



COMMENCEMENT 2011

Special Issue

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columbiaspectator.com



CC

Alexandra Wallace-Creed
Senior VP of NBC News

At Columbia College Class Day, Alexandra Wallace-Creed talked to graduates about how curiosity underpinned her journey to professional success.

Page 3



BC

Sheryl Sandberg
COO of Facebook

Sheryl Sandberg, a senior executive at Facebook, told Barnard graduates they must make women a stronger force in the corporate world.

Page 4



SEAS

Ralph Izzo
CEO of PSE&G

Ralph Izzo stressed the need for graduating SEAS students to take on issues of social responsibility as they begin their post-college careers.

Page 5



GS

Roger Leeds
Professor at Johns Hopkins and Columbia

Roger Leeds discussed the convoluted paths that many GS students take to seeking higher education, and how his own course shaped his character.

Page 6

CONGRATULATIONS 2011 GRADUATES



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Wednesday, June 22, 12-1 PM (ET)
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HENRY WILLSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

For CC grads, it’s all about the big questions

At Columbia College Class Day, speakers encourage critical curiosity

BY JACKIE CARRERO
Spectator Staff Writer

“When you heard your speaker was Alex Wallace, you were probably thinking, who is he?” Alexandra Wallace Creed, CC ’88, joked.

On Tuesday, Wallace, senior vice president of NBC News and former executive producer of “NBC Nightly News,” spoke to the Columbia College’s class of 2011 about her struggle to figure out what she wanted to do with her life after graduation. What guided her was looking at the clues to who she “really was”—exactly what Wallace encouraged graduates to do.

“I looked at the puzzle pieces. I hoarded newspapers. I worked best at crazy hours of the night. Could I make money leveraging this?” Wallace said, recalling the questions she asked herself.

But she wasn’t always aware of her passions. After graduation, she recalled taking a year off before going to law school, going door-to-door with her resumé. “I do not recommend this,” she laughed. During her year off, Wallace began an internship with CBS News, where she found herself doing something she loved.

“I found myself in drug dealers’ homes,” Wallace said, describing the efforts to get stories. After the graduating class laughed loudly, Wallace insisted, “I was reporting, thank you!”

Despite her tumultuous search for a career, Wallace advised the graduates to find a place where they fit and to do something they are passionate about.

After telling a story about how her kindergarten teacher called her an “intensely curious child,” Wallace emphasized the importance of looking within. “The clues to who you are are all around you,” she said.

While Wallace highlighted the role of her own inquisitive spirit in her career search, salutatorian Elizabeth Lyon also encouraged graduates to keep asking questions.

Lyon referenced a paper she wrote for her Literature Humanities class in which she raised questions but didn’t answer them. “My professor was deeply disappointed with it,” Lyon said. “On the side margin, it was written, ‘These are all questions one should be trying to answer.’” But for Lyon, raising questions that could not be answered was something she encouraged her fellow graduating seniors to do.

“Awareness of the passion common to all of us is testament to a strong conviction,” Lyon said, “even if these questions cannot be answered.”

“Awareness of the passion common to all of us is testament to a strong conviction, even if these questions cannot be answered.”

—Elizabeth Lyon,
CC salutatorian

Columbia College Dean Michele Moody-Adams also urged graduates to critically participate in social and political debates—while also telling them that they may want to consider “which pictures you want to take down from your Facebook page.”

While students laughed at Moody-Adams’ joke about

Facebook, they booed shortly after, when Dean of Student Affairs Kevin Shollenberger accidentally called them the “class of 2001” in his introduction to the senior class gift.

Ninety-five percent of seniors contributed to the senior fund—the most participants in the history of the college, according to Scott Allen Maxfield, chair of the senior fund executive committee. All told, the fund raised \$21,341 in contributions and received a matching gift of \$50,000.

Senior class president Sean Udell closed the ceremony by sharing experiences he had heard from his classmates, ranging from memories of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s speech and Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential election win to the more “seemingly banal” experiences of late-night Hamilton Deli runs and long meetings in the IRC.

“The more I heard, the more I realized that our memories wouldn’t overlap in that neat, tied-up-in-a-bow way that I had hoped,” Udell said.

But he did find one unifying factor, he said. “For everyone, friends were present in every story we told.”

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PHOEBE LYTLE / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sandberg, Facebook COO, talks about lack of women in top jobs

Senior class adds over \$9,000 to ‘Bear Essentials’ fund for expenses not covered by financial aid

BY JACKIE CARRERO
Spectator Staff Writer

Barnard graduates like Cindy Reyes may have put pictures of their graduation on Facebook, but it’s not every day that Facebook is brought to a graduation. Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg gave the keynote address to graduates of Barnard’s class of 2011 on Tuesday afternoon.

“In part because I work in Silicon Valley, let’s just say I’m not usually here with this many women,” Sandberg joked at the ceremony on Tuesday. But although Sandberg began her address with lighthearted anecdotes—like Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg asking her, “When do midlife crises happen?”—she quickly adopted a serious tone as she told graduates of the challenge that lie ahead of them as women.

Sandberg cited writers Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof, the husband-wife team who authored a best-selling book about opportunities for women, in asserting that the “fundamental challenge of our century is oppression of girls and women around the world.” She recited facts, noting that only 15 percent of top corporate positions in America are occupied by women.

“Men run the world,” Sandberg said. Although Sandberg herself did not graduate from Barnard, she said she has plenty of faith that Barnard graduates could pick up where her generation left off. “It makes it clear that my generation is not going to change this problem. ... You are our hope.”

As she told graduates of the negative correlation between power and likability for women,

she recalled moments in her own career where she was especially vulnerable to people who said negative things about her.

“I hope that each and every one of you have the ambition to run the world, because this world needs you to run it.”

—Sheryl Sandberg,
Facebook chief operating officer

“I’ve experienced this firsthand when I first joined

Facebook. ... I cried some when I was alone. I lost a bunch of sleep. At the end my only response was to do my job and to do it well,” Sandberg said. “I told myself that next time, I’m not going to let myself cry. I’m not sure that’s true.”

But while Sandberg spoke of her personal struggles, she only had hope for Barnard graduates. “I hope that each and every one of you have the ambition to run the world, because this world needs you to run it,” Sandberg said. “I’m counting on you.”

Lara Avsar, president of the Student Government Association, spoke of her personal struggle with the word “quit.”

Avsar recalled how that her grandmother added on the word “quit” as her middle name. But while her grandmother added it to get Avsar to stop being sassy, for Avsar, the word “quit” has no

meaning for Barnard students.

“We are women who don’t even know the meaning of the word ‘quit,’” Avsar said, “whether it’s surviving a day of papers and dance performances or running around campus trying to get everything done. How else would we be Barnard women?”

While Avsar encouraged her peers to never give up, senior class president Reni Calister advised them to slow down when necessary. She shared a memory of overhearing a frazzled first-year student answer a Liz’s Place cashier’s “How are you?” by recounting her entire to-do list. “The cashier said, ‘You ladies don’t know how to stop,’” Calister said.

Calister advised graduates to stop, breathe, and reflect. “After four years of trying to outdo yourself, you’ll see that perfection is impossible,” Calister said.

“My sisters ... be kind to yourselves. You have grown into women of whom you should be proud.”

For Katherine Sacks, chair of the senior fund committee, the senior gift was a way to be kind to the graduates’ fellow Barnard students who were staying behind. Sacks said that the senior gift was a contribution to the contingency fund created by the class of 2010. The fund provides aid to students to cover expenses not included in the financial aid package like bedding and books.

The senior class raised over \$9,100. Fifty-five percent of the class participated. The contingency fund was also renamed the “Bear Essentials” fund in honor of Barnard’s mascot. “I wish seniors from 2010 could see what a difference they made,” Sacks said.

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PHOEBE LYTTLE / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SEAS speakers provide range of advice

SEAS alum Izzo tells grads to collaborate on solving world problems

BY EMILY NEIL
Spectator Staff Writer

“I wish I knew what you know.”

That’s how University President Lee Bollinger addressed the newest graduates of the School of Engineering and Applied Science on Monday, adding that their knowledge gives them the power to explore and solve “not just engineering problems, but human problems.”

“Every single person who thinks about any subject comes eventually to you,” Bollinger said.

The graduates gathered on a damp afternoon for Class Day, where Public Service Enterprise Group CEO Ralph Izzo—who received both a master’s in mechanical engineering and a doctorate in applied physics from SEAS in 1979 and 1981, respectively—spoke about the importance of engineers collaborating

to search for solutions to the world’s biggest issues.

“The world needs leaders with the knowledge and skills associated with your degree,” Izzo said. “Some of my fondest memories of Columbia are sitting around with friends, trying to solve the problems of the world.”

“I urge you—keep the faith, keep believing in yourself, and never stop learning,” Izzo concluded.

In a more lighthearted speech, valedictorian Norases Vesdapunt spoke of the welcome he had experienced as an international student from Thailand, drawing laughs from the crowd in his description of American habits—including “allowing the boxers to peek out from your pants.”

He ended his speech with a hope for the future possibilities of each of the graduates, and two words: “Surprise me!”

Class president Amanda Tan

began the ceremony by reflecting on the graduates around her.

“When I think about the many people who have impacted my life, I can’t help but think about the people I have met at

intertwined and woven into the thousands of lives we will have touched,” Gaspard said.

Between the speeches from the deans, students, and guests, graduate Dexter Hypolite said he enjoyed the emotions of the day—mixed with elements of practicality.

“I liked listening to what the alumni had to say, as they have knowledge—they’re in the field now, they graduated. So listening to them is good advice, and of course sharing the good feeling of what has been done, what has been accomplished as a class—I enjoyed that very much,” he said.

For graduate Ajit Haridas, it was President Bollinger’s remarks that struck a chord.

“I like the way President Bollinger talked about the connection between liberal arts and engineering,” Haridas said, “and how the two must work together for the betterment of mankind.”

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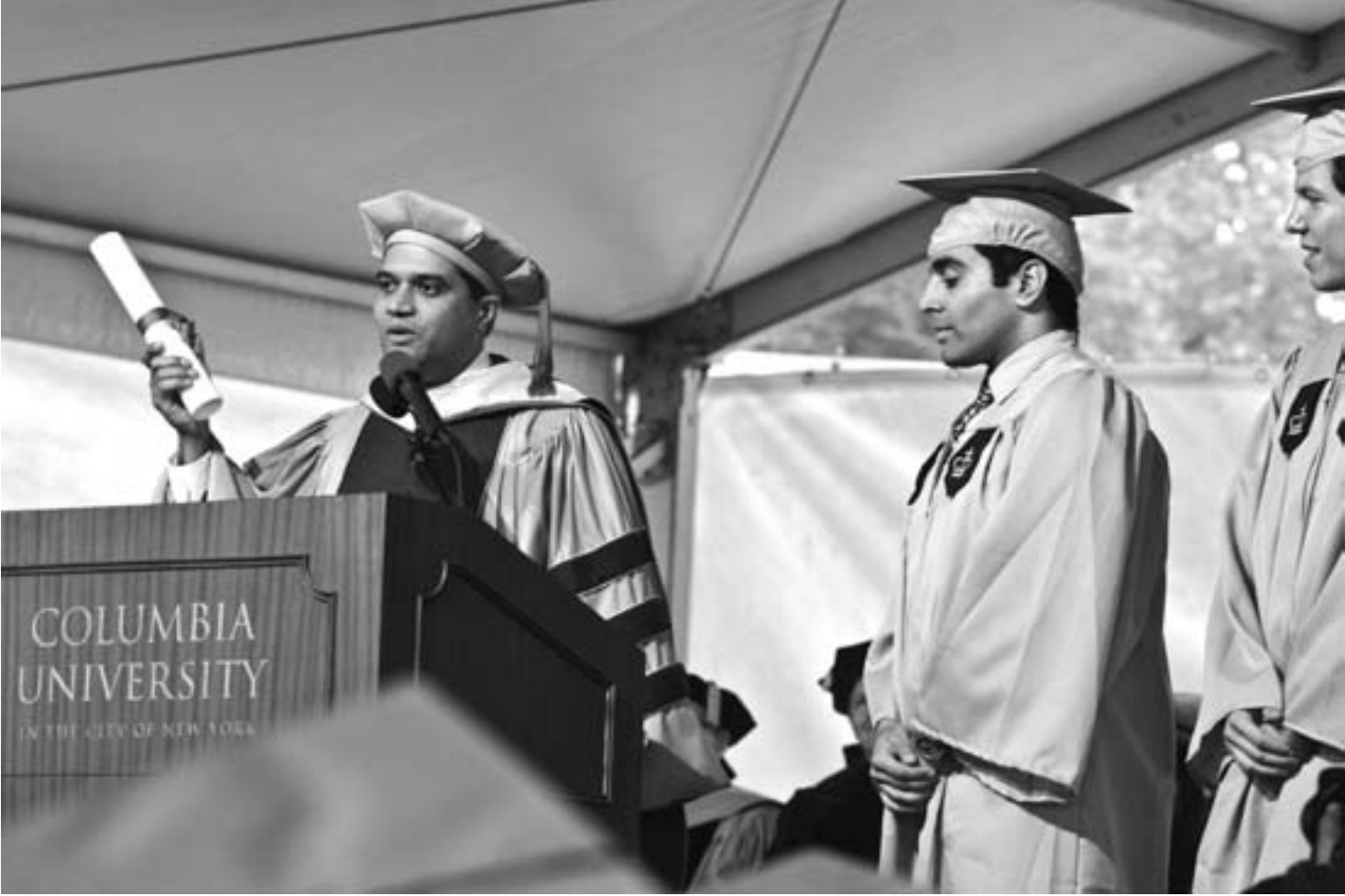
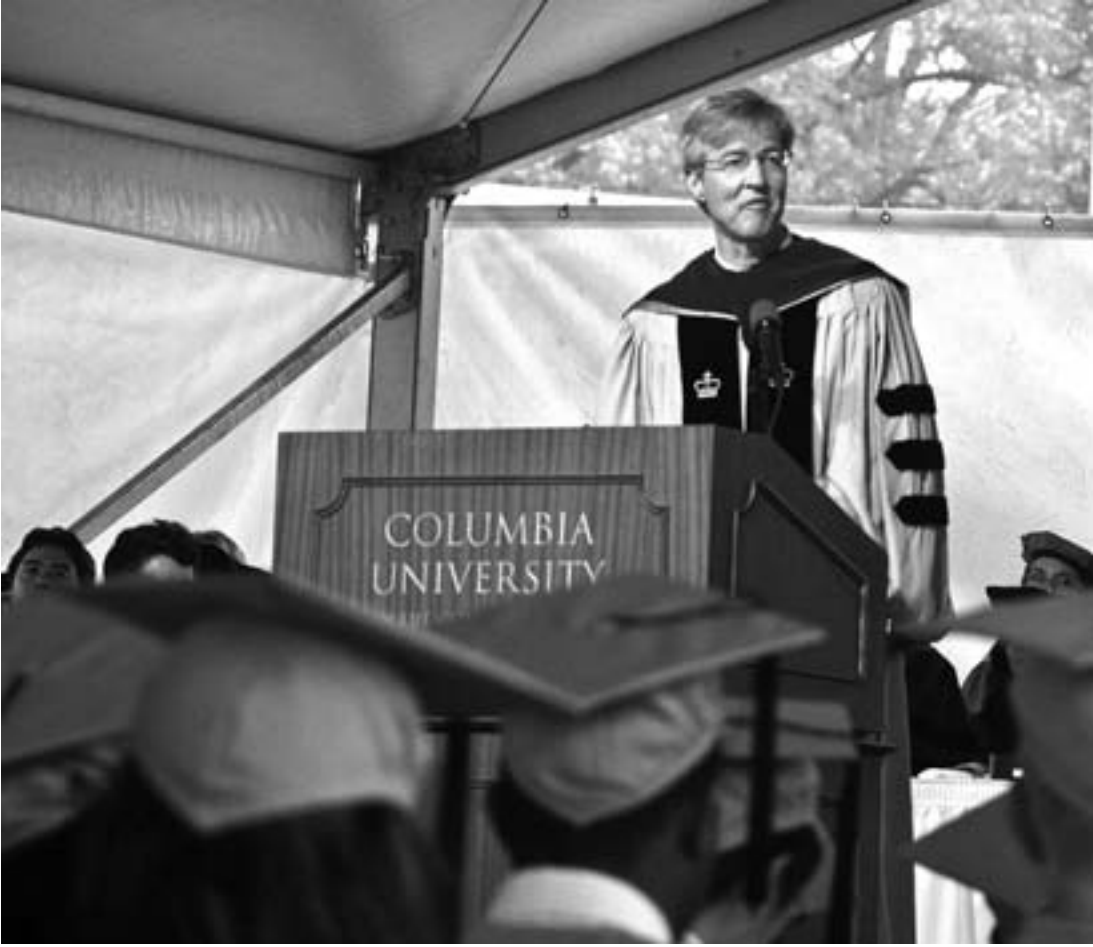
“I wish I knew what you know.”

—Lee C. Bollinger,
University President

Columbia,” Tan said, and was greeted by applause and cheers from her classmates.

Graduate student speaker Joshua Gaspard also highlighted the ability of the graduates to directly improve their future communities through engineering.

“The greatness of our story will not be ... a single event. The greatness of our story will be





HENRY WILLSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Grads celebrate diverse pasts at General Studies Class Day

Leeds, GS '66, says GS gave him 'second chance'

BY EMILY NEIL
Spectator Staff Writer

The newest graduates of the School of General Studies brushed off the winds and intermittent downpours at their Class Day on Monday—with many of their speakers focusing on the bigger challenges they had already overcome.

Roger Leeds, GS '66 and a professor at Johns Hopkins University and Columbia, gave the Class Day address and called his own time at GS a “second chance.”

“My GS education was the essential catalyst for just about everything else that followed in my life,” Leeds said. As the rain pelted the tents until his words were barely audible, he joked, “I hope it’s a good sign.”

Dean Peter J. Awn of the School of General Studies began the ceremony by congratulating the graduates and highlighting the importance of GS as an institution, saying that the creation of GS “was a milestone in undergraduate education,” and had continuing relevance today.

“Members of the class of 2011, you represent the cutting edge of undergraduate education,” Awn said.

Awn also celebrated the fact that 22 veterans were among those graduating.

“You represent so much of what we value here,” University President Lee Bollinger told the graduates in his brief remarks, citing the determination and courage of many GS graduates who had overcome obstacles in order to return to school.

“Many of us here know what failure feels like, and yet not a single one of us knows what it feels like to give up.”

—Elliot Shackelford,
GS salutatorian

Elliot Shackelford, the class salutatorian and a former concert pianist who is now headed to law school, spoke of the unity among GS students despite their diverse backgrounds and former careers.

“Many of us here know what failure feels like, and yet not a single one of us knows what it feels like to give up,” Shackelford said. “All of you know what success looks like, because it looked back at you from the mirror this

morning, and is sitting on either side of you right now.”

Kira Boesch, recipient of the psychology department’s Jennifer A. Pack Prize and class valedictorian, described in her speech how GS allows for students to embrace both their unique pasts and the student life.

“I reveled in the fact that GS students accepted the complexity of themselves and one another,” Boesch said, describing the relief the embracing environment provided her after a childhood spent divided between the “two separate universes” of New York City public schools and professional ballet.

“We can appreciate there is no timeline and no blueprint for achievement,” Boesch said.

For graduate Debra Moore, those words represented a reality.

“Obviously, for a lot of us, it’s the culmination of a lot of work and struggling,” Moore said of the ceremony.

“It’s been a long time coming for myself. Personally, it’s been 10 years since I graduated from high school,” Moore added.

“There was a lot of humor, especially with the rain, and everyone had a good sense of humor about it. ... I’m just excited and elated and ready to get started with the next chapter of my life.”

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April Simpson

BY JACKIE CARRERO
Spectator Staff Writer

April Simpson may have stayed in her hometown of New York City for college, but the work she's done here has transcended the boundaries of the Big Apple.

As president of the Caribbean Students Association, Simpson founded the service program There is Hope to address the needs of children in the Caribbean through education.

"I put my life into it," Simpson said of her work with CSA.

Last spring, under Simpson's leadership, CSA members traveled to Jamaica, where they explored Jamaica's culture and developmental challenges. CSA brought the students they were working with to the University of the West Indies.

"I learned so much about Caribbean people, how to organize, and how to develop an organization," Simpson said. "The service trip was an ideological feat for us, because we focused on the idea that you don't have to leave the

Caribbean to make it a better place."

Simpson also stepped out of Columbia's boundaries when she got involved with the Jamaica Diaspora group, which focuses on strengthening ties between Jamaicans overseas and those living in Jamaica.

She serves as a board member and ended up making some of her best friends through her involvement with the group. "I was in constant communication with government officials and people from Jamaica," Simpson said of her experience on the board.

"I'm even going to the consulate tomorrow night," she added, clearly excited.

In addition to her work with CSA and the Jamaican Diaspora Group, Simpson was also a producer of for the Black Heritage Month fashion show and cultural showcase. She also ran for Columbia College Student Council with the ReNew CU party in 2010.

For her, the work was a way to help others and learn about herself at the same time.

"You have to focus as much on oneself as you do developing

what's on the outside. I feel that people come to Columbia and give themselves to everything around them. I recommend that people grab things around them—you only have four years."

After graduation, Simpson said she plans to be a "nomad." But while the word may not have positive connotations for some seniors, it's exactly what she wants.

"I'm really trying to be a nomad. I want to do the work that I really want to do. So right now, I'm working on developing my own thing," Simpson said.

But before she gets there, she will graduate with someone very close to home—her mother. Simpson's mother will graduate from Teachers College at the same time that Simpson receives her degree in anthropology.

"Graduation is definitely going to be very special for me," Simpson said. She paused. "My mother had me when she was really young, so it means a lot for me to see her getting her master's."

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PHOEBE LYTLE / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Heidi Ahmed

BY SONALEE RAU
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Whether it's the dead of winter or the middle of finals week, Heidi Ahmed, SEAS '11, always has sunshine in her voice and a spring in her step.

During her time at Columbia, she served as vice president of policy for the Engineering Student Council, director of the cappella group Bacchante—and has been a smiling face and encouraging friend to many.

She said that her proudest moments at Columbia have been "when you realize that the work you've done within a group—whether it's in class or in a club—has really helped to build a tangible sense of community and camaraderie."

This summer Ahmed will be working in the biomedical engineering department, continuing to improve her senior design project—a neonatal vital signs monitor for low-income countries.

"The technology that we've developed is awesome—first place at a National Global Health Technologies competition, and the department's Capstone Award—and we're hoping to take it to Mulago Hospital in Uganda ... this

August. I'll also be one of the instructors for the biomedical engineering high school course at SEAS in June and July," she said.

In August, she'll return to her home state of Iowa for medical school, a lifelong dream.

Ahmed said she was feeling especially nostalgic last week at a biomedical engineering dinner.

"We were all together for the last time, celebrating our survival of the last four years—through all of our suffering with projects and problem sets and endless studying, we managed to band together to form one of the closest communities I've ever been a part of, at a college with a reputation of lacking community," she said.

During her time on ESC, Ahmed and others worked to pass gender-neutral housing, which allows any student, regardless of sex or gender, to live together in the same room.

"I loved being VP Policy this year, although I really wish I had been able to spend all of my time—rather than split it with classes—working on initiatives for the student body," she said.

Ahmed says that while being around intelligent people

all the time at Columbia has pushed her to think critically and perform to her highest potential, it has led her to another surprising revelation.

"Despite the fact that everyone at Columbia is brilliant, I realized that we're all still wonderfully flawed humans who are silly and quirky and dorky. No amount of formidable intelligence can keep you from having fun, and this makes it so much easier to always act like yourself, regardless of who you're with," she said.

When asked if she has any advice for the class of 2015, Ahmed said that students should choose to do what they know they want to do.

"If you try to do things because only because others want you to, or because you think it's what you should be doing, even if your heart tells you not to, you won't be as happy. I tried not to let outside influences pressure my choices at Columbia, and so even when I'd be working on a project for the third all-nighter in a row, I was willing to keep working and try to have a happy face because I knew that what I was doing was important to me."

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Annie Tan

BY JACKIE CARRERO
Spectator Staff Writer

When asked to describe herself, Annie Tan says, "I forget my points often and I'm pretty wordy."

It is for her so-called wordiness that Tan has been given the nickname "Annie Tan-gent" by her friends. But there is nothing tangential about her pursuit of achieving change in the world of education.

Tan's passion for education is fueled by her own experiences. As a New York City native, Tan grew up in the public school system. "There's so much wrong in the education system that I grew up in," she said.

Tan, who went to a public elementary school in the Chinatown area where she grew up, was tracked into a specific group according to her academic ability.

"They would put me and all the other people who were on that reading level in the class, because they knew we were so-called 'smart,'" Tan said. But this tracking separated her from other students, and in a school where the majority of the population was Chinese, Tan didn't know one English learner.

"I knew early on I was smart, but I realized I was estranged

from the rest of the school and bilingual students who live in Chinatown," she said.

While Tan encountered separation of students with different language abilities in elementary school, in high school she felt alienation from students who had fewer resources than she did. "I went to Brooklyn Tech, and they had a lot more resources than my friends had at other schools," Tan said. "There was no interaction with people in different [socioeconomic] classes. I didn't even understand what classes were until I got to Columbia."

Once she did get to Columbia, Tan wasted no time in focusing on her goal of education fieldwork. From the America Reads/America Counts program to "a ton" of others, she said her time in college has been defined by her educational experiences. This past semester, she spent 35 hours a week working in the classroom.

But Tan doesn't seek to just educate others—she has also sought to educate herself about her identity. She has been involved with the Asian American Alliance and been a resident of the Intercultural Resource Center for three years. That desire to get involved with cultural groups

came from her experience in the Students of Color Leadership Retreat.

"That was the first time I was confronted with how my race and identity intersected," she said of the retreat.

Tan feels that her involvement with AAA, IRC, and as the academic affairs representative for Columbia College Student Council helped her understand how her own community worked. "You need to understand your own experience before you go out into the world," she said.

Tan will be venturing to Chicago, where she will teach special education through Teach for America. The urban studies major and education concentrator says that she wants to be a new Diane Ravitch, "the outspoken critic of education reform."

But when asked what her most meaningful Columbia experience was, Tan laughs and skips over all of her titles.

"I guess it would have to be my conversations with freshmen and sophomores, when I can sense that people were getting something from what I was saying. Realizing that I've been a good mentor—I think anyone in that moment would feel proud."

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HENRY WILLSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Norases Vesdapunt

BY SONALEE RAU
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

After four years at Columbia, SEAS valedictorian Norases Vesdapunt insists that the proudest moment of his undergraduate career took place on Monday.

During the School of Engineering and Applied Science's Class Day, he gave a speech in front of thousands of people—and included a few jokes.

Vesdapunt says the warm reception he got made him realize the true meaning of his Columbia education.

"Although I'm proud of my academic accomplishments and grateful for all of the recognition I've been getting ... it was the applause and cheering, the compliments on a mere three-minute speech that made me so happy and

proud of my first public speaking success," he said.

It was a triumph he didn't exactly see coming.

"During the sound check a few days prior, I was so nervous that my knees were shaking, and I was merely addressing row after row of empty chairs. But during Class Day, seeing all of the familiar faces smiling up at me among the sea of powder-blue robes, I felt so honored to be standing at the podium," he said.

Vesdapunt, originally from Thailand, says that he is proud to be part of a gifted student body because of the diversity of the group of students surrounding him—and that being named valedictorian was especially surprising given where he came from.

"I come from a very humble upbringing, and an Ivy League education in the United States

was more like a dream than reality," he says.

Vesdapunt appears to be on his way to further successes. He is finishing a research project with professor Luis Gravano that ranks Twitter messages for local events such as concerts and festivals, and he will be starting his Ph.D. at Stanford this fall.

Vesdapunt says simply that he believes success and hard work are directly proportional.

"When I started college, I knew I was extremely passionate about computer science, but I had no clue which specific area. Although it took a few tries to find a shoe that fit, I explored different research areas until I found my true passion."

"You never know until you get your hands dirty," he said.

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HENRY WILLSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



AHMADINEJAD SPEAKS

The class of 2011 had barely been on campus a month when Columbia exploded with controversy. On Sept. 24th, at University President Lee Bollinger's invitation, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took part in the World Leaders Forum, giving an address and answering questions from the audience. Bollinger sharply criticized Ahmadinejad in his introduction, calling him "a petty and cruel dictator." "The Iranian leader shot back, "We don't think it's necessary before the speech is even given, to come in with a series of claims." Ahmadinejad sparked further controversy with his claim that "In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country." Debate continued for months thereafter about the appropriateness of the invitation, Bollinger's introduction, and Ahmadinejad's remarks.

BIAS INCIDENTS

In the fall of 2007, a series of campus incidents brought the issues of intolerance and hate at Columbia to the fore. Days after Ahmadinejad's appearance, Islamophobic and racially offensive graffiti was discovered on a bathroom stall in the International Affairs Building. In October, Teachers College professor Madonna Constantine, who is black, found a noose on her door. Two days later, anti-Semitic graffiti was found scrawled in a Lewisohn Hall bathroom. Later that month, a swastika was spray-painted on an office door at Teachers College. The incidents were met with rallies, protests, and campus discussions on racism and hate speech.

FENIOSKY PEÑA-MORA

Two months after Michele Moody-Adams' selection as dean of Columbia College, the School of Engineering and Applied Science got a new chief administrator as well. Feniosky Peña-Mora, associate provost at the University of Illinois, took over in July 2009 for interim Dean Gerald Navratil. Navratil had served in an acting capacity since 2007, when Zvi Galil stepped down to become president of Tel Aviv University in Israel.



HARMONY HALL

In response to a 50-student increase in incoming Columbia College classes, University housing opened Harmony Hall to undergraduates. The facility had previously housed law school and graduate students.

GLOBAL CENTERS

In March 2009, Columbia began the roll-out of a network global centers, designed to promote engagement between Columbia researchers and opportunities around the world. The openings of the first two centers, in Beijing, China, and Amman, Jordan, were attended by top University administrators and local dignitaries. Two additional centers—in Mumbai, India and Paris, France—have since been launched, and more are planned for Kenya, Turkey, Chile, Brazil, and Kazakhstan.



MICHELE MOODY-ADAMS

In May 2008, Austin Quigley announced that he would step down the next year as dean of Columbia College. The following February, University administrators announced the selection of Michele Moody-Adams, then the vice-provost for undergraduate education at Cornell, as Quigley's successor. Upon taking office on July 1, 2009, she became the first African-American and the first woman to lead the College.



SEPT 2007

HUNGER STRIKE

In November, a group of Columbia students went on hunger strike to call for changes to the Core Curriculum, the administration's policy on intolerance, and the University's expansion plans. After 10 wrenching days, during which time one student was hospitalized, the participants acceded to a set of administration proposals and ended the demonstration.

Initiatives agreed upon included a revision to the Major Cultures requirement and student involvement in the hiring of new faculty for the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. The larger undergraduate body was sharply divided by the strike, with an anti-strike movement calling the protests unrepresentative of student opinion.



SEPT 2008

SERVICE NATION FORUM

On Sept. 11, 2008, about 7,500 Columbians packed Low Plaza to watch Barack Obama, CC '83, and John McCain—then the two major-party candidates for President—speak on the importance of national service. They appeared separately at a forum in Lerner Hall organized by ServiceNation, a nonpartisan group. In the audience were 200 University students, chosen by lottery, but many times that number assembled outside to watch the broadcast on a Jumbotron. The event marked Barack Obama's most recent appearance on campus, and a rare acknowledgement on his part that he graduated from Columbia College in 1983.



OBAMA ELECTED

Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Delano Roosevelt both dropped out of Columbia Law School, and Dwight D. Eisenhower served as University president before taking the Oval Office, but when the class of 2011 arrived on Morningside Heights, no Columbia graduate had yet been chosen as President. On Nov. 4, 2008, that changed with the election of Barack Obama, CC '83. Students celebrated Obama's victory on- and off-campus that Tuesday night.

NEW BARNARD PRESIDENT

In January 2008, Debora Spar was announced as the successor to outgoing Barnard President Judith Shapiro. Spar, who previously served as a dean at Harvard University's business school, is a well-known political scientist. At Barnard, she has overseen controversial changes to the school's administrative structure, the construction of the Diana student center, and the institution of a mandatory meal plan for all students.



BUDGET CUTS

In 2009, it was made public that the value of the University's investments had dropped from \$7.1 billion to \$5.7 billion. In response, President Bollinger announced budget cuts for the central administration and each division of the university. The University also launched several measures to increase financial stability, like cutting the number of Ph.D. students by 10% and adding 50 undergraduates to future Columbia College classes.

ROTC 2008

Spurred in part by Barack Obama's support for the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at the ServiceNation forum in September, student leaders pushed in 2008 for the Navy's ROTC program to be invited back to campus. The program, which trains students and pays their tuition in exchange for their commitment to serve as officers after graduation, had been pushed off of campus in the 1960s as part of a wave of anti-war sentiment. A poll of the four undergraduate schools that fall, which was criticized for logistical shortcomings, found that 51 percent of students opposed the program's return. Administrators said they would not act on the issue.

KYLE SMITH

After a disappointing 2009-10 season that saw the men's basketball team finish with a 5-9 Ivy record, head coach Joe Jones left Columbia for the associate head coaching job at Boston College. In his seven years at the helm, Jones pulled the Light Blue out of the Ivy cellar and turned it into a middle-of-the-pack team.

A month after Jones left, he was replaced by Kyle Smith—an associate head coach at St. Mary's fresh off a Sweet Sixteen run in the 2009 NCAA tournament. In his first season as a head coach, Smith lead the Lions to their first winning record (15-13) since 2007.



BOLLINGER: FIVE MORE YEARS

In October 2010, University President Lee Bollinger agreed to a request from Columbia's trustees that he stay on for at least five more years. Since taking over in 2002, Bollinger has overseen the legal battle surrounding Columbia's Manhattanville expansion, the construction of new facilities such as the Northwest Corner Building, the launch of Columbia's network of global centers, and a University capital campaign whose target was recently raised from \$4 billion to \$5 billion. Should Bollinger remain at the helm until 2016, he will be the longest-serving Columbia president since Grayson Kirk, who served from 1953 to 1968.



GENDER-NEUTRAL HOUSING

In November 2010, Dean of Student Affairs Kevin Shollenberger announced that the University would institute a gender-neutral housing pilot program for the 2011-12 academic year. This program, which students have pushed for since the 2008-09 academic year, allows students of the opposite sex to live in doubles together, though in only six of the residence halls—Wien, East Campus, Ruggles, Nussbaum, Claremont, and Woodbridge. During the housing selection process this spring, 40 students took advantage of the open housing pilot program.

MELES ZENAWI

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was invited to speak at the World Leaders Forum in fall 2010, sparking controversy that recalled Ahmadinejad's 2007 visit to campus. A bio of Zenawi posted on the World Leaders Forum website described him as exhibiting “seasoned leadership,” but Zenawi has been accused of oppressing the citizens of Ethiopia through allegedly intimidating voters and detaining political opponents.

Columbia's invitation to Zenawi provoked outrage from people both on and off campus. On the day of his speech in Lerner, dueling protests lined Broadway.



BIN LADEN KILLED

On May 2 a team of Navy Seals and C.I.A. operatives killed Osama bin Laden—leader of the terrorist organization Al Qaeda and mastermind behind the Sept. 11 attacks—at a compound he had been hiding in in Pakistan. The announcement of his death resulted in an outpouring of patriotism from Columbia students and New Yorkers alike, as many people rallied at Ground Zero and in Times Square to celebrate and reflect.



DIANA OPENS

By the time the class of 2011 had started its freshman year, Barnard's McIntosh Student Center had already ceased to exist. It would not be until January 2010, however, that Barnard had an equivalent space to replace it. That month, the new Diana Center opened for business, offering Barnard new spaces for classes, activities, events, and dining. Its burnt orange glass exterior has attracted both praise and criticism.



PROFESSOR ARRESTED

On Dec. 9, just two days after the drug bust, political science professor David Epstein was charged for having a sexual relationship with his daughter. Though according to police, the incestuous relationship was consensual, Epstein is still awaiting trial.

Epstein's wife, Sharyn O'Halloran, is a tenured professor at Columbia who serves as chair of the executive committee of the University Senate.



SEPT
2009

MANHATTANVILLE: PUT ON HOLD

In 2009, the New York State Supreme Court ruled illegal the University's proposed use of eminent domain in Manhattanville. The decision, which hinged on whether Columbia's expansion constituted a “public use” for the land and whether the neighborhood was “blighted,” threatened the University's ambitious expansion plans. Pre-construction had already begun on the project at the time of the ruling.



CLAUDE STEELE

In September 2009, Claude Steele succeeded Alan Brinkley to become the the 21st University provost. Steele, who previously served as chair of the psychology department at Stanford, has headed a variety of campus initiatives in the 20 months since, including a task force that has recommended that fringe benefits for University employees be scaled back.



SEPT
2010

NWC OPENS

After nearly four years of construction and \$200 million in costs, the Northwest Corner Building opened in December 2010. Designed by architect Rafael Moneo, the building's façade of glass and metal met with mixed reviews. The building's well-appointed library has engendered more enthusiasm, however, as has Joe the Art of Coffee, a high-end New York brewery chain that opened this semester in the building's café space.



MAY
2011

DRUG BUST

On the morning of Dec. 7, 2010, five Columbia students were arrested for selling drugs following a five-month investigation by the NYPD. Through the investigation—called “Operation: Ivy League” by the NYPD—the police discovered that Harrison David, SEAS '12, Chris Coles, CC '12, Adam Klein, CC '12, Jose Stephan Perez (known on campus as Stephan Vincenzo), CC '12, and Michael Wymbbs, SEAS '11 had been selling cocaine, marijuana, MDMA, Adderall, and LSD. All five have entered not guilty pleas and are awaiting trial.

Four of the students who were arrested belonged to fraternities—Alpha Epsilon Pi, Pi Kappa Alpha, and Psi Upsilon—while one lived in the Intercultural Resource Center. Following a review of the three fraternities and the IRC by Dean of Community Development and Multicultural Affairs Terry Martinez, all three frats had their brownstones taken away, while the IRC was put under no sanctions.



BAKER FIELD

In the fall of 2009, the University announced plans to expand the facilities at the Baker Athletics Complex in Inwood. These plans included a new building—now known as the Campbell Athletic Center—for training rooms, coaches' offices, and other facilities for Columbia's varsity athletics programs, and a waterfront park.

The construction plans for Baker Field only allocate 1.5 percent of Columbia's property for public waterfront access despite zoning laws that require 15 percent of land for public access. On April 6, City Council voted to waive the waterfront zoning laws, 46-1, giving Columbia the green light to start building.

From the time of the announcement to the City Council vote, Inwood residents expressed concerns about the building process, worried that Columbia would not take their complaints seriously.

MANHATTANVILLE: CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

In June 2010, the New York State Court of Appeals overturned the NY State Supreme Court decision on Manhattanville, clearing the path for the use of eminent domain. In December of that year, U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case, ending a two-year legal battle over the use of land in northern Manhattan.

Phase I of construction, in which six new buildings will be raised, began in the summer of 2010 with the demolition of existing structures. The Jerome L. Greene Science Center, the building scheduled first for completion, is expected to open in 2016.



ROTC 2011

The repeal of the military's controversial “don't ask, don't tell” policy in December 2010 sparked a new initiative to bring the Reserve Officers' Training Corps back to campus. The University Senate's Task Force on Military Engagement held three open forums at which Columbia students were invited to voice their concerns. The forums were mostly civil and featured a balance of pro- and anti-ROTC speakers, despite a well-publicized incident at the second event where a handful of students heckled and laughed at a disabled veteran. A poll of five Columbia schools indicated that 60 percent of students supported the program's return.

On April 1, the University Senate voted to invite ROTC back to campus, following a 43-year absence, with a 51-17 vote. Three weeks later, President Bollinger announced a program under which students will be able to participate in the Naval ROTC program at the State University of New York Maritime College in the Bronx.

Athlete Profiles

For four years, these six athletes—and others like them—have spent hours each day practicing and training before hunkering down in Butler to study. During their time here, Lauren Cooke, Nick Cox, Lauren Dwyer, Clark Granum, Alex Gross, and Adam Powell donned Columbia blue and did their best to bring victories home to Morningside Heights.



FILE PHOTO

Alex Gross

BY MARISSA SCHULTZ
Columbia Daily Spectator

Alex Gross graduates this year with, in effect, a double major: sociology and football. Along with taking on the already demanding workload of a Columbia student, Gross was dedicated to using every opportunity he had to better himself and the team, spending up to eight hours a day at practice, in the weight room, watching films, or in meetings. His hard work, talent, and leadership were recognized by the league, when he was named Ivy League Rookie of the Year and as an all-Ivy athlete over several seasons; on a national level, when he was named one of 16 National Football Foundation National Scholar-Athletes; and most importantly, by his teammates,

who have called him an incredible motivator and have said that he has an intensity that raised the level of the team at every practice and on every game day.

Gross' drive and determination were tested when he tore his ACL early in his junior season. He embraced his injury as a challenge—an opportunity to prove that he was capable of doing anything he wanted. If you saw someone around campus that year who looked like a caveman, it was probably Gross—after his injury, he made a decision not to cut his hair until he played football again. His patience and persistence paid off, as he came back for a successful senior season and attracted the attention of some professional scouts.

Gross was able to do “the crazy college thing” after the

season and before the semester's end, but when he got a call from his agent over winter break about opportunities to play for the NFL, it was back to business. He had the opportunity to train with the New York Jets this spring and received positive feedback from the coaches. Unfortunately, because of labor disputes, NFL teams are not allowed to sign any new players at this time. If the disputes do not get settled soon, he said, he'll look play professional football in Europe—something especially exciting for a player whose commitment to football prevented him from studying abroad. In any case, the committed athlete is sure that his career will be centered around sports in some way—for Gross, it's important to do something he loves.

Advice for the team for next year: “Take advantage of every opportunity to better yourself and don't waste a day of practice. You will be kicking yourself if you do.”
Best team moment: “Senior Day against Cornell. The team came back from behind win the final home game of the season. It was not only great to be victorious in the last home game for the class of 2011, but it was also an important moment for the program. In the past four years, the team had given up multiple games in the final minutes of play, so it was great to show how they could come back and close out a game in the fourth quarter.”
Parting words to the coach: “Serious thanks and gratitude to all the coaches. To Coach Sigler: “50 pounds isn't impossible.”

Clark Granum

BY JEREMIAH SHARP
Spectator Staff Writer

Clark Granum's departure marks the end of one of the most storied careers in the history of Columbia's athletic department. Over the first three years of his tenure, Granum led the team to three consecutive Ivy League Championships. This year marked the end of the streak, but a large portion of the loss can be blamed on Yale's incredible performance on the final day of the tournament. The Light Blue finished the tournament in second, with Granum placing in the top 10 and earning all-Ivy honors for the fourth time in as many years.

Granum came from Torrey Pines High School in San Diego,

Calif. as a highly touted recruit. He did not disappoint in his first year—he was able to take third place individually while leading Columbia to its second Ivy League Championship in program history. Granum continued to be a strong contributor, finishing fifth and helping the team win its second consecutive league title. The third year showed Granum's strongest individual performance at the championships—he took the final round into a one-hole playoff, falling just short of the individual Ivy title.

This year, Granum led the team in scoring average and was able to finish in the top 20 on seven different occasions. His consistent strong play and leadership skills will be sorely missed next season, but the team will

be more than ready to compete at high level despite his graduation.

While younger players will become the new faces of the team, the graduating seniors are irreplaceable.

“Every kid that comes into this program is not replaceable—you just get new players,” head coach Rich Mueller said.

Mueller also stressed the impact that Granum and co-captain senior Justin Lee have had on Columbia golf.

“Both Justin and Clark have left such an important mark on our program,” Mueller said.

Following his graduation from Columbia, Granum plans on returning to warmer pastures in San Diego, where he has already begun looking for jobs.

Advice for the team for next year: “The best three moments were the last day of the Ivy League tournaments for the past three years, when we won. If I have to pick the best one it had to have been the first one. It was new to me, so it was the most fun. Not to say that the next two were any less fun—I just think the first one is always the best.”

Best team moment: “Stay focused. It's a long season—you have to not get tired and just stay focused in every tournament. Keep your mind on the goal, which is always winning the Ivy League Tournament. As long as you keep your head on winning that tournament you always have a good chance.”

Parting words to the coach: “It was a pretty amazing experience for four years, to grow with the same person the whole time. It's pretty rare that a coach stays for an athlete's whole time, which is really cool. It was definitely fun winning three tournaments under the same person.”



FILE PHOTO

Adam Powell

BY REBEKA COHAN
Spectator Staff Writer

Commencement is a time of endings. After four long years of hard work, graduation serves as a reward and marker of accomplishments. For Columbia swimmer Adam Powell, though, things are just about to get started. He plans to continue his athletic career on a worldwide stage. “Right after graduation, I'm pretty much just going to hit the ground running on training for 2012,” Powell said. For the next year, the soon-to-be alum will be training to qualify for the Olympics.

Despite his ambitious and exciting future plans, Powell can't ignore his past four years and the things that he's learned at

Columbia. “One of the biggest things I've learned is exactly what it takes to get to the top—all the hard work, all the hours,” he said.

Columbia didn't just teach Powell how to work hard, although he thinks he would have found success no matter where he went. “One of the things I will always say is whenever you get to any environment, you always have to adapt to your situation.”

And boy, did Powell adapt well for the Light Blue. The New York native is one of the best swimmers Columbia has seen, and one of the fastest sprinters in the Ivy League. Powell never lost in his trademark events—the 50 and 100 free—during his senior season. In 2010 and 2011, he was named to the Division I Mid-Major All-American first

team, and he also qualified for the NCAA swimming championships. At his final conference meet of his season, the Ivy League Championships, Powell won the Harold Ulen award as the Career High Point Swimmer for his impressive collegiate record.

The graduating senior is confident in his ability to take his hard work and apply it to training for the Olympics, especially since he won't have to worry about schoolwork and other deadlines. He has no other plans for next year, as he is hoping to spend a full year focusing on only swimming. Powell believes that good things lie ahead.

“I really think I'll just be able to take it up a notch and really do all that is necessary to make sure I'm on that podium.”

Advice for the team for next year: “Never to back down from a challenge. A lot of times Columbia is viewed as the underdog in swimming but we managed to do some pretty incredible things this year. The biggest part of that is just letting them know that as soon as you enter the water. Don't be afraid to attack it and don't worry about who's next to you, just swim your own race.”
Best team moment: “Probably this year when we won the 400 freestyle relay, which was the second relay that Columbia's ever won in history, and it was the first free style relay that we had ever won.”
Parting words to the coach: “Thank you for everything. Jim's been a great coach even before I came here and the interest that he showed—that's one of the biggest things that drew me to Columbia. He seemed like he was genuinely interested in having me. Even before I got here, once he found out I was coming, I used to hear stories of how excited he was, and I hope that in my four years here and everything that I've done, I've definitely just lived up to those expectations.”



FILE PHOTO

Lauren Cooke

BY MIKEY ZHONG
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

Starting time was not guaranteed coming into Columbia, and Lauren Cooke—now an all-Ivy center back for the women’s soccer team—embraced that.

“I was deciding between MIT and Columbia,” Cooke said. “And in my recruiting, one of the girls on the [Columbia] team directly was like, ‘Do you want to play real soccer again?’”

MIT guaranteed Cooke her center back position, “all 90 minutes of it,” but also offered only Division III competition, which ended up being the deal breaker.

Although she didn’t hit the field immediately, she found playing time by the end of her freshman year.

Three years later, Cooke exits Columbia a decorated athlete. Since her sophomore year, she has led the team in minutes played and didn’t miss a single minute her senior year. Last year, she earned second team all-Ivy accolades.

Cooke describes another aspect of her decision to pick Columbia over MIT as unorthodox. She professes that she’s

more of the math-and-science type—she was the lone SEAS student on this year’s team—but ironically, the former high school valedictorian chose to play for the Light Blue because of the University’s liberal arts component.

“Academically, Columbia would have pushed me to be good at other things and force me to be ... more well-rounded,” Cooke said, adding that she thinks that engineering students should be required to take more humanities classes in the Core.

A graduating mechanical engineering major, she spent two summers working at Chevron and built a source-separate latrine (a type of communal urinal area) last summer in Ghana with Engineers Without Borders. In a year or two, though, Cooke plans to attend medical school, and she hopes to become a doctor one day.

“I really enjoyed it [majoring in mechanical engineering]. I think it’s so fun and so cool. But I don’t know if I find it thoroughly satisfying as a career for life, as I would really enjoy as a doctor—the actual interaction with patients, the fact that you have a direct feel of the difference you’re making the world,” Cooke said.



FILE PHOTO

Advice for the team for next year: “Savor every moment and really take it all in.”
Best team moment: “Winning 2-1 at Penn this year—Columbia overtook Penn for first place with the win.”
Parting words to the coach: “Thank you so much for your dedication to the team and for your passion throughout all of it and for each one of us—our lives on and off the field.”



HENRY WILLSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Nick Cox

BY RYAN YOUNG
Spectator Staff Writer

It is never easy to replace graduating seniors, but it will be especially difficult for Columbia baseball to replace its star center fielder, who helped carry his team in his final season with his bat, speed, glove—and leadership. Co-captain Nick Cox enjoyed and took advantage of his four admirable years as a Lion.

“Academics and athletics—even though they’re pretty separate at our school—have both in their own way taught me something, and I think I’m going to use my experiences on the field and in the classroom,” Cox said.

One such experience came from a simple email.

“My first month of school, I emailed a professor and called him by his first name—and he quickly reported me to the dean,” Cox said.

He feels his time at Columbia has taught him how to better interact with new people and has opened him up

to meeting people from very diverse backgrounds.

“From my freshman year to my senior year, I met a wide variety of guys from all over the country and formed relationships with people that I wouldn’t have probably made if I went to a state school in Florida,” Cox said. The Sunshine State native chose New York over schools closer to home with better-known baseball programs.

The decision to come to Columbia looked even better after the team won a championship during Cox’s freshman year, during which he was also unanimously voted Ivy League Rookie of the Year.

“I would say that whole experience my freshman year was my favorite year here,” Cox said.

Despite not claiming an Ivy title since, Cox is still proud of what the Lions have achieved on the field.

“You can’t beat winning a championship, but I think the hard work that we put into everything may not have shown every year, but

it helped shape our team and the attitude of our players,” Cox said. “The team had good chemistry every year and I think the guys worked hard every year. All the guys worked hard for each other.”

Despite fighting injuries for a decent portion of his Columbia career, Cox is considered one of the best players the Lions have ever had by head coach Brett Boretti. This year, Cox was first team all-Ivy and earned Ivy League Player of the Week honors twice, performing in the clutch with his offense and diving catches on defense. He batted .353 and stole 18 bases, which gave him a career total of 70 steals, the second highest total in Columbia history.

In the coming months, Cox plans to work at an insurance company on Wall Street, but he still hopes baseball may be in his future.

“I’m going to be staying in the city and working and living with some teammates and my girlfriend,” Cox said. “There’s a possibility I may look into some independent ball.”

Lauren Dwyer

BY MIA PARK
Columbia Daily Spectator

Throughout the chaos of school year’s end, Lauren Dwyer kept calm and carried on—as she always had on the basketball court. In her fourth and final season on the women’s basketball team, Dwyer assumed a singular role: leader. As one of two seniors and a co-captain, she led the team both on and off the court. She shaped the dynamics of all 28 games that she started, and is arguably one of the most valuable players Columbia has ever had.

Dwyer finished the 2010-11 season with 1051 career points—the seventh most in program history. She contributed much more than 9.5 points per game, though, as she worked with each of her teammates to make sure everyone was playing their best.

“Leadership for me means the investment in the team,” she said. “It’s about caring the team individually, putting every teammate on the same page by communicating directly to her what we are looking for.”

Four years on the team have provided several memorable moments for the Nevada native, but the best one is easy to identify.

“When we went to Hawaii for this year’s team trip, seeing the sun rise in Diamond Head crater was one of the most incredible experiences I had,” she said. “I have never woken up to see a sunrise before.”

Dwyer played in all 112 games that she was on campus for and started in 108 of them. As much as her consistent presence will be missed next year by her coaches and teammates alike, it is Dwyer who is grateful for her time here.

“I thank the coaches who gave me such a wonderful opportunity,” she said. “I am still grateful that they found me from my hometown and saw a potential in me.”

While the team will not see her on the court next season, Dwyer leaves her advice for the players—especially the incoming class—behind.

“Take advantage of the opportunities you have here and be committed to basketball,” she said. “Make it worth it all the way through. Never do it halfway.”

Dwyer will be in the city for a couple of months after graduation and intends to go into the sports business, ideally sports marketing for the NBA. While her absence may be felt at Levien Gym, the future may see Dwyer continuing to play—not necessarily with a ball this time—on an even bigger court.

Advice for the team for next year: “Take advantage of the opportunities you have here and be committed to basketball. Make it worth it all the way through. Never do it halfway.”
Best team moment: “Seeing the sun rise in the Diamondhead crater in Hawaii on a team trip.”
Parting words to the coach: “I thank the coaches who gave me such a wonderful opportunity. I am still grateful that they found me from my hometown and saw a potential in me.”



FILE PHOTO

Advice for the team for next year: “Stay focused, through the victories and the losses.”
Best team moment: “By far, it was when we won a championship.”
Parting words to the coach: “Thanks for a great four years of my life, four of years of tough competition, and teaching me the skills that I need to be successful in life.”

John McClelland

BY ARVIN AHMADI
Spectator Daily Spectator

John McClelland, GS, graduated from high school as student body president, captain of the debate team, and a self-proclaimed “geek.” He was the



PHOEBE LYTLE / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

perfect Columbia pre-frosh—and yet it took him six years, several continents, and a successful career in the military to finally arrive in Morningside Heights. His first detour was France.

“After high school, I ran

away to France. I lived six months by my wits in France. My accomplishments I’d rather not say, but I was able to survive on very little,” he said.

His next pit stop was more calculated and was one that shaped his experience at Columbia: the military. McClelland is one of Columbia’s most active military veterans and is graduating from the School of General Studies with a degree in history.

After his spontaneous stint in France, he shipped off to basic training for the Army in April 2003. With a parent in the military, it was something that had always been on his mind. Moreover, he viewed some time with the Army as a challenge.

“For me, it was really testing myself and knowing that I could accomplish certain things,” McClelland said, “that the skinny military brat who

lettered in debate, didn’t letter in sports, could climb up a mountain with 150 pounds of gear and assault a building at the end of it.”

McClelland claims he was constantly seeking to put himself in extreme situations—all the way up to his decision to attend Columbia.

“That’s why I ran away to France—to see if I could do it and survive and learn things there,” he said. “And finally when that experience came to its natural end, I joined the military. And when that experience came to its natural end, I decided to go to college finally.”

Upon arriving on campus in January 2008, he chose to embrace his past in the military, forming close friendships with other student veterans.

“If somebody can understand you and where you’re coming from, it is a breath of fresh air in an environment

where you’re constantly alienating yourself purposely to create a better image of yourself,” McClelland said. “It’s almost like a home to go back to.”

McClelland soon became president of the U.S. Military Veterans of Columbia University, president of the Hamilton Society, and battalion commander for the New York City Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. He was also instrumental in MilVets’ successful efforts this year to bring ROTC back to Columbia and to lobby Congress for revisions on the new GI Bill.

However, he says his biggest accomplishments at Columbia were about building community among student veterans.

“You cannot discuss my experience at Columbia without discussing MilVets. We built that organization up from like 35 veterans to 300 over the course of three years. ... I’d like

to say that I helped be a part of that community,” McClelland said. “I won’t say that I created it, but I helped be a part of it.”

As he leaves Columbia and the military community that it has fostered, McClelland said he is venturing into the business world. He will be an analyst at McKinsey and Company next year, while picking up a commission at the National Guard as an infantry officer. Hoping to start his own company one day, McClelland said he recognizes the value of really hard work.

“If you want to get anywhere, you have to work your ass off for it,” he said. “Columbia has given me an opportunity to reinstate myself and to also give me the intellect tools to digest problems in order to solve them. It’s really a combination of optimism and hard work.”

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Ace Patterson

BY DANIELLE GRIERSON
Spectator Staff Writer

Anthony “Ace” Patterson, also known as Tha Pyro, has stepped into one of the biggest spotlights at Columbia—opening for Snoop Dogg as a member of CUSH.

But despite Patterson’s accomplishments with the Columbia University Society of Hip-Hop, not many people know his full story.

He describes applying to Columbia on a whim, not knowing much about colleges but being enticed by the promise of a substantial financial aid package. In his college admissions essay, Patterson wrote about his stay in a homeless shelter, watching cartoons, and making friends with those characters.

When he got to Columbia, his essay was the first one to be read at an orientation event.

But life at Columbia wasn’t always easy for Patterson, who admitted that he did not want to stay at the University in the beginning.

“I didn’t know what college was about, but I got in,” Patterson says. “The experiences I got and understanding the significance of being here and my family allowed me to stay. I realized that I’m not living for myself. This is way beyond me.”

And Patterson did hit his stride. When asked about his achievements during his four years, Patterson chuckles and humbly proceeds to give a laundry list of his accomplishments, from being chosen as the featured essay writer for the Black Students

Organization in 2007 to one of his raps being published in the 2011 edition of the Columbia Undergraduate Journal of Anthropology.

“I also got a graduation cord from the office of multicultural affairs for my contributions to the community,” Patterson said. “I’ve been wearing it all day,” he laughs.

Those closest to Patterson say his humility and compassion has resonated with them most.

“Ace is one of the friendliest people on campus,” Tabia Santos, BC ’13, says. “One of my favorite things to do when its warm outside is hang outside with him on the stoop. I appreciate his company because we actually have conversations. He talks back, and it’s rare.”

Ace’s last roommate Chikezie Ohayia, CC ’12, said that his distinctive laugh made a difference.

“Sometimes it was a long laugh, sometimes it was short-pitched. For me, being his roommate, that made my life. Just to hear him laugh and hear everything was going well got me through the things I was going through. Finding hilarity in a tough situation is what I value about him the most,” Ohayia says.

Although he isn’t sure what his future holds, Patterson says he isn’t stressed, and is looking into graduate school and pursuing his talent for music and music production.

“I just believe that you are never too old to learn, and never too old to be a nice person,” Patterson said.

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PHOEBE LYTLE / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

BY SAMMY ROTH
Spectator Senior Staff Writer

If you want to know the best place to buy Oreos at Columbia, ask Nathan Miller.

For a computer science class, Miller and a classmate created a database that lists the contents and prices of every vending machine on campus. Want the cheapest machines around? Try the Mathematics building. Just want to avoid overpaying? Then steer clear of the expensive Uris Hall machines.

“Let me tell you, there were a lot of interesting things to learn,” he said.

Miller is a computer science major, but his interests don’t end there—he’s also a Talmudic scholar, a published crossword puzzle maker, and an avid member of the little-known Columbia University Bowling Club.

A native of Houston, Miller came to New York to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary, through the combined program at JTS and the School of General Studies. He said he’s not very observant when it comes to Judaism, but he has enjoyed studying Talmud—a collection of ancient commentaries on Jewish law—from an academic perspective.

“It’s just very interesting, I mean, in terms of the logic that these rabbis had, let’s say fourteen hundred years ago, and how that plays out into their decisions,” he said.

But Miller said his real passion is for computer programming. He has been a self-described “computer guy” for years, building websites for several companies and taking computer science classes in high school. He experimented in a few other fields at Columbia, but ultimately came back to computer science.

“This is what I know, and this is what I love,” he said. “And you’ve gotta do what you love, otherwise you’re not going to have a good life.”

For another computer science class, Miller and a classmate created a programming language that uses statistics about teams and players to predict the outcomes of baseball games. Miller—a longtime Houston Astros fan—said the final project was somewhat successful, but had difficulty predicting the

Nathan Miller



HENRY WILLSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

outcomes of close matchups.

Miller will soon return to Houston to start a job as a software designer at JPMorgan Chase, but that won’t stop him from doing crossword puzzles on the side. Miller’s first published puzzle appeared in the Los Angeles Times last May, and was syndicated nationally.

Miller said he tries to make crosswords that appeal to his generation.

“I think that one of the major problems with most puzzles ... is that they’re written by older people for older people,” he said. “And that’s not realistic. There are a lot of very intelligent people our age.”

Miller is currently working on a puzzle loosely based around the film “2001: A Space Odyssey.” He hopes to sell it to the LA Times.

When he wasn’t programming or puzzle-making at Columbia, Miller might have been at hanging out at Harlem Lanes with the bowling club. The approximately 20-member group, which meets once a week, received Columbia funding this year as a club sport. Miller was the club’s secretary—“which, in a bowling club, means

nothing, or very little” he noted.

“It’s easily the most accessible club sport,” he said. “You don’t have to be athletic at all to bowl with us.”

Miller hopes the club continues to receive funding next year, but he won’t be around to see what happens. He leaves on Saturday for Houston, where he hopes to spend the rest of his life.

One factor in his decision to leave New York was the weather—he called the city a “frozen tundra that’s not fit for human habitation”—and another was its high cost of living.

But while New York is an expensive place to live, Miller doesn’t recommend that Columbia students always choose the least expensive options—at least when it comes to vending machines. He said that for a great vending experience, students should try trekking to an out-of-the-way machine he discovered on the bridge between Pupin and the Schapiro Center.

“It’s the same price as the rest of them,” he said. “But it’s a pretty radical place to get a Coke.”

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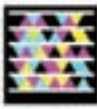
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to the graduating Class of 2011.

We look forward to seeing you
at University Commencement

Wednesday, May 18, 2011, at 10:30 a.m.



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