to do better and be better because of them,” she said.

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John Goodwin, CC

BY CHRISTIN ZURBACH
Spectator Staff Writer

Although John Goodwin does not plan to work on that other, famous part of Broadway after leaving Columbia, theater has been a defining force in his time as a student. He ended his Columbia theater career as a writer of the 118th Varsity Show.

“It was like all four years of college built up to that one weekend,” he said.

Goodwin grew up in Virginia, attending prestigious state-chartered magnet Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. “So, obviously, I chose to major in political science and film studies,” Goodwin said. While at Thomas Jefferson, Goodwin also wrote a one-act comedy, akin to an Oscar Wilde parody. Upon its success, he considered continuing writing.

Despite his high school experience, Goodwin first entered Columbia’s theater scene as an actor. That first fall of 2008, he acted in the student-written holiday musical “XMAS! 3” and also decided to audition for the spring’s 115th Varsity Show. His role as an ensemble cast member would play a huge role in Goodwin’s Columbia trajectory.

The next year, as a sophomore and a Contemporary Civilization student himself, he took a principal role as a young CC professor who holds his office hours at the bar 1020. In

between the two, Goodwin wrote “XMAS! 4.” “I had so much fun writing ‘XMAS,’ I realized that writing, even more than acting, is my calling,” Goodwin said. This writing experience led to Goodwin’s self-admitted capstone experience as a writer for the 118th Varsity Show his senior year.

What makes the Varsity Show different from other campus productions is its Columbia-centric content, which personalized the writing experience for Goodwin. “There were several characters in the show that are caricatures of people I know or Jeff [Stern, CC ’12, V118 co-writer] knows,” Goodwin said. He cited writing this 118th Varsity Show as his most meaningful experience at Columbia. “Finally getting to say my piece about this school was the most rewarding and cathartic moment,” Goodwin said. It was also one of his last Columbia moments, since the show closed shortly before the end of the semester.

As for utilizing that political science degree, Goodwin has other plans. He is going to law school, in hopes of becoming a public interest lawyer and working for a district attorney or attorney general. When asked what he will miss most about Columbia, Goodwin points to the people beneath the cynical facades of students “pretending to be cold New Yorkers.”

“I think there’s still a bit of heart in everyone here and it always comes out at the end,” he said.

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HENRY WILLSON / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

MUSIC MAN | Goodwin has been a staple of the Columbia theater scene over his four years, acting in the Varsity Show twice and also writing the 118th Varsity Show and “XMAS! 4.”

Athlete Profiles

In their four years at Columbia, five extraordinary athletes have played their hearts out on the field, all while keeping up with their coursework. These graduates—Mike Mazzullo, Melissa Shafer, Kyle Merber, Sammy Roberts, and Pat Lowery—exemplify what it means to be a Lion.



ALYSON GOULDEN / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

IRON MIKE | Mazzullo was Columbia men's soccer's first-ever three-time captain.

Mike Mazzullo, CC

BY MRINAL MOHANKA
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Most seniors at Columbia spent the last few weeks of school thinking about the end of classes, finals, and senior week among other things the end of the semester brings. But Mike Mazzullo's last few weeks at Columbia College have not revolved around the sense of an ending. The senior, who was a four-year starter for and the first-ever three-time captain of the Light Blue men's soccer team, has been training with the New York Red Bulls, one of the largest franchises in Major League Soccer and one that boasts several world-class players.

"It's a huge adjustment coming from the college game to playing with guys like Henry and Marquez," Mike Mazzullo said, referring to international soccer stars Thierry Henry and Rafael Marquez.

Mazzullo made history in January, becoming the first Columbia soccer player ever to be drafted by an MLS team when the Canadian side Toronto FC selected him in the supplemental draft. But things did not work out across the border, and Mazzullo returned to Columbia and began training with the Red Bulls.

"I'm just training with them," Mazzullo said. "I don't know what my official status is. I trained with the first team last week which was obviously a lot of fun and that's how I'm treating the opportunity: That it's fun and I'm just trying to make the most of it and it's soccer, so you can't go wrong."

The New Yorker was a significant part of a class that helped turn around the men's soccer program. The season before Mazzullo and his peers from the class of 2012 set foot in Morningside Heights, the Lions went 0-7 in the Ivy League. Four years later, a team captained by Mazzullo almost delivered the program's first Ivy title since 1993. The Light Blue finished with a 4-1-2 conference record and came closer to the Ivy League title than any other occasion in the past 18 years, as Brown and Dartmouth shared the crown with a 4-2-1 record. The Lions tied 1-1 against Cornell in Ithaca in the season finale—a win would have handed the title to Columbia.

"You should always have that hunger to achieve more."

—Mike Mazzullo, midfielder

"Soccer-wise, with the group of guys that we had coming in—a strong freshman class—I expected that we were going to win an Ivy League championship and be pretty dominant, so that's an obvious letdown never to have achieved those goals," Mazzullo said. "I think if you're an athlete, you should always feel like you didn't do enough rather than you achieved too much. You should always have that hunger to achieve more and that feeling of ambition."

But even with that outlook, Mazzullo recognizes that the team has made strides.

"At the end of last season, I didn't think we had as good a season as I'd have hoped, but looking back at the past four years, the team is a lot better now than it was when I came in and that's an achievement in itself," he said.

The midfielder was an all-Ivy honoree twice during his Columbia career, and finishes with four goals—including two game-winners—and five assists. Mazzullo played in 66 matches out of a possible 68 during his career as a Lion as he attempted to perfect the art of balancing soccer with academics.

"Academically, I knew what I was getting into," he said. "I became a history major and obviously it's tough academically, but at Columbia, like a lot of other schools, it's as hard as you want to make it. So I was able to negotiate my soccer goals and sacrifices with having a pretty successful academic career throughout."

Even though Mazzullo has already represented the Red Bulls in a fixture against the Lions, he's still getting used to becoming an alum.

"I don't think it's sunk in yet," he said. "I played in the New York Red Bulls reserve game against Columbia, which is kind of strange, because these were my teammates just a couple months ago. It was obviously a little strange but it hasn't really sunk in yet. I think when the fall comes around and I see the schedule, see the teams they'll be going up against in the Ivy League and the rest, that's when it'll sink in."

Melissa Shafer, CC

BY REBEKA COHAN
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

One of Melissa Shafer's favorite memories in light blue is also her first. In her debut game for Columbia, the guard scored her first-ever basket against Oakland as her family cheered her on.

"I have a bunch of family in Michigan and they were there," she said. "They brought a lot of fans and I made my first shot when I got in—and they were screaming."

Scored only two minutes after she entered the game, that shot was Shafer's first-ever three-pointer in college. Although she didn't know it at the time, it was the first of many.

Years later, during her senior season, the graduating guard broke Columbia's record for the number of three-pointers over the course of a career, with 168. When asked about her record, Shafer was modest.

"That was my job," she said. "To make three-pointers."

Shafer took this job to the next level, breaking the record with the help of a fierce sense of competition. According to head coach Paul Nixon, Shafer is a remarkably committed player.

"I think on the court, she's a very tenacious competitor," he said. "She doesn't back

down for anyone, even if it's somebody with a lot of size on her."

So when her coach pulled her aside after she had been struggling with her shots and told her that she was on mark to break the record, something clicked.

"That was my job. To make three-pointers."

—Melissa Shafer, guard

"Obviously that shows how well he knew me, because that little competitive spark was lit and it helped me get extra focused and refocus on my shot," she said. "It wasn't necessarily a goal game in and game out. I think he knew I needed a little more."

Shafer quickly brings up contests with her younger brother when asked if she's always been competitive.

"And then he got bigger and stronger than me," she said before laughing. "And I had no chance."

Her competitive edge always made her a force to be reckoned with. In addition to holding the Columbia record for three-pointers, she played in every game all four years

of college, starting in all 28 contests her senior year. In her sophomore year, she led the Ivy League in three-point shooting percentage.

"I think she's a player who I know is always going to give me everything she had and compete to win," Nixon said.

But when it comes to her personality off the court, Shafer is different. Friendly and caring, it's hard to imagine her, according to Nixon, having no interest in making friends.

"Off the court, Melissa is a very sweet-natured person," he said. "She has a great sense of humor, and she really gets along very well with people."

He's right. When asked about her defining moment on the team, she's can think of only the team.

"I've been able to develop some really close bonds with some girls," she said.

This is also true for Shafer in her day-to-day life at Columbia. The psychology major is quick to joke about the nostalgia she's feeling with the end of senior year, but that doesn't change how much she appreciates her time at Columbia.

"I think the people here," she said when asked what her favorite thing at Columbia. "Just how different everyone is and how everyone can still be on the same page together."



DOUGLAS KESSEL / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SHARPSHOOTER | Shafer broke the school record for career threes made, with 168.

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SPEED RACER | Merber broke the American collegiate record for an American in the 1,500.

Kyle Merber, CC

BY CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW
Spectator Staff Writer

“I stepped on it, and I obviously make a lot of inappropriate gestures and a lot of bad words came out of my mouth. ... Like, ‘Bad word, bad word, I’m going to have to take at least a day off of running while waiting for this cut to heal.’”

On a training run the August before his junior year, Columbia track and field standout Kyle Merber tore a tendon in his foot when he stepped on a piece of glass, an injury that prevented him from training the next day—and from competing in all three of his seasons: cross country, indoor, and outdoor—that year.

Just months earlier, Merber, then a sophomore in Columbia College, had set an Ivy League record in the mile, becoming the second ever in the conference to break four minutes in the event, and later took 10th at the NCAA’s.

“It was obviously a difficult time for me,” Merber said of his forced sabbatical. “The hardest part was the fact that every day I thought there was a chance I would be able to run again. But in terms of development as an athlete, that gave me time to rest and reflect on what I’d done in my career and what I wanted to do going forward ... I walked away with a lot of motivation.”

Because of that motivation, Merber’s career was characterized not by what could have been but by what was.

Merber has topped off his career with a superb senior season, claiming the individual silver at cross-country Heps, taking gold in the mile and helping set a conference distance medley

relay record at Indoor Heps, and breaking his own Ivy League record in the 4x800 in Outdoor Heps—a record he and three other Lions had set just the previous week at the Penn Relays. He also holds the Ivy League record in the 1,500 meters, and has won multiple Ivy titles.

On May 14, 2012, Merber made history on a much larger scale. Running in the 1,500 at the Swarthmore Last Chance Meet, he crushed the competition by finishing in 3:35.59. This time was not only good enough to crush his old Ivy League record, but it was also the fastest 1,500 time ever recorded by an American collegiate athlete.

A clearly successful athlete, Merber is also modest and graceful in his disappointments. This year, for instance, his silver medal at cross-country Heps was a mixed victory: Although he helped the team make Nationals for the first time ever, Merber was only one-tenth of a second from individual gold.

“Naturally in the sport there’s a lot of tight finishes, and I’ve been fortunate lots of times to finish on the right side of it. Other times, you unfortunately finish on the backside of it,” he said. “Definitely the most upsetting part was the team was so close, and so not only did I get nipped at the line, the team did. But I mean, those types of moments you take in a stride and you recover from them, and you ultimately realize that there’s a lot of positives to take away.”

Though he competes in a seemingly individual sport, Merber views the joy of running as heavily team-based. When asked to name personal highlights, for instance, he hovers on

his sub-four miler before waxing rhapsodic about collaborative efforts. “The relays I was able to anchor and help my teammates and together win a individual DMR or 4x800 title really stand out,” he said. “It’s way more fun to celebrate with other people.”

Columbia’s emphasis on the team played a large part in Merber’s decision to enroll. “I was told by the coaches, ‘Look, we don’t have any scholarships or anything but we really, really want you,’” he said, “and I wanted to come here and be a part of something that where I wasn’t just another athlete to these coaches or this team but really a part of it and embraced by a family atmosphere.”

A philosophy major, Merber says his solitary time spent running helps him think. “There’s probably some connection,” he said. “I’m not necessarily thinking about Kant’s theories while I run, but I think you have plenty of time to reflect on life, its meaning, why you’re doing things.”

At the same time, his philosophizing reveals him to be, at least on some level, intensely practical. Besides that one ill-fated run, Merber doesn’t have many regrets, besides learning too late that Rite Aid sells the cheapest cereal in the neighborhood.

“I’m very happy with the way everything’s worked out. I’ve had a lot of fun in the process and with the friends and relationships I’ve made, and coming out with those memories is definitely something that I’d say contributed largely to these best four years of my life,” Merber said. “Everyone says that college should be the best four years of my life, and I can say confidently up to this point, they have been.”

Sammy Roberts, SEAS

BY SPENCER GYORY
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

While Columbia’s fencing future is very bright, senior sabreist Sammy Roberts leaves big shoes to fill as she graduates this May.

Roberts fenced at an elite level throughout her four years as a Lion. She accrued a 140-58 record and was named first team all-Ivy three times and second team all-Ivy once. Moreover, Roberts earned honorable mention All-American the past three years at NCAA’s.

But Roberts never planned to get involved with fencing. She fell into it thanks to a push from her best friend Caroline Vloka.

“I got involved with fencing when I was 14,” Roberts said. “My best friend tricked me into going to practice with her. What she was trying to do was really obvious, but I fell for it. It turns out I like the sport and I have a knack for it.”

Vloka, who has fenced on Harvard’s sabre team for the past four years, has been a mentor and friend to Roberts throughout her fencing career.

“Caroline walked me through the whole process,” Roberts said. “She got me into the sport, got me involved with the competitions. To this day she is one of my best friends and she is an amazing fencer. She has supported me 100 percent.”

Roberts began competing at North American cups when she was 15 and internationally when she was 16. Fencing has taken the Upper Saddle River, N.J., native all over the world:

Germany, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, France, England, Azerbaijan, South Korea, and even Cuba.

In addition to Columbia’s fencing coaches, Roberts works with renowned fencing instructor Yury Gelman at the Manhattan Fencing Center. Gelman was inducted into the Fencing Hall of Fame in 2010 and has been the U.S. Olympic coach at the past four games.

While she has achieved a number of accomplishments on the strip, including making the junior Olympic team in 2010, Roberts believes her greatest moment as a fencer came at this season’s NCAA Championships.

Midway into the regional qualifying tournament and 11 days before NCAA’s, Roberts suffered what could have been a season-ending ankle injury.

“I lunged, my ankle twisted outwards and I heard my ankle pop,” Roberts said. “I crumbled to the floor and I couldn’t get up, I couldn’t walk.”

When she went to the hospital later that night, she found out she had torn two of the five ligaments in her ankle.

“I begged [head coach] Michael [Aufrichtig] to give me a chance to recover,” Roberts said. “I went home to ice and I worked with Jim Gossett for hours. Rehabbing was my job. I became an expert.”

Her fencing test was scheduled for Tuesday but Roberts said she couldn’t even walk until Saturday. Fortunately, she passed her tests and junior sabreist Lowey Diedro gave up her spot to let Roberts compete

at NCAA’s, where the senior finished in 12th place.

“I have no words to express my gratitude to Lowey,” Roberts said.

Roberts majored in chemical engineering at the School of Engineering and Applied Science and plans to begin a Ph.D. program at the University of Florida for chemical engineering in the fall.

“It was an opportunity that came up on my door and I wasn’t going to say no,” Roberts said.

Eventually she hopes to work in product manufacturing, particularly in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, but she still hasn’t ruled out continuing her fencing career.

“I have spoken to my coaches and I don’t feel I have accomplished everything I think I can accomplish in this sport,” Roberts said. “I plan to take a year off to give myself a break from everything and I will re-evaluate then. If I decide to keep fencing, I want to make the senior team on the U.S. World Team and, if feasible, I would like to go for the 2016 Olympics.”

When asked to give advice to younger fencers, Roberts always says the same thing.

“Once you come to Columbia it’s not about you anymore,” Roberts said. “You’ll be better off when it’s not about you. Once you make it about this team you excel further than you ever thought you could. If you let your teammates in, your coaches in, at this school, you will be a better fencer than you ever knew.”



DOUGLAS KESSEL / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

DOWN PAT | Lowery struggled early on, but finished with a 3.56 ERA and 147 strikeouts.

Pat Lowery, CC

BY ELI SCHULTZ
Spectator Staff Writer

When the Lions open the 2013 campaign, for the first time since 2009, Pat Lowery will not be on the mound.

At 6-foot-5 and 195 pounds, the righty, a senior in Columbia College, has been an imposing presence on the mound for the Lions over the last four years, and was the Light Blue’s opening day starter each of the last three seasons. In his time at Columbia, Lowery amassed a career record of 10-16, an ERA of 3.56, and 147 strikeouts in 192.1 innings.

“It hasn’t really sunk in yet,” Lowery said of the end of his collegiate career following the Lions’ final game of the season on April 28.

And what a career it’s been. In his first year, the Oakdale, Conn. native saw limited action. He went 0-4 with a 4.32 ERA in 11 appearances, including four starts, also registering his only two saves as a freshman.

But Lowery emerged as a dominant force in the Ivy League during his sophomore

season. The 2010 campaign was a very successful one for the team as a whole, as Columbia won a Lou Gehrig Division title, and Lowery was an integral part of the team’s success. After becoming the Lions’ ace, the righty went 5-3 with a 3.46 ERA and 45 strikeouts in 65 innings on the way to earning Ivy League Pitcher of the Year honors. Lowery was especially impressive in conference play, recording a 3-1 record and holding opponents to a remarkably low .172 average. He also pitched brilliantly in his final start of the season, which came in game one of the Ivy championship series versus Dartmouth. Lowery lasted the full nine innings and gave up just two earned runs, striking out seven en route to a 13-2 Columbia win.

Like many of his teammates, Lowery struggled to meet expectations in 2011. His ERA rose to 4.62 and his record was an unimpressive 1-5 due in part to problems with run support. One of his losses came in a game in which he allowed only one earned run, and in

five of his nine starts he failed to pick up a win despite giving up three or fewer runs.

Lowery bounced back, though, and pitched brilliantly in his senior season. He went 4-4 on the year, posting a career-high 46 strikeouts in 53.2 innings. In addition to being the lowest of his college career, Lowery’s ERA of 2.35 this past season was the best in the Ancient Eight.

Though his college career is over, Lowery’s baseball future is very promising. With a fastball that is consistently in the 90-92 mph range and that occasionally hits 94, coupled with a slider in the mid-to-high 80s, Lowery has attracted the attention of a number of professional scouts.

“There’s been a number of guys who have been out to see him,” head coach Brett Boretti said. “From the activity and the guys who have been out to see him, I’m pretty sure he’s gonna get a shot at the draft.”

While a MLB career is still far from guaranteed, Lowery will leave Columbia with a bright future ahead of him.



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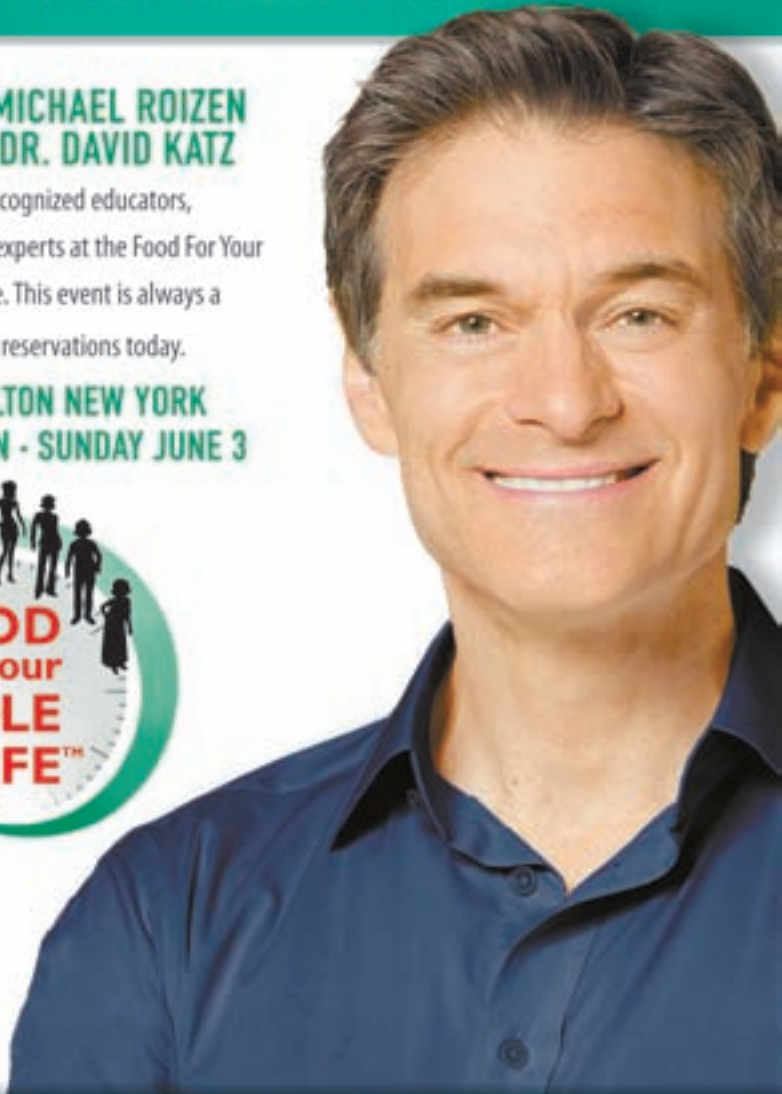
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