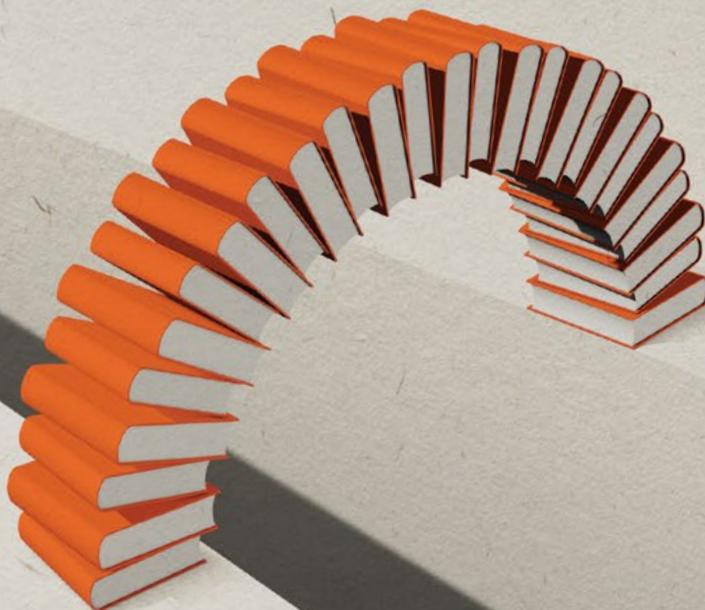


# ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

# Alumni

MAGAZINE



## *Building Bridges*

JOHNNIES CONNECT TO THE  
COLLEGE AND ONE ANOTHER

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*A Re-envisioned  
Relationship*

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*An Open  
Conversation*

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*Internships  
Connect the  
Lab to Life*

# *What, we might ask, is the nature of the thing?*

## **What is this piece you have before you?**

It is not a reincarnation of *The College* magazine, a resource-intensive publication that the college could not continue to staff and maintain. It is not an annual report, either; it is not meant to give a detailed account of what the college is doing and how resources are being spent.

## **What, then, is this publication all about?**

This is a look at you and your fellow alumni—what *you* are doing, how you are living and modeling the Program, and how you are giving back to St. John's in meaningful ways. It is a look at the connections you are creating around the world, and it is your guide to making them even stronger.

**What this piece needs from you now is a name.**

**What captures the essence of the stories in this collection?**

**What options do you like and which ones do you not?**



Visit [sjc.edu/mag-survey](http://sjc.edu/mag-survey)  
and share your thoughts.



Dear Fellow Johnnies,

I hope this message finds you well. Reflecting on our alumni community, I recall a passage in John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, written in the same century that saw the founding of our forebear, the King William's School. John Donne wrote "no man is an island," and yet the challenges of current times seem to contradict this notion—highlighting separations of situation and, with the pandemic, of actual distance. Despite this, we continue to find bridges connecting us.

Bridges span divides and create meeting points. They aid the passage of ideas, communities, and conversation. Bridges facilitate growth, with movement from the familiar to the unknown, and connect challenges to opportunities. In these pages we will learn of ways alumni can serve as bridges—between the college and future students, between new graduates and careers, between the college and the world, between the Great Books and future generations—all while serving as bridges to each other.

In maintaining these connections, we move beyond our individual limitations and boundaries. Just as the Program allowed us to bridge distant shores, eras, and cultures, our connections allow us to expand our understanding and our community.

We have much to celebrate this past year. Through the tremendous generosity of alumni and friends, and the commitment of staff and faculty, St. John's was able to **traverse years of fiscal austerity to stand on higher, firmer ground**. The strength of the alumni community has helped carry the college over and past many significant challenges.

As the Alumni Association approaches its 200th year, and the college stands strong, I am grateful for the opportunities ahead of us. Strengthened by the foundational beginnings we all share, alumni have a key role in bridging across our community—so we may be more than “entire of ourselves.” What Donne wrote in 1623 is as true today as it was then: by virtue of the connections we foster, we are elevated.

St. John's Forever!

**Gigi Escalante (A92)**  
President  
St. John's College Alumni Association

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# *A Re-envisioned Relationship*

Annapolis tutor Erica Beall (A07) remembers the conflicting feelings that arose in the years immediately following her graduation from St. John's. "It was possible to remain engaged with the college, but it was not always clear in what capacities we still belonged," she says of herself and her fellow Johnnies. "We used to joke about how those four years of intense self-discovery can lead to an ambivalent attachment: both clinging to and fleeing from the college when it's finally time to go."

Now, as a member of the Alumni Relations Working Group (ARWG), Beall is committed to helping change that dynamic. With representation from staff, faculty, alumni, and members of the Board of Visitors and Governors, the group advises the collegewide Office of Alumni Relations, and Beall describes it as "almost like a think tank."

"There's room for unstructured conversations that generate interesting ideas for how to serve, and show appreciation for, our alumni. It's a great mix of brass tacks and broader reflection, all with an eye to re-envisioning alumni relations in a way that's both practical and true to the spirit of the college," says Beall.

For Director of Alumni Relations Chris Aamot (SF04), the ARWG serves as an invaluable source of support and encouragement—and ensures that the alumni voice is heard. "They are holding me accountable for doing the best job that I can do," he says. "It's the most productive relationship I could ask for."

When Aamot looks out toward alumni, he sees a community for whom "being a Johnnie is who they are." But, he adds, that sense of identity doesn't always translate into concrete action.

From Aamot's point of view, the primary challenge is for St. John's to determine how it can best support alumni while also inspiring them to take action on behalf of the college.

This bidirectional approach to alumni relations is a new industry standard and differs from the past when, Aamot says, "You simply held a get-together and hoped that happy vibes would somehow lead to good outcomes."

In pursuit of a more effective—and mutually beneficial—model, the Office of Alumni Relations embarked on a listening campaign in recent years, approaching alumni who didn't have histories of deep engagement with St. John's.

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Alumni are defined by the college's governing document, the Polity, as any former student who has completed one semester of the undergraduate program or one segment of a graduate program. It is a lifelong community that is not bound by time or place but is united by a common curiosity and commitment to exploring fundamental questions together.

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"We knew these alumni still loved the college," says Aamot. "So we asked them, 'what can the college do for you? What do you need?' The universal answer was: 'Help us continue the life of the mind that we began at St. John's.'"



CHRIS AAMOT SFO'4

ERICA BEALL AO'07

Aamot and his colleagues are dedicated to providing Johnnies with numerous opportunities to do exactly that, whether on campus, off campus, or virtually. He cites Summer (and now Winter) Classics as popular and enriching options along with the three low-residency programs of the Graduate Institute, which are open to alumni on a degree-track or audit-only basis.

As it seeks to meet the needs of alumni, the college also asks that alumni help meet the needs of current and future students, through advocacy, philanthropy, and volunteerism.

Regarding the first of these, Aamot says, “We need our alumni to be talking about St. John’s to the people within their sphere of influence. Our mission is to continue the Great Conversation by bringing people of all ages to the table to read these books and explore these questions. If we have empty seats, then nothing else matters.”

Next, says Aamot, St. John’s needs to engage more volunteers. “That has been a longstanding challenge for us, because we’ve always had more alumni who want to get involved than we have been able to deploy, but we are going to keep working to build channels for those who raise their hand.”

The third action the college wants to encourage is philanthropy. This particular need became especially crucial when the college reduced tuition by one-third in 2019. “What made that possible was an outpouring of philanthropy from alumni,” Aamot says, noting that the college needs more participation from alumni who are willing to make small gifts, year after year.

“St. John’s tends to produce maximalists,” he notes. “We are the people who are going to read the thou-

sand-page book on the beach. But we need to remember that the little things matter. The small gifts, the little actions of advocacy, those things have real power and can change trajectories.” Like his colleague Beall, Aamot knows firsthand how complicated alumni feelings about St. John’s can be.

“We want it to be better than it is because we believe in the true, the good, the beautiful—that which is the ideal,” he says. “We believe in *arete*, and the college is always going to fall short of *arete*. How do we reconcile that? We adopt a calculus where we are both supporting the college as it is and helping it to become better.”

For both Aamot and Beall, that means recognizing and celebrating that Johnnies are lifelong members of one community—and then focusing on the ultimate reason for the college’s continued existence.

“As a tutor, this shift has meant a greater awareness that part of what we are doing is preparing our students to be alumni,” says Beall. “Maintaining a healthy connection between alumni and the college helps me keep this essential aspect of a tutor’s work concretely in view.”

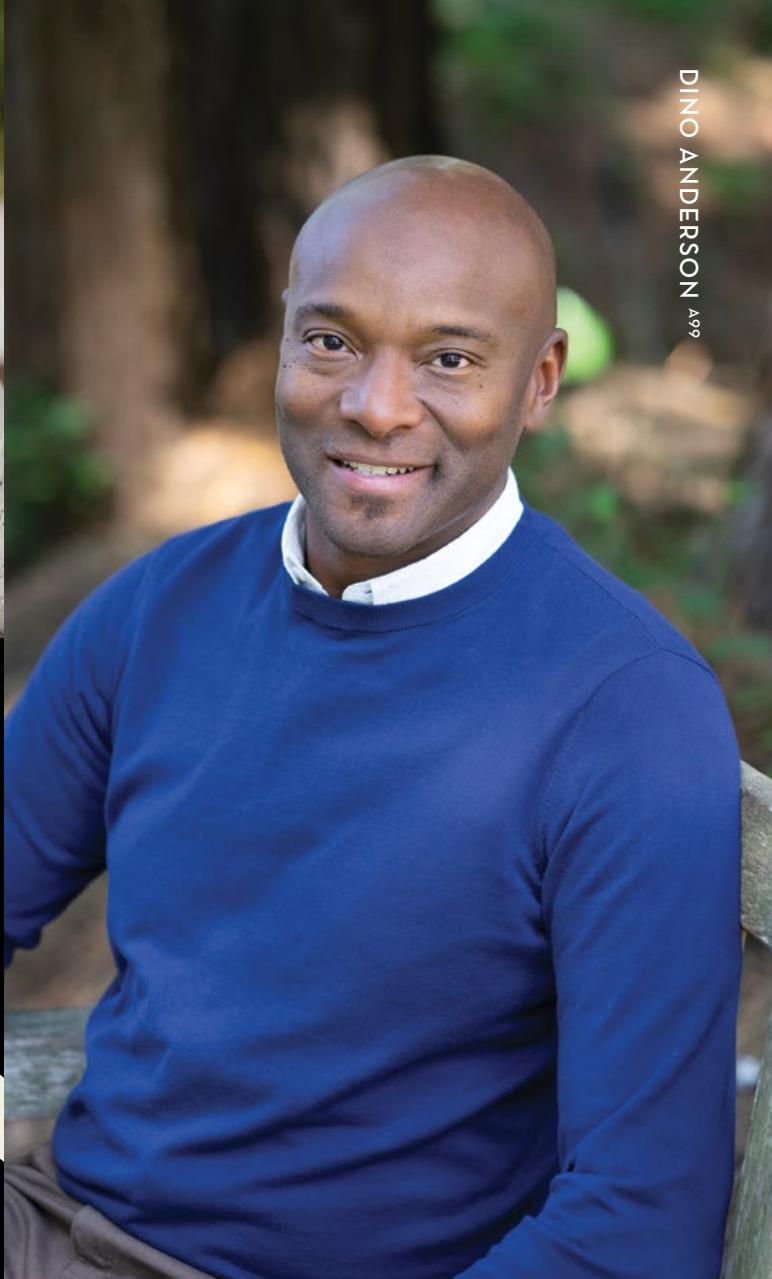
This evolving relationship between the college and alumni is not only crucial to St. John’s future but is also the right approach for the present.

“In this environment, where people are becoming increasingly polarized, there is nothing more valuable than true collaborative inquiry into meaningful questions,” says Aamot. “Teaching students how to do that—to stand for their own voice and genuinely listen to others who differ from them—there is no better education for the modern moment.” ♦

MARTI ACOSTA A'92



DINO ANDERSON A'99



# *An Open Conversation*

MARTI ACOSTA A92

DINO ANDERSON A99

This spring, the college sat down for a conversation with Marti Acosta (A92) and Dino Anderson (A99), two of the many alumni who have positively impacted the college through their volunteerism and advocacy. Their involvement with the college as alumni is extensive and includes collaborating with the college on issues of concern to alumni, including diversity and inclusion initiatives. Marti Acosta has worked in leadership development for more than two decades. Currently a senior moderator for Harvard Business Publishing, she has facilitated diversity and inclusion programs for global corporations including Natixis, Mars, and Intel. Dino Anderson began his career teaching at Bowdoin College and Columbia University. He is the chief culture officer at Articulate in San Francisco and is a lecturer at the Master of Liberal Arts program at Johns Hopkins and the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

**How have you been involved with the college as alumni thus far?**

**MARTI ACOSTA:** I've been involved for many years and volunteered in several capacities. I did a video around how the St. John's education develops the leadership skills that are desired in corporations around the world. I have presented to parents of newly admitted students, and I have delivered workshops to students on topics like networking. I was on the Alumni Association Board, and now I sit on the Board of Visitors and Governors.

**DINO ANDERSON:** I am mainly involved on three fronts: through the board Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion; I am the director of the Alumni Association Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group for the Alumni Association Board; and I participated in the One Table, Many Voices visioning process.



Columbia University professor Roosevelt Montás visited both campuses to speak about the value of the Great Books and why they matter in our modern and diverse world.

Did you miss the presentation?  
Videos of both lectures  
can be found on the college's  
YouTube channel:  
[youtube.com/stjohnscollege](https://youtube.com/stjohnscollege)



**I know of your work on the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Task Force and related work partnering with college staff to develop a vision for One Table, Many Voices events, like the Roosevelt Montás lecture and visit. How would you describe this work?**

**ACOSTA:** It's the work of every organization to create an environment that is supportive of everyone showing up authentically as themselves. I'm an immigrant, and I'm also mixed-race. When I was younger, I sort of accepted this feeling of not really fitting in anywhere in the world, and when I went to St. John's I found my people. The Program, how we approach Western thought, is by its nature intellectually inclusive. For me the importance of being on the D&I Task Force is to help create an environment where everyone can fully engage in this very special education and have their diverse voices heard, even if they don't see all their identities reflected in the texts.

**ANDERSON:** It comes from an awareness that there is an opportunity for more diverse representation among the voices that have shaped Western civilization. The conversation is not limited to the authors on the Program, since there are more voices that have contributed to sustaining and expanding the big questions on the true, the good, and the beautiful.

**Marti, what stood out to you from the Roosevelt Montás visit or lecture, and how would it have spoken to you when you were a student at the college?**

**ACOSTA:** One of the things that was really beautiful was that Professor Montás was talking about his personal relationship with some of the works we read at St. John's. A crazy thing blew my mind: I asked him a question about his definition of freedom, and he clarified something for me, which is that the word "liberal" in liberal education is more closely related to "liberal" in the sense of "liberty" than in the sense of "broad."

I have lived in lots of different cultures and countries, and I realized that so much of the ways that we categorize ourselves are for other people. One of the liberties that a liberal education gave me is the ability to question these narrow categories, approach issues from multiple perspectives, and embrace my complexity and even my paradoxes.

**How do alumni help the college understand and address important efforts like this?**

**ACOSTA:** As alumni, we provide a larger context outside of the school. The St. John's education requires study and self-reflection and insularity. There's a contraction of our activity to allow for an expansion of our minds. The alumni help people see what expansive education means in the world—what's next after St. John's and how we carry that education with us—because it's hard to do that when you are focusing in on the fundamental principles of a triangle or the astronomical foundations of calculus.

**Dino, talk more about your role in the events related to the 70th anniversary of W. E. B. Du Bois's visit to the college.**

**ANDERSON:** What an exciting opportunity to have collaborated on commemorating the visit of a seminal Program author to the college. I was particularly excited because in grad school I did deeper research on Du Bois's dynamic life, writings, and pedagogy, particularly as it concerned the grounding and promise of the American polity and preservation of the contributions of the African diaspora.

When I got involved with the task force and the Alumni Association, I found an article with the exact date of when Du Bois spoke at St. John's, so I was one of the people to voice that he made an appearance. I think it is important to note that quite a few people pointed out that fact. I am glad that these voices were able to influence the realization of this event. Sadly, I didn't have the opportunity to attend the all-college seminar because of other teaching commitments, but I was happy about working with staff and other alumni to make sure we told the story of what it meant for Du Bois to be at the school.

**What did it mean for you to experience this focus on the Du Bois visit and speech?**

**ANDERSON:** I recall reading the text as a senior and not grasping the gravity and urgency of his words. This could have been due to an immaturity on my part, and our reading only a part of *The Souls of Black Folk*—a complex work of education written in the *Bildungsroman* tradition.

There's a certain maturity you need to read that work, because it's representative of Du Bois's lifelong commitment to documenting and eradicating the social injustice and inequities that happen for Black and other people of color. And now, seeing the exacerbation of race relations in the United States (and in other countries), we have much more context for Du Bois's text as a harrowing depiction of the U.S. polity and its inability to live up to its promises.

It was exciting to have Du Bois's voice be central—not as a reaction or a performative gesture in the name of diversity, but because he is in the Program and because these words still resonate as strongly as they did in 1903, and in 1952, and now in 2022: "so that they can come to know what has taken place in the past and what mistakes have been made."

It gives me hope to see the college shining a light on this great thinker and his urgent words and, through this celebration, creating a space for difficult conversations. I feel the college is trying to heal its own soul so that it can be a voice to help heal the American polity's soul.

**Marti, I heard you participated in a video shoot that paired a student with an alum up on Monte del Sol, having a conversation about a great book. What did you talk about?**

**ACOSTA:** I was paired with a student who is Nepalese, a wonderful, thoughtful Johnnie. We had a brief discussion about a passage in the *Iliad*, specifically around the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. My biggest problem with the video was trying to decide how to pronounce Patroclus, because we all had different ideas!

There's a thread that holds all Johnnies together, and even though, as I said, I found my people there, I found a very diverse people: people from all over the place with different backgrounds and different relationships to the work and different things they wanted to do with life. Being able to come back and connect with some students and seeing how amazing and how diverse they are, it was fun.

**Dino, take yourself back to being a student at St. John's. How does your work with the college today speak to, or from, your younger self?**

**ANDERSON:** I'll never forget what one tutor, Debbie Renaut Axelrod, told me when I was adamant that I wanted to pursue a graduate degree in philosophy and maybe one day come back to teach at St. John's. (This romantic vision was not uncommon.) She told me it was important to gain different perspectives on other schools of thought and approaches to philosophy. When I did go to grad school, I had the courage to put the Western philosophical canon into question—from those who inherited the tradition and those who had

their histories and thoughts contested. I'm glad that I've had that ability to mature and think differently, to question the canon. The Program should always keep its central questions alive and always ask who is not at the table and why?

**How did each of you view your St. John's education in real time and how do you view it now? Has your perspective changed?**

**ANDERSON:** My younger self didn't have all these resources that are on the campus now. What a great and wonderful thing to know that we can get better. I see that commitment happening, and it makes me hopeful. My younger self is glad that I made the right decision to go to a school that is

committed to giving us a foundation and always looking at ways it can improve.

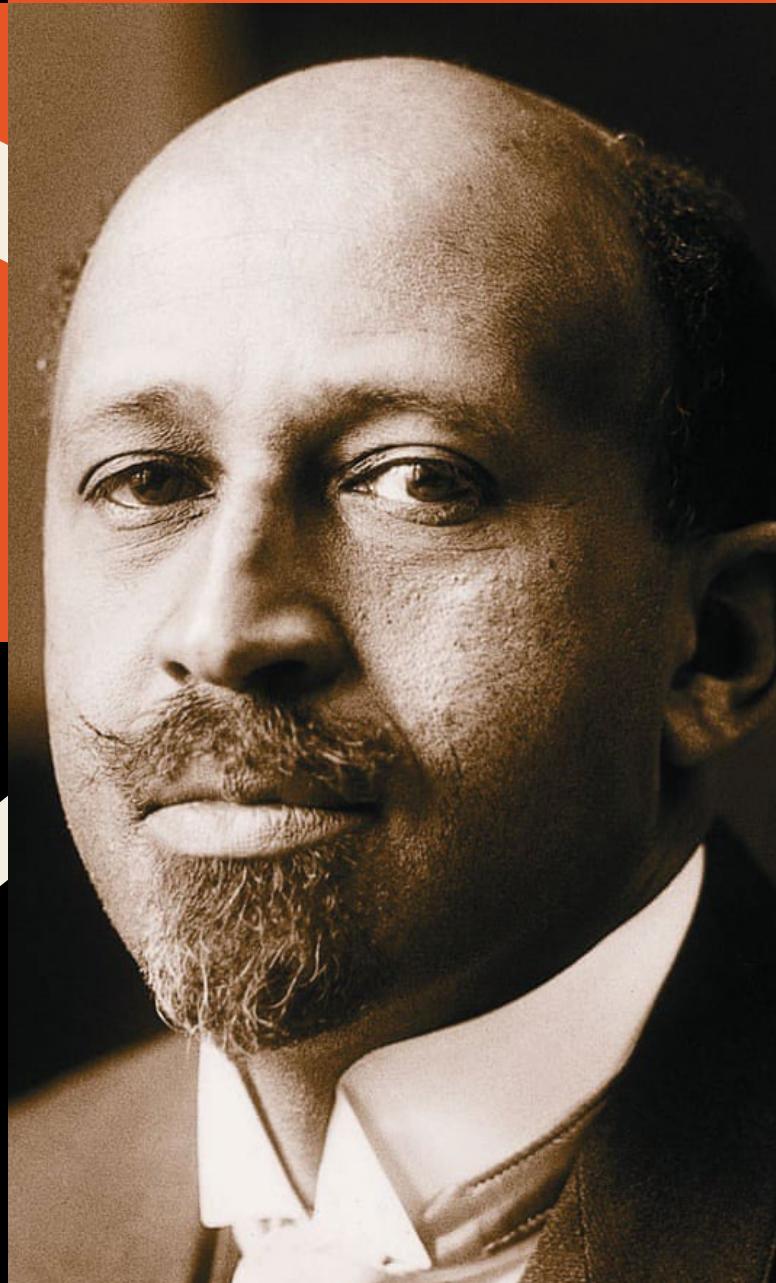
**ACOSTA:** I often introduce myself to other Johnnies as someone who did junior year twice, not because I had to but because I wanted to. My perspective about St. John's now is one of feeling great privilege for having been there while also being shocked that the world doesn't recognize it fully for the gem that it is.

Alumni should really be proud that they are part of a community that is willing to look at itself critically—and also with compassion and also with praise. We deserve all of those things. ♦

“  
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”  
—MARTI ACOSTA A'92

The St. John's community marked the 70th anniversary of W. E. B. Du Bois's visit to the Annapolis campus with an all college seminar on his 1952 lecture. Du Bois, author of *The Souls of Black Folk*, is believed to be the only Program author to speak at St. John's College.



*How can I  
be an advocate  
for the college  
and its alumni?*

## *Be an advocate for GivingTuesday 2022.*

Join us this year for GivingTuesday  
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students and the Program.

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All alumni are members of the St. John's College Alumni Association, an independent group that works closely with the college to advocate for St. John's continued excellence. The Alumni Association is governed by a volunteer board of directors who represent their fellow alumni and are elected by and from the alumni body.

Visit [sjc.edu/alumni/association](http://sjc.edu/alumni/association) for more information about items on the ballot, including the Association's board of directors and your elected representative to the college's Board of Visitors and Governors.

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to elevate  
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Take a walk down memory lane and share your best stories about Johnnie dorm giggles, gaggles, and maybe even a few geese to support our upcoming campaign for campus infrastructure and renovations. Submit your stories and keep an eye out to see which fantastic tales are chosen.

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# *Teacher Ignites International Interest in St. John's*

Any St. John's alum who happened to peer into the classroom of high school teacher Liam Goodacre (SF08) would find the intellectual comforts of home—and some familiar friends.

Aristotle, Kant, Sartre, Beauvoir: all make an appearance.

It is not necessarily the subject matter—grounded, though it is, in the classics—that would transport this hypothetical Johnnie back to the seminar table; it is the plurality of voices, united in the pursuit of understanding.

In Liam Goodacre's classroom, conversations abound.

"My teaching has evolved over the years, in terms of both style and content, but Socratic teaching methods are still very fundamental for what I do," says Goodacre, who teaches philosophy at the United World College Mahindra near Pune, India.

The United World Colleges (UWC) constitute an international network of high schools that share a stated aim of uniting "people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future." Goodacre has been a part of the UWC community for more than 12 years, first



LIAM GOODACRE SF08

as a student and now as a teacher.

In between, he found St. John's, and his encounter with the Great Books shaped the trajectory of his future.

"The college was a step in a different direction for me. I had no experience with the classics, but I was attracted to the seminar style of learning and the democratic principles of the classroom," he recalls, adding that he "discovered philosophy" along the way.

"St. John's was four great years of thinking 'what is this person trying to say? I have never thought along these lines, and I cannot imagine coming up with this idea because it is so alien, so radically new.'"

After graduating from St. John's, Goodacre felt he could help other students to develop their own relationship with "radical ideas." Attracted to UWC's commitment to egalitarianism in education and the diversity of the student body, he joined the faculty of UWC Mahindra, where he spent the first five years of his teaching career. He then taught for four years at UWC Dilijan in Armenia before returning to India.

It was during his time in Dilijan that Goodacre's teaching methods had a profound effect on James Law (SF25).

"I was really struck by the detail in which Liam thinks about things. We would read a sentence from Plato, and he would stimulate a fantastic conversation just around that," says Law, one of two students who attended Goodacre's philosophy class at UWC Dilijan and are now in their second year at St. John's.

"Some teachers stand in this elevated role, but with Liam, you were on common ground. I can see now that he ran his class just like a St. John's class."

Goodacre says that numerous students will invariably ask about his educational background, giving him the opportunity to describe and promote St. John's. "Every year there is at least one student who will respond enthusiastically, and we will sit down and talk for a couple of hours. That student usually ends up going to St. John's."

This was ultimately the case for Law. "I was really curious about how Liam became the thinker that he is, and he told me about the college. We would meet every week to talk."

Law initially succumbed to the temptation to design his own education and spent a year at a college where he could choose from electives—but his conversations with Goodacre continued to reverberate. By the time the pandemic struck in 2020, forcing Law to leave his college campus in Maine, he had already decided he wanted to be at St. John's. With a letter of recommendation from Goodacre, Law applied to St. John's and enrolled at the Santa Fe campus in Fall 2021.

"When I came to St. John's and had my first seminar, I realized 'yes, this is what Liam was trying to emulate in his classroom.'"

Law joined the largest cohort of UWC students to enroll at St. John's in a decade—and entered a Santa Fe freshman class that was the largest in 18 years. These results are especially significant as St. John's, like many small colleges, prepares for a demographic cliff that will see the population of college-age students drop by an estimated 15 percent in the coming years.

"UWC is very helpful to St. John's because it can provide diversity, but you also find people who get what the college is about," Goodacre explains.

The college, in return, has a lot to offer students. "St. John's will give students something they don't

already have, something they can't even imagine," says Goodacre. "I suspect that at a lot of liberal arts colleges, you are getting fed what you already know, or what you already believe. St. John's will challenge students in ways they can't even imagine being challenged."

That desire to be challenged also manifests itself in Goodacre's own approach to education. For years he has taught Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, giving students an opportunity to hear from one of history's most influential female philosophers. Most recently, he helped UWC Mahindra develop a course in which students discuss the implications of slavery, both historical and contemporary, from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Both subjects address emotionally resonant issues that are at the forefront of a global conversation—and Goodacre is convinced these are exactly the kinds of conversations that St. John's gives people of all backgrounds and perspectives the tools to confront.

"There is so much divide these days, and I truly believe that St. John's approach to education can help. It helps us to listen, to find common causes amidst all of the things that pull us apart. It's not an easy thing. But I really do think that St. John's College, more than most educational systems, can help bridge divides." ♦

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**The Class of 2025  
is the largest in  
a decade, and 1 in 4  
of these rising  
sophomores  
learned about  
St. John's College  
from an alum.**

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connect the  
college to the  
next generation  
of Johnnies?*

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[sjc.edu/1alum1referral](http://sjc.edu/1alum1referral)

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# *Summer Classics: A Beautiful Opacity*



KENNETH WOLFE SF94

LEAH LASELL SFGI04

**B**occaccio's *The Decameron* is a collection of one hundred stories that chronicle the whims of fortune and vicissitudes of love. Set in 1348 in a country villa outside of Florence, it features a group of ten young people trading narratives while taking refuge during the aftermath of a plague.

To be sure, the book's theme has a particular resonance in light of our collective relationship to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. But that's not the primary reason Santa Fe tutor Ken Wolfe (SF94) chose it as a featured text for the 2022 session of St. John's Summer Classics.

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Although strongly associated with Santa Fe, Summer Classics is emerging as a collegewide program, with more tutor collaboration, online offerings, and attendees from around the country.

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*The Decameron* is also the first major work of prose literature produced in Italy, a country to which Wolfe has a strong personal connection; he completed both a master's degree in Latin and a PhD in classics from UC Berkeley. "I've had a really long-standing interest in the Mediterranean world, not just the ancient one," he says. "I know Italy, and I love the food, the sound of the language and the music—everything."

Wolfe initially read *The Decameron* during spring break of his junior year at St. John's. "It was just on my own," he says. "I didn't have a chance to have Johnnie-style discussions on the book, but I really got into it and found it delightful."

He began to revisit it last fall and asked Annapolis tutor Leah Lasell (SFGI04) to join him in co-facilitating a Summer Classics seminar on the text. The two had known each other for years and had previously worked together on a collegewide committee.

By his own count, Wolfe has facilitated four or five Summer Classics seminars in the past, leading dis-

cussions on topics ranging from Darwinian theory to Persian poetry. For the 2022 session, he not only collaborated in person with Lasell to discuss *The Decameron* but also teamed up with Annapolis tutor Allison DeWitt for an online seminar, “Reading the Qur'an as Literature.”

This is the first Summer Classics experience for Lasell, who shares Wolfe’s interest in the geographical region and culture of Boccaccio. “I have a grant to study Galileo this year and next year, so I’ve been working on Italian science and philosophy,” she says.

Unsurprisingly, there are a number of factors that might draw tutors to a particular text or work of art for Summer Classics. It could be the appeal of revisiting a Program text with a fresh group of readers or the allure of exploring something new—including films, opera, paintings, or photographs. Sometimes it’s simply committing to a book that has sat for too long on a shelf, untouched, as was the case with Lasell and *The Decameron*.

Of course, the plague theme did play into the two tutors’ choice of text, too.

Says Wolfe of the pandemic, “It’s been a really difficult time for a lot of people in terms of isolation. You might be isolated alone, or you might be isolated with family members, and both situations will have their challenges.”

*The Decameron* can provide an antidote of sorts to that difficulty. “It’s a really fun book,” Lasell says. “A lot of the stories are based on pleasure. There’s sort of an interesting interplay between what’s allowed, with respect to the state and religion, and how people are trying to find pleasure in the crevices there.”

In general, she finds that a text that engenders fruitful discussions is one that can be approached by readers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, which is also the ideal profile of a Summer Classics seminar group.

Alumni accounted for 1 in 5  
Summer Classics participants in 2022.

2022 session) people with a strong personal connection to the college, Summer Classics attendees are immediately immersed in the culture and conventions of a Great Books seminar.

“We do have a lot of repeat participants, and newcomers can learn from people who have done it in the past,” says Wolfe. “They all bring a lot of energy and enthusiasm and freshness to the conversations.”

The desire to connect through ideas is central to a St. John’s education and, some would argue, a defining characteristic of our shared humanity. For Lasell, this notion was reinforced by a story she heard on public radio some years back.

In an interview, an Afghani man spoke of being middle-aged in a war-torn country and recalled how groups of people would get together to read Shakespeare.

Shakespeare remains  
the most widely read author  
in 32 years of Summer Classics.

“It would have been impossible to talk about war directly and about how it affected their lives—it was just too raw,” says Lasell. “But somehow talking about Shakespeare gave them the opacity that they needed to think about their life without thinking about their life. It created this barrier.”

“When we’re reading Boccaccio, we’re talking about post-plague Italy. It’s as if we are not talking about ourselves at all. That allows us to talk about the things that we might want to talk about, but maybe they are too politically tense. Our emotions get too high when we talk about things directly, so this allows us to talk about them indirectly.”

“That’s what St. John’s does so well,” she adds, referring not just to Summer Classics texts but to the Great Books overall. “It provides us not just some opacity, but a beautiful opaque surface.” ♦

Whether they are alumni, lifelong learners, or (as is the case with Lasell’s mother, who registered for the

*How can I  
return to the  
conversations  
I love?*

## *Join fellow seekers for a Year of Classics.*

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Spend a week (or more) among fellow lovers of intellectual inquiry as you delve into texts—as well as visual and cinematic pieces—that you didn’t have time to explore as an undergraduate. Online options are available, or you can attend Summer Classics in person and make Santa Fe your vacation destination.

[sjc.edu/summer-classics](http://sjc.edu/summer-classics)  
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[colloquysjc.com](http://colloquysjc.com)  
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### ***Take in a lecture, Johnnie-style.***

Friday night lectures remain a cherished tradition of the academic year. If you remember what it’s like to see familiar ideas thrust into new light, that experience is still yours to enjoy, free of cost.

Visit [events.sjc.edu](http://events.sjc.edu) for the schedule or watch past lectures on the college’s YouTube channel.

[youtube.com/stjohnscollege](http://youtube.com/stjohnscollege)

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*After graduating from the Graduate Institute, I really missed St. John's—learning through discussion was amazing. To relive this experience, I enrolled in the Year of Classics. These seminars—just an hour and a half a month were wonderfully enriching, with intellectual classmates and insightful tutors who enhanced my learning experience.*

*For anyone seeking to expand their intellectual horizons, I would strongly recommend the Year of Classics as the best way to learn and to exercise your mind.”*

—CATHY FOGEL AGI11

“

*St. John's has remained my diamond test for intellectual engagement, so when I recently became a Johns Hopkins professor, I chose to live in Annapolis, drawn partly by the prospect of Friday night lectures. Anxious that memory's lens would be distorted by the gauze of nostalgia, I attended my first lecture primed for disillusion. But experience exceeded expectation. I arrived at eight and had to stand, while the students had come early, jamming the Great Hall, content to wait and to listen, and then to stay late, eager to ask questions. Whether you're waxing nostalgic or wanting intellectual inspiration, come to a Friday night lecture. But come early. Otherwise, you'll have to stand.”*

—DANIEL H. FOSTER SF90

“

*A week of seminar tends to frame the events in my life. It happened all through the Graduate Institute, and it happened again at Winter Classics. We used the Emily Wilson translation of the Odyssey, and I was so taken with it that I told everyone, including an old friend from the Peace Corps.*

*I said: ‘Dennis, I had a week seminar on the Odyssey. An old guy, after decades of sleeping with goddesses, wants to go home to see his dog, his wife, and his son, and to kill everyone who ever crossed him. His dog wagged his tail before anyone else recognized him.’ Dennis replied that he really likes to get home to see his dog too. Then in April my son's obituary was published. Homer came again: ‘His spirit left his body. Still alive, still seeing the sunlight.’ You have to suffer, but you can get home. Consolation.*

*Whether light-hearted or deadly serious, Winter Classics sticks with you. Come be a part of it again.”*

—W. PETER BALLEAU AGI17



“

*It was August 2020, and I was sitting in the comfort of my own home, after sanitizing groceries in our self-imposed lockdown. I pulled up my email and there was a notice from St. John's College announcing the Eastern Classics Program would be available online. I stared at it, dumbstruck. Finally, after 20 years of wanting to study these texts, a pandemic gave me the chance. We would not sit around a physical table, but we have been participating with each other in tiles across the computer screen from homes and offices all over the world. It worked beautifully! Even Sanskrit, which I am continuing with a special study group...yes, online. Now you too can study practice realization with Dogen, trek through the north with Basho, and translate the Gita. Enjoy!”*

—PAM CARTER SFG108

“

*The Summer Classics in beautiful Santa Fe is a return to the memories, conversations, and friendships of your St. John's experience. I loved my Johnnie experience and Summer Classics allows me to be a Johnnie all over again. Day to day it is very hard to have conversations on the beautiful and true with the nicest of people. Summer Classics is a return to the good life and is the highlight of my summer (perhaps even my year). I am so happy I made the decision to get back to Santa Fe and St. John's. If you loved your St. John's experience, I implore you to get back to the high desert come July. It will be like you never left. You will be instantly hooked all over again!*

*LONG LIVE ST. JOHNS!"*

BILLY GERRISH AGM



# *Supporting our Newest Johnnies*



KIDUS KEBEDE <sup>A20</sup>



CHLOE NIEDZIELSKI <sup>A25</sup>

**W**hen Chloe Niedzielski (A25) arrived on the Annapolis campus of St. John's College in August 2021, she was, like many of her peers, concerned about fitting in, about making friends, and about making mistakes. She felt anxious, and she struggled—with her fears, with the weight of her college decision, and with frustratingly unfamiliar laundry machines.

"I had so many questions," says Niedzielski. "But I was also given the opportunity to ask them. I wasn't just handed a folder and a room key and told 'good luck figuring it out.'"

Niedzielski was among 54 members of the Class of 2025 whose first year on the Annapolis campus began with the Pritzker Promise Bridge Program, an extended orientation experience for qualified incoming students who would like additional preparation prior to the start of the academic year.

The welcome she received is different from the one that Kidus Kebede (A20) remembers.

"Transitioning into the college is tough," says Kebede, St. John's first-year student engagement coordinator, who helps oversee the bridge program in Annapolis. "This is true of any institution, but histori-

cally St. John's has not had a focus on easing that transition, particularly for students who are already at a disadvantage."

Six years ago, Kebede was a first-year student with challenges of his own. He came to St. John's as an international student and found an education that immediately captivated him—and an institution that took longer to love.

"After the first few weeks, you were mostly left to fend for yourself," he recalls. "I was midway through my sophomore year before I finally gained my footing. Looking back now, I feel like I wasn't necessarily set up for success."

But that was then. Today, he says, the college is taking a more proactive approach to student support, spurred in part by constructive feedback from alumni.

"Instead of waiting for students to walk into offices and say, 'I am struggling,' we are creating communication bridges between students, staff, and faculty from day one," Kebede explains. "Students feel more connected to the school and to the administration and not left to fend for themselves."

Kebede describes the Pritzker Promise Bridge Program as a core component of a collegewide effort to help students succeed at St. John's.

Funded through a *Freeing Minds* campaign gift from the Jay Pritzker Foundation, the bridge program is meant to address the distinctive needs of new students whose backgrounds and circumstances could potentially serve as obstacles to academic success. On both campuses, eligible students include those who qualify for federal Pell Grant assistance, students who are the first in their families to attend college, and international students.

"There are some social drawbacks and risk factors that come with being a part of these demographics," Kebede explains. He says the bridge program helps to mitigate those factors by giving participants more time to adjust to campus, access to a social safety net, and an extensive overview of available resources.

What it does not do, Kebede assures, is downplay the realities of a tough course load or the demands of the St. John's classroom. Participants hear about long

nights and long papers from peer mentors who offer a candid—and uncompromising—view of Johnnie life.

"Peer mentors are specifically instructed to represent the college as honestly as they can," Kebede says. "And that's important, because while new students might think they are going to leave every seminar with a sort of glow, that isn't reality. There are frustrating conversations, and students need to hear about them."

Luke Widenhouse (A25) participated in the 2021 bridge program as an incoming freshman and says

the peer mentors offered a "no holds barred perspective" that prepared him for the classroom more than any other discussion he had. "It's one thing to hear from a member of the administration, but it's another thing to hear about the version of St. John's that might be different in real life than it is on paper, to learn what actually does or doesn't work in the classroom."

In 2021, eight students served as peer mentors in Annapolis; this year the campus has ten. Both Niedzielski and Widenhouse, now sophomores, are among them.

"It wasn't long ago that I was filled with questions, and now I have some answers to share with the next generation of Johnnies," says Niedzielski. "I

can help them understand that you won't reach your destination all at once, but you will get closer and closer until the other side isn't overwhelming anymore."

Widenhouse adds, "I am passionate about this school and want to do my part in giving back to it."

Their enthusiasm is representative of what Kebede sees as a broader collegewide culture shift, one that calls for more collective accountability in helping all members of the St. John's community feel connected to the college.

"Every student who signs their name in the book during Convocation deserves to be set up for success, because that is the core of our message, that a liberal arts education should be available to anyone who seeks it."

"Being a part of that is fulfilling." ♦

# *Internships Connect the Lab to Life*



SUSMI SHARMA SF21

**E**very summer, St. John's students fan out across the globe to gain valuable onsite work experience through the Hodson Internships, which are based in Annapolis, and the Ariel Internships, based in Santa Fe.

Students who are interested in these summer opportunities work with the Career Services Office in Annapolis or the Office of Personal and Professional Development (OPPD) in Santa Fe to identify locations and programs that align with their goals—or tap into budding interests. The right match can give students a deeper understanding of their post-graduate choices and provide an edge as they seek employment.

The experience can also foster deeper relationships between students, alumni, and the college.

When Susmi Sharma (SF21) was awarded an internship during her senior year, she sought to explore her growing interest in neuroscience and psychology. Piér Quintana, assistant director at OPPD, introduced Sharma to Dr. Taffeta Elliott (SF97), assistant professor of psychology and education at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, known locally as New Mexico Tech.

Elliott was interested in hosting a student intern in her lab and, as an alum, was familiar with the advantages that St. John's students can bring to experimental research.

"Susmi had a great can-do approach to lab work that might have been tedious to students who have less insight about their own motivations or the value of using empirical study to test strong claims," says Elliott. "She also had an advantage in that she understood clearly how her senior essay work on Nietzsche was related to psychological research on self-perception and metacognition."

Sharma's internship with Dr. Elliott involved two distinct research projects that took her into the seemingly disparate—but perhaps not too dissimilar—brains of South African clawed frogs and college students.

The first study looked at how frogs use an assortment of hormones, nonverbal cues, and vocal communication to mediate their behavior and their social decisions. The other study explored the learning strategies that are most effective for college students

who are pursuing majors in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

"The questions we were persistently asking were 'why do most of us spend hours using ineffective learning strategies like highlighting or rereading text?'" explains Sharma. The assistance she provided during her internship will help researchers to understand why students continue to rely on unproductive strategies and how educators can promote more effective ones.

Sharma now works full time as a research assistant at the University of Minnesota's Department of Neuroscience, where she continues to nurture her interest in the neural underpinnings of human behavior.

"My initial fascination with neuroscience deepened after my hands-on internship," says Sharma. "Before I interned with Dr. Elliott, I was questioning my decision to some extent: I did not know how or even if I could really help people by doing experiments and computational work."

"The internship opened my eyes, made me see that the task of a researcher is to understand the problem and then connect the experiments to real people's lives."

Alumni who are in a position to host a summer intern are encouraged to find out how a current student can enrich the workplace—and how hosting a student can enrich their own relationship to the college.

"Mentoring Johnnies keeps me connected to St. John's," says Elliott. "Susmi brought energy to our summer projects, and she brought great conversations." ♦

A collegewide survey of St. John's alumni shows that nearly 20 percent of graduates have pursued careers in STEM or a related area, such as healthcare.

#### YOUR GENEROSITY CAN OPEN THE DOOR TO A STUDENT'S CAREER.

Summer internships at St. John's are funded entirely through philanthropic support, making them more accessible to students who depend on paid summer work. Reach out to [development@sjc.edu](mailto:development@sjc.edu) to learn how you can help more Johnnies benefit from an internship.

# *Alumni Couple Bring Their Johnnie Perspective to Life*



ELI CASTRO <sup>SF94</sup>

TRACY LOCKE CASTRO <sup>SF95</sup>

Eli Castro (SF94) and Tracy Locke (SF95) Castro created a life and a legacy from their pursuit of knowledge of the Great Books at St. John's College. Their daughters Ella and Clarissa attended Summer Academy on both campuses. Ella just graduated from American University, and Clarissa will join the Santa Fe freshman class this fall.

"When the parents are Johnnies, we're always going to be talking about books," says Eli, a Deloitte executive. "This helps us have great conversations because we have a common language."

Tracy, an independent web developer, adds: "Up until middle school, we read stories out loud, including the children's Homer." She remembers the girls exclaiming, "We're on our Odyssey!" as they played.

Tracy grew up on a rural Texas cattle ranch and attended a boarding high school in Dallas, Texas, where one of her teachers knew about the Great Books program. "I found a St. John's brochure at a career fair and thought, 'I am at the beginning of my life, and I want to know the answers to the big questions; but the books are right there in the library.'" To help her de-

termine whether the college was right for her, Tracy visited St. John's, attended seminar, and was "amazed" at how the conversations continued late into the night. "It felt so authentic...the blurring of your academic life and your personal life, hiking in the mountains together," she says.

She and Eli became friends at St. John's and after graduation they married and settled in Texas to raise a family. Both say they could not have predicted their future careers. Tracy's post-graduation journey initially led her into public health nursing and teaching at the University of Texas at Austin. After enjoying some time as a stay-at-home mom, she is now focused on graphic design, web design, and web development. "Our path is not straightforward," Tracy says. "St. John's is an education for the whole person. It helps you learn who you want to be, and the skills you can get later."

Soon after St. John's, Eli began working toward a PhD in economics at the University of Wisconsin, a direction he quickly discovered was not right for him. "This isn't working for me; do we have any leads?" he

asked Jennifer Chenoweth (SFGI95), who was then head of the Career Services Office in Annapolis. She put him in touch with Aaron Rosenbaum (A89), who operated a small consulting business that worked with government clients. One week later, Eli moved to Washington, DC.

"Absolutely, St. John's got me that job," says Eli, who began his consulting career through that fortuitous introduction to a fellow Johnnie. He subsequently earned an MBA from the University of Texas and in 2005 joined professional services company Deloitte, where he serves as a managing director focusing on higher education clients.

The couple says their passion for St. John's inspired their two daughters to take an interest in the college, with both daughters attending Summer Academy during their high school years.

Eli is confident that their eldest daughter, Ella, benefitted from her Summer Academy experience even though she eventually chose a different college. "I think discourse—civil discourse—matters as much when doing a public policy degree at American University as it does when talking about books," he explains. "Approaching conversations about ideas in a certain inclusive way—is listening to and responding to what people are saying—that absolutely has value. Summer Academy gives a little window into that. Clarissa loved the St. John's conversations, and there never really was another choice even though she was accepted at other schools."

Eli's dedication to St. John's has also inspired him to think about ways to connect the college to students outside of his own family. He recently participated in an online workshop in which he and fellow alumni met with newly admitted students and addressed some of the most commonly asked questions: How do employers view St. John's? What is the relevancy to the work world? Can one get into a good graduate school after St. John's?

"The answers were incredibly easy," says Eli. "When you head out from St. John's, you don't have a direction; you're just a college graduate," he recalls. "Imagine a big meadow, and there's no path through

it. All of us who are on the other side have figured out a path. It's really cloudy when you try to look forward; it's obvious when you look backward," he explains. "Anyone can share their story to help make the post-graduate journey seem a little less scary, and that can be impactful," he adds.

Eli notes that the college now offers students more direct career preparation. "St. John's summer internship program sets the bar in education," he says. "And I work with higher education all the time."

"The world is changing, evolving, and so is St. John's," adds Tracy. "The core of St. John's is still there with

the Great Books programs, but now there are many activities and career preparation opportunities that make St. John's even better," she says. "While I feel strongly that being an undergraduate isn't about getting a skill so you can find a job, we do have to get jobs."

Alumni, Eli asserts, are motivated to support current students for various reasons, including a desire to perpetuate the distinctive and transformational experience they enjoyed. "St. John's exists in a world that is becoming more and more specialized, so our college is becoming more and more unique," he says. "The Program allows people to learn to think in a way

that's difficult to learn in other places."

"If you're the beneficiary of a beautiful experience like St. John's, you owe it to the world to make sure it exists for those who come after you," he concludes. "That's how it is for me." ♦

“  
Anyone can share  
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a little less scary,  
and that can be  
impactful.  
”

—ELI CASTRO SF94

#### IS YOUR TEENAGER CURIOUS ABOUT THE ST. JOHN'S EXPERIENCE?

Children of alumni can enjoy a week of Summer Academy at half the price. Ask them to note on the application that they have a parent who is an alum.

[sjc.edu/summer-academy](http://sjc.edu/summer-academy)

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help fellow  
Johnnies find  
their paths?*

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with current students.*

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As an alumni volunteer, you can provide support for a spectrum of career-oriented opportunities at every commitment level, from short conversations about your career path to participation in a panel or presentation, to mentorships that support students throughout their job search process.

Visit [sjc.edu/career-contacts](http://sjc.edu/career-contacts) to let the college know how you can help.

## *Contemplating a career change?*

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St. John's offers personalized career coaching that is free of charge to alumni. The college can guide you through self-assessments, interview prep, and strategies for negotiating an offer—without the high cost of a private coach.

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connect with them both to elevate  
opportunities outside the local  
campus areas.

# *On Reading, Religion, Redemption, and Reasons for Giving*



**MARK JORDAN** SF73

*The following content has been excerpted from an interview with Mark Jordan, R.R. Niebuhr Research Professor at Harvard Divinity School. Please visit [sjc.edu/mark-jordan](http://sjc.edu/mark-jordan) to read the full interview.*

## **How did you find your way to St. John's?**

I had an intense religious conversion right before I went to St. John's. I landed in Annapolis as a fairly young February freshman, ready to do work on Christian tradition, the relation of theology to philosophy, and, especially, ethics.

Having dropped out of high school, St. John's was my gamble. I remember getting the admissions letter a few days before Christmas and thinking, "Oh

good, I'm not going to be flipping burgers. I can go to college." Looking back, it is especially interesting that when I graduated from Santa Fe, the prep school from which I had dropped out graciously awarded me an honorary high school diploma.

## **What stands out from your initial experience of the Program?**

One of the things St. John's instilled in me was the courage to follow questions wherever they lead and not to worry about the property signs that people put up to fence off certain areas. So I started reading and just kept going. In high school, I'd been reading Thomas Aquinas and I continued to do so as a first-year student, but I also fell in love with the way Plato is read at St John's.

My senior paper at St. John's was on Thomas Aquinas and Plato. The advisor who was reading it told me that it was interesting but two times longer than it needed to be—and he was right! I went on to do a dissertation on the doctrine of creation in Thomas, on how God can be read through the creation.

## **Are there any memories from your time in Santa Fe that strike you differently now?**

When I was at St. John's there was passionate discussion about how the curriculum was or was not related to the arts and literature, because among the students and faculty there were people who wrote

novels and poems, or people who painted and threw pots and photographed morning light on chamisa (my fixation at the time). How could we include those arts within the Program?

I remember sitting one day in the dining hall in Santa Fe and thinking, “We don’t have to include them. They already include us!” We were surrounded by this jaw-dropping beauty, and looking back now, I realize that part of what held me in place to do the work was the gift of being able to read powerful books in this theater of beauties. Trying to write those beauties has become more and more important to me—so I take that moment in the dining hall as a premonition.

#### **How do you characterize your ongoing relationship with your St. John’s education?**

I’m one of those people for whom the St. John’s curriculum was exactly right. It gave me ways of reading and teaching and writing that I have used for the rest of my life. I still own the copies of Plato and Aristotle that I bought the first day I was on campus at Annapolis. I still use them to teach. So I feel a daily connection to the work of the college.

#### **How did you and your husband, Bill, decide what kind of gift to make to St. John’s?**

As a college teacher, I’ve never had a lot of money to give. That was the motive for making a bequest or planned gift. We’re not raising children, we don’t have family obligations, so we are free to say, “Here’s

what we’ve accumulated. When the time comes, put it to good use.”

The college was really clear that if Bill and I wanted to designate the money for particular purposes we could. But having spent my entire life in colleges and universities, I know that an overly specific gift can rapidly become an albatross. So that’s why we decided to give our money for whatever general purposes the college deemed important. If we didn’t trust the college to make that discernment, we wouldn’t be giving the money.

#### **How do you hope your gift will support the college in the future?**

As a teacher, you learn over time that how you articulate your questions today or this semester can change dramatically. Still, underneath, there’s a current that flows, that continues to feed you through your teaching and writing.

I feel that about the college, too. There may be—will almost certainly be—many changes in the articulation of the curriculum, but what I want to support is the current underneath. If you believe that the kind of work St. John’s does reaches deeply into human capacities or needs or pursuits, then that work will be important as long as there are humans.

I look forward into a future that I really can’t discern. I have no idea what the college’s curriculum is going to look like in a hundred years, but I very much hope that St. John’s will be around to provide fundamental education. ♦

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#### **THE MOST MEANINGFUL GIFT YOU GIVE TO ST. JOHN’S DOESN’T HAVE TO BE THE ONE THAT COMES STRAIGHT FROM YOUR POCKET.**

It can be the gift of your legacy, given on behalf of the students to come. By including St. John’s in your estate plans, you can have a tremendous impact on the future of the college—often at little or no cost to you today. Visit [sjc.giftplans.org](http://sjc.giftplans.org) to start planning your legacy.

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#### **IS ST. JOHN’S ALREADY IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS?**

Email [plannedgiving@sjc.edu](mailto:plannedgiving@sjc.edu) and let the college know. Documenting your intentions will ensure that your gift is used exactly as you want it to. This important step also allows the college to say “thank you” through St. John’s Forever: The Legacy Society of St. John’s College.

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*How can I  
support  
St. John's  
with my giving?*

## *Challenge your classmates to make a difference.*

### **Make the Annual Fund a yearly priority.**

Regular annual giving is the best way to support everything you care about at St. John's: every student, every tutor, every conversation, and every need. Through monthly recurring gifts and multi-year pledges, you can spread your commitment over time and make a significant difference at a manageable level.

[sjc.edu/annual-fund](http://sjc.edu/annual-fund)

You lived together, ate together, and learned together. Now you can make a difference together—and you don't have to wait until your reunion year to do so. November 29 marks St. John's fifth year of participation in GivingTuesday, the national day of giving. Challenge the members of your graduating class to make a gift and offer to match a certain amount when they do. If a fellow classmate offers a challenge—step up to meet it. The results do make a difference. During GivingTuesday 2021, the St. John's community collectively raised more than \$200,000 to benefit students and the Program.

## *Invest in the campus experience.*

Through the \$25 million Pritzker Challenge, St. John's is preparing both campuses for future generations of seekers. When you make a gift in support of campus improvements, the Jay Pritzker Foundation will match every \$2 of your gift with another \$1.

[sjc.edu/pritzker-challenge](http://sjc.edu/pritzker-challenge)

## *Connect your legacy to that of the college.*

The most straightforward way to include St. John's in your personal legacy is by naming the college as the beneficiary of a gift from your estate. Taking this step can be as simple as adding one sentence to an existing will. By combining a legacy gift with regular support for the Annual Fund, you can make a profound difference in the lives of current and future students—at a level that makes sense for you today.

Visit [sjc.giftplans.org](http://sjc.giftplans.org) to get started.



## *Find out if your employer will match your gift.*

Your employer or your spouse's employer could offer a matching gift program that will double or even triple the value of your gift.

Check out the matching gift tool at the website below to see if your company participates.

[sjc.edu/matching-gift](http://sjc.edu/matching-gift)

## *Honor your St. John's education with a reunion gift.*

By commemorating your milestone reunion year with a gift to the college, you and your classmates can help more students benefit from a St. John's education.

[sjc.edu/reunion-giving](http://sjc.edu/reunion-giving)

ST. JOHN'S

# *Day of Gratitude & Reunion Weekend*

A NEW ANNUAL  
TRADITION BEGINS



## Santa Fe   Annapolis

FRI SEPTEMBER 9  
& SAT SEPTEMBER 10

FRI SEPTEMBER 23  
& SAT SEPTEMBER 24

This fall St. John's begins a new tradition of uniting our most dedicated volunteers, ambassadors, and donors with our class reunion gatherings for a weekend of in-person celebration.

### FRIDAY

#### *Learn about your impact and let the college thank you.*

Both campuses will host a full day of events for alumni, friends, and student leaders who advance the mission of the college through their volunteerism, advocacy, and gifts.

### SATURDAY

#### *Celebrate a milestone... together.*

This year, in conjunction with the Day of Gratitude, St. John's will welcome back to campus our 10-, 25-, and 50-year reunion classes, including those alumni who were not able to celebrate in person in 2020 and 2021.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEKEND

- ❖ Seminars ❖ Gratitude Lunch ❖ Inaugural Freeing Minds Society Induction Ceremony
- ❖ Campus Tours ❖ Dean's Lecture ❖ Lunch with Faculty ❖ Intellectual Programming ❖ Reunion Class Dinners

Reach out to [alumni@sjc.edu](mailto:alumni@sjc.edu) for more information.

# *St. John's is profoundly grateful for alumni whose gifts of time and resources enable the college to...*

## **KEEP TUITION REASONABLE**

Through widespread support for the *Freeing Minds* campaign, the college cut tuition by one-third in 2019, making St. John's one of the most affordable colleges in the Small College Consortium. The modest increase that takes place in Fall 2022 is substantially below the annual rate of inflation, due in significant part to the continued generosity of alumni.

## **BALANCE THE BUDGET**

After years of running a structural deficit that peaked at \$12 million, St. John's is now entering its third consecutive fiscal year with a structurally balanced budget.

## **ATTRACT A GROWING COMMUNITY OF SEEKERS**

Alumni are sharing the message that St. John's College offers a life-changing experience. The Class of 2025 was the largest in a decade, and one in four of these rising sophomores learned about St. John's from an alum.

## **EARN A POSITIVE CREDIT RATING**

S&P Global raised their outlook for St. John's from stable to positive—a strong vote of confidence from a highly regarded credit rating agency. Alumni support is one of the factors they considered

when determining that St. John's is a good place for an investment.

## **SUPPORT STUDENTS IN THEIR CAREER GOALS**

Alumni said that St. John's must do more to help students prepare for post-graduate life—and then stepped forward to offer that help. More than 2,500 alumni have raised their hands through [sjcconnect.com](http://sjcconnect.com) and signaled their willingness to have a conversation about their career paths.

## **INVEST IN STUDENTS**

The St. John's Endowment consists of invested gifts that yield an annual revenue stream for the college. For the past two years, that income stream has been equivalent to \$11,000 in annual support for every Johnnie.

## **REDUCE OUR DEPENDENCE ON TUITION**

St. John's new financial model, bolstered by the *Freeing Minds* campaign, makes generosity more important than tuition. In 2021, philanthropy covered nearly 40 percent of the cost to deliver the Program, removing a heavy burden from the shoulders of students.

## **ASSIST 90 PERCENT OF STUDENTS WITH TUITION COSTS**

St. John's ability to keep tuition

reasonable and still provide students with more than \$14 million in additional aid is the direct result of alumni support for the college's philanthropy-centered financial model.

*The college thanks you for all of the above. Your gifts, volunteerism, and advocacy have made these results possible in a higher education environment where they are rare.*

## **BE A PART OF ST. JOHN'S GIVING SOCIETIES**

St. John's two distinctive giving societies recognize transformative acts of generosity.

The *Freeing Minds* Society honors alumni and friends who have made an epic commitment to St. John's College through cumulative lifetime giving of \$100,000 or more.

St. John's Forever: The Legacy Society of St. John's College celebrates alumni and friends who have linked their legacies to that of the college through the commitment of a future estate gift.

## SELECTED NOTES FROM CLASSMATES

**1967**

In July 2021, **Ronald Kephart** (A) retired from 32 years of teaching anthropology (linguistic, cultural, and biological) at the University of North Florida.

**1977**

The pandemic gave **Ellen (Hamilton) O'Donnell** (A) time and space to reignite her art practice. She found a wonderful teacher to shepherd this process via a second alma mater, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She's in a virtual art group, has a studio, and is engaged in making again.

**1982**

This August, **Marion (Betor) Baumgarten** (A) and **Jon Baumgarten** (A) will have been married 40 years! They are both retired from the federal government and reside in the Chicago area.

**Leslie (Smith) Rosen** (A) and **James Hyder '84** (A) have moved to a seaside cottage in MA to help take care of Leslie's mother and to enjoy the next steps of their life's journey with children and grandchildren not far away.

**1987**

**Ele Hamburger** (A) is happily living in Seattle with her husband and three teenagers, who constantly keep them on their toes. She is a partner at a small plaintiff-side civil rights and class action law firm, where she focuses on health care and health coverage issues. She would love to visit with

friends who are passing through the Pacific Northwest.

**1992**

**Captain George Dolan** (SF), U.S. Navy, completed a three-year tour as naval attaché to South Korea in June and is now serving on the Navy staff in the Pentagon. He welcomes inquiries from any Johnnies considering a career in the military.

**2002**

**Sara Abercrombie** (SF) is an associate professor and department chair in the Department of Educational Psychology at Northern Arizona University. She was awarded the NAU President's Distinguished Teaching Fellowship in 2021, a recognition of the highest level of teaching excellence and positive impact at NAU and beyond.

**Kate Jordan** (SF) lives with partner Jeremy and daughters Esme (4) and Oona (1) in Oakland, CA. Kate serves as a chief financial officer for UC Berkeley and loves to garden.

**2012**

**Brandon Carney** (A) got married in August 2021 and transitioned into finance from scientific research in January.

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### LET YOUR CLASSMATES HEAR FROM YOU!

If your class year ends in a 3 or 8, email [alumni@sjc.edu](mailto:alumni@sjc.edu) to include your news in the next alumni magazine.

PHOTOS ARE WELCOME!

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# ALUMNI WEEK

[sjc.edu/alumni-week](http://sjc.edu/alumni-week)

*Memories that  
take you back.*

*Conversations  
that carry  
you forward.*

*No travel required.*

**A**s St. John's alumni, our connections to one another are not bound by time or place—and shouldn't be. After all, the texts we read and the questions we ask transcend generations and geography.

The physical separation we have experienced over the past two years has given rise to more inclusive ways of being together. Alumni Week is one example—and one that St. John's began exploring even before the pandemic emerged. Through this annual virtual gathering, alumni from around the world can enjoy intellectual engagement and community, but with fewer barriers to participation. Greater access means more opportunities to catch up with classmates and tutors, rekindle conversations, and reconnect with the college and one another.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM ALUMNI WEEK 2022

*A variety of tutor and alumni-led presentations show that the life of the mind need not dwell solely in the classics or in the classroom. There are treasures to be found in unexpected places, from Tolkien's Middle-earth to your own comfortable kitchen.*

If you missed Alumni Week 2022 this past June, or want to relive a moment that challenged your thinking, visit [sjc.edu/alumni-week](http://sjc.edu/alumni-week) to enjoy the following highlights.

## *Beyond the Classroom: The Mystery of Gollum*

Gollum is perhaps the greatest villain of *The Lord of the Rings*—and maybe its most tragic hero. Who is Gollum? Why is he so central to the novel? Join tutors Krishnan Venkatesh and Richard McCombs to dive deeper into the intricate world of J. R. R. Tolkien.

## *JohnnieTalks*

A game designer, a pediatric neurologist, and a tech entrepreneur talk about life's turning points—what they mean, how to live them, and how they can change everything.

## *Beyond the Classroom: Living the Program*

Tutors are the more senior students and role models of our St. John's community, but what does it really look like to live the Program? Take a sneak peek into the lives of beloved tutors beyond the classroom. Hear their wisdom on balance, integration, and following *thumos* on the road, in the kitchen, and everywhere in between.

## *Alumni Association Awards*

Every year the Alumni Association welcomes honorary members into our ranks and bestows the Award of Merit on those alumni who are elevating the profile of the college through their lives, careers, and contributions to the Great Conversation. Hear their stories and celebrate their achievements.

## *In Memoriam*

Join your St. John's community as we recognize the Johnnie chairs that now sit empty. Together we honor those Johnnies who have passed, leaving us with moments and memories to cherish.

# *In Memoriam*

St. John's College remembers the alumni, staff, faculty, and leadership who passed away during the 2021-2022 academic year. Together we celebrate the impact of their lives and legacies on our Johnnie community.

Donald S. Kaplan (Class of 1945)	Charles Coaston (SFGI76)
Clarence R. Morris (Class of 1948)	Jeffrey B. Shea (A76)
Carolyn Banks-Leeuwenburgh (Class of 1955)	Terence A. Teachout (A78)
John Joanou (Class of 1955)	Joan F. Vinson (AGI81)
Barbara D. Winiarski (Class of 1955)	Nicholas M. Ossorgin (SF85)
Nancy Eagle Lindley (Class of 1958)	Toni Wilkinson (SFGI87)
Mary Campbell Gallagher (Class of 1960)	Elizabeth Malmgren (AGI88)
Lloyd H. Byassee (Class of 1961)	Anna A. McManus (SFGI91)
Natalie Silitch (Class of 1961)	Amanda E. Richards (SF91)
Jeffrey P. Escoffier (Class of 1964)	Leo P. Kelley (SF93)
Richard E. Roderick (Class of 1966)	Raymond R. Ames (A94)
Margaret Winter (Class of 1966)	Brian C. Bowman (SFGI94)
Leslie S. Bornstein (SF68)	Michael A. Miller (A94)
Robert A. Fielding (A68)	Glenn Freitas (H04), Santa Fe Faculty Emeritus
William J. Cromartie (SF69)	Katherine L. Harper (H06)
Patricia A. Turner (SFGI69)	Tova R. LeCuyer (A14)
Richard A. Treacy (SFGI70)	Frederick C. Foote (SF15)
Anthony Vitto (A70)	Carmen Harrell (H15)
David C. Chute (A72)	Michael A. Thomas (A15)
Fred Mattis (A73)	Charles S. Trefrey (H19)
Gene F. Taylor (SFGI75)	Charlie H. McKenzie (SF21)

*This listing includes those who have passed between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.*

*We care deeply for all members of our college community. If you know  
of fellow Johnnies who have passed away but are missing from this list, please  
contact [advancement@sjc.edu](mailto:advancement@sjc.edu) so we may honor those individuals.*

# *Alumni Association* *Honorees 2022*

Honorees are selected each year by the Alumni Association Board of Directors and recognized for their pursuit of and success in leading examined lives, as well as their steadfast commitment to the St. John's College community. During Alumni Week 2022, the college and the Alumni Association honored the following recipients of the Award of Merit, Volunteer Service Award, and Honorary Alumni designations.

## **AWARD OF MERIT HONOREES**

For distinguished and meritorious service to the United States, to their native state, to St. John's College, or for outstanding achievement within a chosen field.

**Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš (A88) – for extraordinary advocacy of freedom and democracy and service to the people of Latvia as prime minister.** Kariņš is the prime minister of Latvia. He may be the only Johnnie alumnus to date to serve as head of state of a sovereign nation. As a freshman in 1984, Kariņš received an honorable mention for the best freshman essay, an honor he has touted throughout his adult life. He continued his education

at the University of Pennsylvania, earning a PhD in linguistics.

Kariņš later moved to Latvia, where he was first elected to Latvia's Parliament in 2002, and in 2009 was elected to serve as a member of the European Parliament. He became prime minister in 2019 and has led one of the longest serving Latvian governments in modern history. As prime minister, Kariņš has been an outspoken advocate for freedom and democracy, arguing that “Democracy is contagious. It is an attractive idea because it is the people, not autocrats, who decide who runs the country and in which direction to move.”

**Pedro Martinez-Fraga (A84) – for achievement in the field of law and international relations.**

Pedro J. Martinez-Fraga is a renowned international lawyer. He is a partner at Bryan, Cave, Leighton, and Paisner, where he co-leads the firm's international arbitration team and is a World Bank arbitrator. He served as lead U.S. counsel on behalf of the Republic of Chile in the case against former Chilean president, Augusto Pinochet, and has also worked on the prosecutions of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and deposed Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

His writings in the fields of public and private international law have been published in 15 coun-

tries and five languages, including more than 50 reviewed articles and six books. Martinez-Fraga has lectured at more than 30 universities across the globe and is an honorary professor of law at both the Universidad de San Ignacio de Loyola and the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima, Perú.

**Boaz Roth (AGI92) – for achievement in the field of education.**  
Boaz has dedicated his life to teaching in the St. John's mode. He is chair of the English department at Thomas Jefferson School in St. Louis, where he has taught English, Greek, and math for almost 30 years and coached basketball for more than 20 seasons. The school has small, seminar-based discussions in every discipline and boasts that its average student will have read 80 works of classic literature by graduation. His school's basketball court has ἀρετή painted on its floor and a local newspaper once found it noteworthy to state that "The varsity basketball team huddles with coach Boaz Roth, then springs back and yells, full-throated: 'Arete!' This is how one cheers at Thomas Jefferson School."

In addition to his master's degree from St. John's, where he is remembered both for his focus as a student and his drive as a basketball player, Roth earned a BA with a double major in philosophy and economic theory from the American University.

**John Ruskey (SF90) – for achievement in the arts and exploration.**

John Ruskey is a river guide, adventurer, canoe builder, artist, and Bluesman. He conducts workshops on ecological education, runs camps for local children, and, with his company, the Quapaw Canoe Company, leads canoe tours on the Mississippi River. He and fellow alumni once co-led a seminar on Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—while traveling on the mighty Mississippi itself. One of his long running projects is [rivergator.org](http://rivergator.org), an all-encompassing internet and print resource providing detailed instructions for paddling the Mississippi River between St. Louis and the Gulf of Mexico.

Ruskey was the first curator of the Delta Blues Museum; is the co-founder and director of the Delta Blues Education Fund; and has written a monthly column, "Down in the Delta," for *Blues Revue* since 1998. In 1997, he won the Early Wright Blues Heritage Award, presented to a non-musician for outstanding work to preserve, promote, perpetuate, and document blues in the Mississippi Delta.

**VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS**

**Chelsea Adams (A12)**

Adams began volunteering for the college and the Alumni Association soon after she graduated in 2012. Her service includes ten years on the Alumni Giving Council, the Alumni Leadership Forum, the Admissions Working Group, and the Awards Committee. She has also volunteered with Summer Academy, the online Great Books Summer Seminar Series, and at numerous college fairs. In addition, she has served as class chair for the Annapolis Class of 2012. Adams is known to both college and Alumni Association leadership as a cheerful and tireless volunteer. Her service in all facets of alumni volunteerism is extraordinary.

**Claiborne Booker (A84)**

Booker has given the college and the Alumni Association years of cheerful and diligent service. He was elected by the college's alumni to the Board of Visitors and Governors in 2011 for a three-year term, which was extended for an additional two years. After he completed his tenure on the board, he immediately began four years of service on the Alumni Association Board from 2016-20, leading our volunteer efforts to support annual giving. Booker is like Aeneas, "duty-bound, and known" in the service of St. John's.

## HONORARY ALUMNI

### Michael Bechko

Mike Bechko is the network and telephone systems coordinator on the Santa Fe campus and joined the college's IT department in May, 1999. Of Bechko, it is said that "his ready smile, great sense of humor, incomparable dependability, and relaxed demeanor make it possible for us to face technology's continued stressors. Nothing rattles Mike: as one staff member notes, she's never heard him yell, 'though there are many times when he should have.'"

In his life outside the office, Bechko enjoys engaging in new forms of exercise and approaches to well-being; and he steadfastly believes in the importance of using one's brain for other-than-work activities.

### Cara Sabolcik

Cara Sabolcik was a vital part of the Greenfield Library staff on the Annapolis campus for 21 years, most recently serving as the associate library director until 2021. Sabolcik was instrumental in establishing the college's digital archives and digitized the library's audiovisual collection. It was Sabolcik who confirmed that W. E. B. Du Bois gave a lecture on the Annapolis campus, an event which became the basis for a collegewide celebration this year.

Sabolcik's service to St. John's also includes various appointments on the Staff Council and in numerous faculty, undergraduate, and Graduate Institute study groups through the years. In the great-

er community, Sabolcik served as chair and vice chair of the Maryland Interlibrary Loan Group, thereby enabling access to books otherwise not readily available to St. John's College and making the Greenfield Library more widely known as a participating peer institution.

### Susan Shamos

Dr. Susan Shamos is the founder of The Centus School Counseling Program, which places experienced counselors and social workers in schools that otherwise would not have enough access to high-quality mental health services for students. Together with her husband, Jeremy (SFGI76), Shamos has been a supporter and benefactor for multiple arts organizations throughout Denver and the state of Colorado. Shamos and Jeremy led Denver's efforts to host the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention, a gathering of 5,000 U.S. and international artists and arts professionals.

Notably, Shamos has participated in Summer Classics at the college for over three decades. She and Jeremy are among the top 15 lifetime donors to the college, inspiring others to join them in philanthropy and enriching the college community by gifting substantial works of art for public spaces on campus. Shamos has served on the college's Board of Visitors and Governors since 2016.

### Mark Sinnett

Mark Sinnett served as a tutor at St. John's College from 2000-2020. In this role, he drew upon his background in mathematics

and theology, having received his doctorate in mathematics from the University of Texas at Austin, as well as a PhD in systematic theology from Cambridge University. Prior to coming to St. John's, Sinnett was a lecturer in mathematics at Concordia Lutheran College, Kansas University, and San Jacinto College. He is also a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church, having served as minister at the First Presbyterian Church, Stephenville, Texas, and as a senior minister at Clemmons Presbyterian Church in Clemmons, North Carolina. Sinnett had the honor of being a visiting scholar at St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1997.

A beloved tutor, Sinnett was overwhelmingly chosen by the graduating Class of 2022 to be their graduation speaker.

# *How can I stay connected and informed?*

Don't let the alumni magazine  
be your only source of  
updates on the college and  
your classmates.

## *Bookmark the college website.*

*Read the  
award-winning  
Annual Report.*

Recognized by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, St. John's 2021 Annual Report to Alumni and Friends boldly claims that the college is stronger than ever—and delivers the evidence.

[sjc.edu/annual-report](http://sjc.edu/annual-report)

*Come home  
for a visit.*

If you live nearby, come grab a snack at the coffee shop, check out a book from the library, or just stroll around and see the campus improvement projects that are taking place in both Annapolis and Santa Fe.

If the passage of time has put physical distance between you and our two campuses, make a plan to visit. Our first annual Day of Gratitude would be a great time to get reacquainted with your once and always home.

*Follow St. John's  
on social media.*

The college has an active presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Visit [sjc.edu/social-media](http://sjc.edu/social-media) for links to all of these accounts and more.

**Sjc.edu** isn't just for current and future students. Alumni can also find a wealth of content, from thought-provoking podcasts and recorded lectures to profiles of fellow alumni.

*Update your  
email.*

If the college does not have your current email, you are missing out on news, invitations, and intellectual content from the college. Here are three options for updating your contact information:

1.

**Fill out the enclosed envelope  
and mail it back to the college**

2

Visit [sjc.edu/alumni-update](http://sjc.edu/alumni-update) to update your information online

3.

Scan the QR code below

Update your information  
by November 14, 2022 and  
be entered to win one  
of six gift cards, valued up  
to \$500, to the St. John's  
College bookstores.



[sic.edu/alumni-update](http://sic.edu/alumni-update)



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