In a fall semester unlike any other, the University of Miami has made dramatic changes to ensure the safe return of students, faculty, and staff.
COVID-19 has disrupted our lives in unimaginable ways. Many students and their families are now facing new and increased financial hardships at a time when our world is in even greater need of the next generation of bold leaders, innovative thinkers, and creative problem-solvers.

A top priority at the University of Miami is to remove financial obstacles to admission and maximize every student’s access to the full range of educational opportunities the University offers.

We’re calling on you to open doors to dynamic experiences that change lives and, in turn, allow our graduates to change the world by applying their education in transformative ways.

Consider making a gift to University of Miami scholarships today at alumni.miami.edu/student-relief

Make your gift before December 31 and receive special tax benefits through the CARES Act.

miami.edu/magazine

Volunteer 26 Number 2 | Fall 2020

A gift to scholarships opens doors and changes lives.
Sylvester Receives $126 Million Gift

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center will use the anonymous gift—the largest in the University's history—to propel into its next chapter of excellence

A landmark gift of $126 million to the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of UHealth and the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine, will accelerate advances in finding cures for cancer and expand innovative treatment options for cancer patients. The groundbreaking donation—the single largest in the University of Miami’s 95-year history—will further propel Sylvester's standing as one of the nation’s preeminent cancer centers.

The unrestricted gift was made in honor of Stephen D. Nimer, director of Sylvester and the Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in Cancer Research. "I am truly humbled by the impact this gift will have on our mission to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer," says Nimer, who is also a professor of medicine, biochemistry, and molecular biology at the Miller School. "I've dedicated my life to excellence and serving the well-being of others," says Nimer, who is also a professor of medicine, biochemistry, and molecular biology at the Miller School. "I now want to honor this donor. With a gift of this size, it's our goal to maximize its impact, ensuring that we invest in programs and people who can change outcomes for as many patients as possible. That will mean a legacy that lasts for generations to come."

Recognized as one of the world’s premier leukemia and stem cell transplant researchers and clinicians, Nimer led the multiyear effort to secure National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designation in 2019, making Sylvester the only NCI-designated cancer center in South Florida, and one of only two in Florida.

"Sylvester is a leader in cancer care and research, and this tremendous act of generosity will have a profound impact on our work in this field," says University of Miami President Julio Frenk. "The gift is an affirmation of the extraordinary vision and leadership of Dr. Stephen D. Nimer and our talented and passionate team of researchers, clinicians, faculty, and staff who are changing the way we prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer."

The gift also maximizes impact by matching additional donations of $1 million or more to Sylvester. To date, philanthropists, including The Pap Corps Champions for Cancer Research, Paul J. DiMare and the DiMare family, Steven Dwoskin (Dwoskin Charitable Trust Foundation), Eric and Elizabeth Feder, and Annette de la Renta have met the challenge, donating $2.1 million, to accelerate innovative cancer research and bolster endowment funds for faculty chairs. This matching program will also establish a strong pool of resources for necessary investments in infrastructure, including a new research facility.

The gift will provide a powerful financial boost to support faculty chairs. This matching program will also establish a strong pool of resources for necessary investments in infrastructure, including a new research facility. "This anonymous gift is a game-changer for Sylvester and represents the kind of historic generosity that often defines the course of disease treatment and management," notes Stuart Miller, J.D. ’82, chair of the UHealth Board of Directors and former chair and current member of the University of Miami Board of Trustees. "We are now prepared for the next level of innovation in research and clinical care, while building the infrastructure and engaging the talent required to sustain these efforts." Miller, who is also the CEO of Lennar Corporation, leads a vibrant tradition of philanthropy for the Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine.

"Sylvester’s preeminent national reputation is due in part to the single-minded dedication our physician-scientists have to those they serve," says Jayne S. Malfitano, member of the University of Miami Board of Trustees, vice chair of Sylvester Board of Overseers, and president of the Harcourt M. and Virginia W. Sylvester Foundation board. "The donor saw in Board of Overseers, and president of the Harcourt M. and Virginia W. Sylvester Foundation board. “The donor saw in

Based on the donor’s previous interest in Nimer’s research priorities, a part of the gift will be dedicated to advancing research in cancer epigenetics and Sylvester’s experimental therapeutics program. “This will help the people in this community get greater access to more novel treatments,” says Nimer.

The gift has already allowed Sylvester to recruit a leader in the field of experimental therapeutics. Funds from the donation will support Sylvester’s continued efforts to attract and retain top-tier scientists and clinicians.

"What is most exciting about this gift is the tremendous impact it will have on cancer care for the people of South Florida,” says Hilarie Bass, J.D. ’81, chair of the University of Miami Board of Trustees. Ultimately, anyone seeking cancer care at Sylvester is the true beneficiary.”

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'Canes Central Offers Student-Centered Assistance

New service brings financial aid, student accounts, and other operations into a centralized location


Nestled in the new 30,000-square-foot Student Service Central on the northeast side of campus, ‘Canes Central features a highly trained staff who can address student questions across a myriad of topics. It is the centralized location where students can make payments to their student accounts, lift a hold from their academic records, receive information regarding financial aid and course registration, and complete other transactions such as obtaining a ‘Canes Card. New technologies help improve the user experience on student information systems and websites.

“Part of our goal in transforming the student experience is to minimize barriers, eliminate roadblocks, and enable students to access resources,” says Jacqueline A. Trivisano, executive vice president for business and finance and chief operating officer. The ‘Canes Central team is ready to help students by phone, online, or in person. Students who opt to visit the ‘Canes Central website can navigate through self-help tools or find answers among frequently asked questions.

“The University of Miami provides a world-class academic experience for its students, and now we offer a world-class on-campus experience,” says Jeffrey Duerk, executive vice president for academic affairs and provost. “This new department empowers them to take full advantage of the unparalleled academic and extracurricular experiences available at the U.”

Student Government President Abigail Adeleke says the new department has been a tremendous help to her and her peers since its opening.

“One of the most positive pieces of feedback I have heard from my peers is that the wait times are very low,” says Adeleke. “In between classes, students are able to walk into ‘Canes Central and get their issues resolved fairly quickly.”

In the event that a student is unable to find an answer on the ‘Canes Central website, Mariana Valdes-Fauli, assistant vice president for service and experience excellence, says students can submit a case, which opens a virtual ticket in the system where students can track progress updates. There are five easy ways to connect with the team, office hours are student-friendly, and no appointment is necessary.

“We collectively strive to provide world-class service and student-centered care to every student at the University,” says Mykel Billups, assistant dean for academic support services. “And with a blend of group and individual study areas, the new space is tailored to meet our center’s programming needs as well as the needs of our students.”

During the summer, Adeleke was having trouble with accessing her financial aid. ‘Canes Central was able to assist her throughout the entire process and encouraged her to reach out to IT for additional help.

“I am so glad we have this system in place on campus,” said Adeleke. “I personally love the concept.”

Designed for growth in both staff and programming, the third floor of the building exclusively houses the Counseling Center. In this new space, the center is able to host workshops and group sessions, provide training of doctoral students through its American Psychosocial Association accredited training program, and offer other services.

“Colleges and universities across the country have seen an increase in mental health challenges their students are facing, and the University of Miami is no different,” says Patricia A. Whiteley, Ed.D. ’84, vice president for student affairs. “This new facility, combined with other student services, will allow the Counseling Center staff the ability to provide the best care to our students.”

Counseling Outreach Peer Educators, whose members are undergraduate students with a passion for tackling college mental health issues, are also gaining much-needed programming and meeting space in the new building.

“The new center continues our efforts to destigmatize the need for mental health support for students,” says René Montenegro, director of the Counseling Center. “We have designed our new space to allow our counselors, other staff members, and peer educators to be innovative in their approach to supporting the campus community.”

Initiative Advances Gender Equity
University takes a critical look at challenges women face across the academy

In a year that marks the passage of the 19th Amendment, and on the day after International Women’s Day, the University launched the Flagship Initiative for Women and Gender Equity—created to assess and address issues of equity that women continue to confront across the academy.

The initiative, announced March 9, examines ways in which the institution can support female students, faculty, staff, and other members of the University and broader community in achieving gender parity in leadership.

“We know firsthand the difference women in leadership can make,” says President Julio Frenk, noting that for the first time in its history, the University has women leading at every level. “Yet this initiative recognizes that more remains to be done to ensure that women have opportunities to lead in every sector of society.”

Hilarie Bues, J.D. ’81, chair of the University’s Board of Trustees; Jacqueline Travisano, executive vice president for business and finance and chief operating officer; Rebecca Fox, dean of continuing and international education; Claudia Grillo, associate vice president for strategic philanthropy; and select student leaders will spearhead the new strategy.

“As we approach our centennial, we want to take a critical look at an issue that has been fundamental to this University since its founding—the status of women,” Bues says. “We want to put the University at the center of an institutional and national conversation about equality and inclusion.”

“We’re undertaking this initiative in a way that is relevant, authentic, and consistent with who we are,” says Fox.

“We’re a young university, nimble and innovative, and we can find new ways of looking at and dealing with issues.”
New Trustees Named
Appointees bring varied expertise to the Board of Trustees

Six new members offering professional experience in business, finance, law, technology, and strategic planning were welcomed to the University’s Board of Trustees at the spring meeting in mid-June.

“We are pleased to welcome these well-respected leaders to the Board of Trustees,” says Hilarie Bass, J.D. ’81, chair of the board. “The new members bring a top level of insight, expertise, and excellence that is crucial in moving the institution’s goals forward and ensuring these are aligned to better address pressing global and local issues.”

The following are the new trustees.

Patricia Menendez-Cambo, B.B.A. ’84, deputy general counsel of SoftBank Group International and general counsel of the SoftBank Latin America Fund. Prior to SoftBank, she served most recently as former vice chair of Greenberg Traurig.

Jordan Rhodes, third-year School of Law student and president of the Student Bar Association. In her first semester, she received the Dean’s List distinction.


Joseph P. Mas, B.B.A. ’92, M.B.A. ’94, CEO of MacTeq, Inc. and director of the Mas Family Foundation. Prior to 2020, Mas was chairman and CEO of Neff Corp.

Alice S. Vilma, B.B.A. ’99, managing director of Morgan Stanley’s multicultural client strategy team who has worked in various roles in the global capital markets division.

Carolyn B. Lamm, J.D. ’73, a partner at White & Case in Washington, D.C., where she specializes in international arbitration, trade matters, and commercial litigation.

The following are the new student trustee member.

Caroline A. Hausner, a junior at the University of Miami and second-year School of Law student.

The following are the new alumni trustee members.

Pratim Biswas—whose knowledge of applying aerosol science and engineering to areas such as energy and environmental nanotechnology, solar energy, air pollution control, and medicine is world renowned—this summer was named the new dean of the University’s College of Engineering.

A member of the National Academy of Engineering, Biswas began transitioning to the University this fall and fully Assumes his post in January 2021. He comes from Washington University in St. Louis, where he held multiple academic positions during a 20-year career.

“Pratim Biswas is a leader in his field—a skilled academician, scholar, and researcher who is deeply dedicated to helping both students and faculty members to excel,” says President Julio Frenk.

At the University, Biswas plans to work closely with the Frost Institute of Chemistry and Molecular Science, mentoring both students and investigators; forge closer ties with alumnae; and further enhance programs in all of the school’s departments—areas such as health systems engineering, sustainability and resilience, data and computer science, and space science and engineering.

The new dean highlights the fact that the College of Engineering has one of the highest enrollments of women in the nation.

“Diversity has historically been a challenge in our discipline,” he says. “But the University of Miami is a step ahead in that regard, and it is critical to support and enhance that diversity at the undergraduate and graduate levels and within the faculty.”

He notes, too, the University’s strong foundation in aerosol science and air quality, especially through the Rosenstiel School’s Department of Atmospheric Science and where he will have a dual appointment.

Biswas suggests that the applications of his specialty—aerosol science and engineering—are numerous. As the novel coronavirus has spread throughout the world, he has endeavored to demonstrate his hallmark by conducting research to develop wireless sensors to be carried by health care workers in emergency rooms to detect COVID-19 aerosols, among other innovative virus-related studies.

“Engineers, because of our knack for problem-solving,” he says, “can reach out to communities and work with them collaboratively to help develop solutions to many problems.”

Entertainment Adapts
Student and alumni artists creatively pivot to new platforms

As the pandemic swept into our lives months ago, the entertainment industry suffered an abrupt and pervasive shutdown. Movie theaters fell silent, concert halls shuttered, and film production spiraled into indefinite delay.

Yet entertainment thrives on creativity and innovation, and slowly but persistently the lights have flickered back on as performers experiment with new ways to share their talents.

At the University, the Frost School of Music has been teaching students to adapt. With virtual as the new normal, the school has transitioned its popular “Hire a Musician Program”—connecting Frost musicians with community for-hire events—to a digital platform.

“COVID-19 has curtailed live, in-person performances and caused financial hardship, but gigging is the lifeblood of our students and alumni,” says Dean Shelton Berg.

Alumni, like Michael Menendez, A.B. ’11, a stand-up comedian, are finding new ways to share their creative craft.

“Stand-up comedy relies entirely on an audience—that’s part of the reason I’m job searching, and we’re excited to be a player in the recovery of our community, and these students—who want to give of themselves and who have wonderful talents—want to be part of that effort,” says Ginger Baxter, director of Ziff Graduate Career Advancement.

“It’s our community responsibility as the leading business school in South Florida to help local businesses recover,” adds Dean John Quelch.

Fanyi Zhang, M.S. ’20, who earned her degree in business analytics this past May, jumped at the opportunity to put her newly honed business skills to work.

“Joining the Volunteer Corps was really a win-win. Because of COVID-19, I’ve had more time at home while I’m job searching, and we’re excited to do what we can to help these non-profit survive,” says Zhang.

Zhang and three other recent grads were selected for the corps’ first project with 305 Pink Pack, a nonprofit that provides free healing support services for women in Miami-Dade County undergoing cancer treatment. Students are helping to analyze business strategy and develop comprehensive outreach.

The corps is open to all recent graduates of the Miami Herbert Business School’s M.B.A. program or its multiple specialized M.S. degree programs. Students must fill out an application and he willing to volunteer 20 hours or more of virtual time per week for between two and 12 weeks. The students are then paired with nonprofit companies, and projects are supervised as they progress.

“Working with nonprofits offers wonderful experience and is so important for our community,” Baxter says. “Students realize that the same skill set is needed to lead a nonprofit as it is for a multimillion-dollar corporation.”

Group Helps Businesses Recover
Volunteer program matches new graduates with nonprofits

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Leader in His Field
Pioneering scientist named dean of the College of Engineering

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World-renowned aerosol scientist Pratim Biswas is named dean of the College of Engineering.
The Black Lives Matter movement, which continues to stir racial justice awareness throughout the United States, has prompted upheaval in the marketplace. Long-standing icons depicting racial stereotyping—Uncle Ben’s, Mrs. Butterworth’s, Cream of Wheat, Eskimo Pie, and Aunt Jemima, among others—have tumbled off the shelves to seek new identity in rebranding.

For Claudia Townsend, an associate professor of marketing at the Miami Herbert Business School, rebranding prompted by cultural shifts and consumer critique is nothing new. “But the speed of the awakening—all that’s happened within such a short time—and the awareness spurring the changes are all very different,” she says.

Townsend, whose expertise focuses on aesthetics and visual presentation in consumer choice, points out that the past 10 years have heralded a period of rethinking gender roles, and that companies have responded.

She referenced Target, which previously marketed separate toy sections for boys and girls that have since merged, and television commercials for home cleaning and childcare products that previously showed only women and now regularly show men mopping, cooking, and caring for toddlers. Townsend also points to Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty,” which expanded the company’s imagery of beauty to include women of different ages, sizes, ethnicities, and hair type and style. Yet these changes are often met with resistance by consumers ready to exercise their purchasing muscle.

“Consumers just don’t like change,” Townsend says. “They are often fiercely loyal to their favorite products. And even when they may support a branding change, there’s always backlash when a company changes an asset.”

This fierce loyalty, she explains, stems from anthropomorphism, a concept key to marketing where products assume human characteristics. “With Aunt Jemima, even people who understand what’s wrong with this imagery are challenged,” she said, “because the image feels like a person—like the sweet aunt they grew up with.”

Another practice that has gained traction is cause-related marketing, where companies partner with a nonprofit and contribute a portion of their product’s purchase price toward the cause.

“Consumers, especially those willing to do research behind any branding changes, will question if the rebranding is authentic,” she says. “These same customers are also going to demand that the companies do more, in essence, that they put their money where their mouth is and take real action—contribute to a cause, promote diversity in leadership, or increase employee salaries.”

Townsend says rebranding research shows that millennials—with their considerable purchasing power—are exceptionally cause-driven and ready to financially reward companies they respect.

—Michael R. Maloney

The field of biomimetic chemistry has emerged in recent decades with the goal of designing artificial enzymes that can mimic the powers of natural enzymes—found in every living organism and that serve to trigger thousands of biological functions. Artificial enzymes could, for example, convert corn into ethanol or help create new drugs more quickly, cheaply, and effectively.

Rajeev Prabhakar, a computational chemist at the University of Michigan, has been working with researchers at the University of Michigan, moved a step closer to that goal, having created a novel, synthetic, three-stranded molecule that functions just like a natural metalloenzyme, or an enzyme that contains metal ions.

“This is an incremental but important step in the development of artificial enzymes, long considered chemistry’s Holy Grail,” Prabhakar explains. For their groundbreaking study published in Nature Chemistry, he and graduate student Vindi M. Jayasinghe-Arachchige have explored techniques with Michigan collaborators that might reveal a new strategy for creating artificial enzymes.

Jayasinghe-Arachchige, in the final year of her doctoral studies, designed the new molecule on the University’s supercomputer’s guidance.

Better Hurricane Forecasting

Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science researchers David Nolan, Brian McNoldy, and James Hyliak are using sophisticated supercomputer simulations to study how different landscapes, from suburban settings to large city centers, affect hurricane sustained winds and gusts.

Their research, part of a federally funded study, has far-reaching impacts, promoting not only to upgrade forecast models to account for wind speeds over land but also to predict how buildings disrupt and modify winds.

“Trees, houses, a densely packed cluster of skyscrapers—they all have an impact on wind speed and direction,” explains Nolan, professor and chair of atmospheric sciences and co-principal investigator of the study. “And wind velocity can differ from one area of a city to another, even from one side of a building to another. We’re trying to better understand such variations.”

To do so, Nolan and others turned to the Institute for Data Science and Computing and its powerful Pegasus supercomputer, analyzing data gleaned from 24 simulations of Hurricane Wilma making landfall over South Florida.

The study could lead to the creation of extreme-weather apps that yield detailed data. “You’d simply punch in your address and get information on what the wind speeds will be in a given area through-out the course of a storm,” Nolan says.

Early Autism Marker

In the first study of its kind, University of Miami researchers have determined that infants with familial risk for autism show insecurity,” Messinger points out.

Published in Developmental Science, the study looks at how 15-month-old babies react when they are brieﬂy separated and then reunited with a parent, and it builds on Messinger’s extensive previous research on infants whose older siblings have been diagnosed with autism.

“While we can’t stop a future ASD diagnosis, these ﬁndings suggest we should consider attachment-related interventions for high-risk infants who show insecurity,” Messinger says.
**Eye on Athletics**

**'Canes Football Starts Strong**

The Miami Hurricanes are off to a fast start to a football season that many weren’t sure would even take place because of the COVID-19 uncertainty. The ‘Canes kicked off the Atlantic Coast Conference season—only one of two major conferences that launched on time—with an impressive 31-14 win against the University of Alabama Birmingham.

Quarterback D’Eriq King sparked the attack with electrifying runs and pinpoint passes that herald the bright future for the team. He passed for 337 yards—led by speedy Cam’Ron Harris. His four-fingered rings signify hometown 305 after a 66-yard touchdown scamper. Harris rushed for 337 yards—led by speedy Cam’Ron Harris.

**Sprinter Brittny Ellis Nominated for Top Award**

Middle-distance sprinter Brittny Ellis, B.S.N. ’19, has already gotten her name in the Miami record books. Now the three-time ACC Championships champion, five-time silver medalist, and a four-time ACC team champion is positioned for even greater acclaim.

Ellis is one of two women nominated by the ACC for the 2020 NCAA Woman of the Year Award. She has blazed a trail on the University track. The 400-meter runner is a two-time U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA) All-America second-team selection and twice earned the association’s honorable-mention accolades.

**Freshman Amato Comes Ready to Row**

Unlike many rowers who do not discover the sport until high school or sometimes even college, Gabrielle Amato brings a wealth of experience and talent to the ‘Canes crew.

The Miami native first learned to row at summer camp when she was 11, and she fell instantly in love with the sport and the community of people around it.

Rowing soon became one of the most important parts of her day, and Amato worked diligently to get stronger and faster. She attended her junior year of high school online and kept a rigorous daily schedule of training and academics.

The hard work paid off. In 2018, Amato was invited to the Youth Olympics Qualification and the finals of the Pan American Junior Remo Competition in Chile—the first female to ever represent her home country of Haiti in an international rowing competition.

“I was a little scared at first because I didn’t want to let them down,” Amato says. “But then I let everything go and told myself, ‘You’re here for this, you’re here for your country, just have fun.’”

Amato chose to stay in Miami to be near her mother, who lives on Miami Beach, and is excited to join a new crew team on the water. She will be majoring in dentistry and continuing to train in hopes of potentially representing Haiti at a future Olympic Games.

**Mia Atrio Has Her Eyes on Goal**

When freshman forward Mia Atrio, a scoring standout who helped her Miami high school win its first state championship, gets her goal in sight, she rarely misses.

Over a decorated four-year high-school career, Atrio was a three-time Miami Herald First-Team All-Dade member, two-time Miami Herald All-Dade soccer player of the year winner, and the 7A-5A All-Dade female athlete of the year recipient.

And when it came time to decide where to bring her soccer skills, Atrio was on target. She grew up just a few miles away from the Coral Gables Campus; her father, Andy, played wide receiver for the Hurricanes in the mid-’90s; and the U was always at the top of her collegiate list.

“It was like a dream come true, since it was my dream school for soccer, and it was what I was aiming for all my life,” says Atrio, who launched her ‘Canes career with the team’s first game in early September.
WHERE OTHERS SEE A CHALLENGE, WE SEE AN OPPORTUNITY.

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Our many programs are tailored to equip a new generation of leaders with the skills needed to manage crises, work through abrupt business changes, and develop innovative ideas that transform the business world of tomorrow. Applications are still being accepted for January, but the deadline is quickly approaching. To learn more, visit bus.miami.edu/whatsnext.

A Champion for Civil Rights

Donald Spivey has been fighting for racial equality for most of his life, using his lectures, teachings, and exhaustive research as a distinguished professor of history and Cooper Fellow in the College of Arts and Sciences to help foster change.

In recognition of his work as a civil rights champion, Spivey was named special advisor to President Julio Frenk as part of the University’s 15-point plan to improve “racial justice on campus and beyond.” This plan was introduced as the nation struggles to eradicate systemic racism and police brutality that especially targets people of color.

Spivey plans to pursue specific goals, such as helping to increase the number of Black faculty members at the institution and ensure that the University admits and—more importantly—retains more Black students.

“These are issues we have to wrestle with,” says Spivey. “Action without thought is empty, and thought without action is blind.” he says, quoting Kwame Nkrumah, the Ghanaian nationalist leader and revolutionary who led the Gold Coast to independence from Britain in the late 1950s.

Spivey grew up poor on Chicago’s West Side, raised by Mississippi-born parents who were part of the Great Migration—that massive movement of some six million Blacks who fled the rural South between 1916 and 1970 in search of a better life in the northern states.

His father worked in Chicago’s steel mills, and his mother in a clothing factory. “As a kid, I held every job you can think of,” Spivey recalls. “Back then, parents believed you should work for things. No one was going to give you anything.”

A history teacher at his inner-city high school “who made things relevant to the moment and showed us that we all had first-rate minds” sparked his love for history.

That passion has persisted and translated into a dedication to academic service. Spivey went on to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees, then a Doctor of Philosophy. All in history.

His research and achievements at the University are legendary, including nine authored or edited books. While he was trained as a labor historian, his body of research runs the gamut—from the history of education to Black music to sports.

In 2019, he was awarded the University’s Outstanding Teaching Award and Provost Award for Scholarly Activity. Spivey’s team-taught “The Sixties” course is one of the most popular at the University, with more than 1,000 students having taken the class since it started 10 years ago. That decade of tumultuous change and incredible optimism was particularly formative for Spivey.

“So many things were happening, and my social consciousness was growing. The many, many fights, protests, demonstrations, and social and political skirmishes of the era are very much a part of who I am today,” he says.

At the time, he attended the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign on a full football scholarship but hung up his cleats to focus on his studies and burgeoning activism. He joined the Black Students Association on campus, making the hiring of more Black faculty members a priority.

The very history department through which Spivey took courses toward his major had no professors of color. He and his fellow students met regularly with school administrators, pushing for that to change.

As a kid, I held every job you can think of. Back then, parents believed you should work for things. No one was going to give you anything. —Donald Spivey

THE BEST STUDENTS ARE THE ONES WHO FIGHT FOR WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN.
Degree Tackles Big Data

The Master of Science in Data Science tailors its curriculum for multiple fields

Data science—extracting knowledge and insights from structured and unstructured data—continues to blaze new trails as an exciting new career path. To prepare graduate students to excel as data mining and programming specialists, the College of Arts and Sciences established the Master of Science in Data Science.

The interdisciplinary degree launched this fall with 15 students, featuring tracks in technical data science, data visualization, smart cities, and marine tracks in technical data science, data visualization, smart cities, and marine science.

“Most data science degrees are based on engineering or computer science, and we wanted to go beyond that to offer an interdisciplinary program that utilizes the University’s diverse resources,” says Maryann Tobin, A.B. ’01, M.F.A. ’04, Ph.D. ’09, assistant dean for professional education.

An undergraduate data science track offered through the Department of Computer Science was approved in early fall, and plans continue for additional tracks in the program, according to Tobin. “This degree is open to everyone—a tech background is certainly not required—and we want to help students be ready to succeed,” says Tobin. Many of the students in this first cohort enrolled in one or more of the three preparatory mini-courses—linear algebra, calculus, and computer programming—which were offered this summer.

The Department of Computer Science spearheaded the program’s design in coordination with the Miami Institute for Data Science and Computing, and the curriculum invites collaboration from the School of Architecture, School of Communication, School of Education and Human Development, College of Engineering, and Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

The new degree benefits from the fact that the University is home to one of the nation’s fastest supercomputers—the $3.7 million Triton—and likewise the University’s agreement with AT&T to become the first academic institution to deploy AT&T’s 5G+ and Multi-access Edge Computing technology.

“We have fantastic resources and wanted to offer a unique degree that allows students to explore the breadth of data science across the entire University curriculum,” Tobin says.

Restored Corals Observed Spawning

First-ever event provides hope for restoration efforts

For the first time, staghorn corals grown in a nursery and replanted at a reef restoration site off Key Biscayne have spawned, signaling hope that fragmenting corals and outplanting them to reefs is a viable approach to help rebuild Florida’s valuable marine ecosystems.

Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science scientists and collaborators from SECORE International observed restored staghorn corals (Acropora cervicornis) at Rainbow Reef releasing healthy spawn on Aug. 6 and Aug. 7, marking a first for nursery-grown corals outplanted on a reef restoration site in Miami-Dade County.

“It’s a very rare phenomenon to witness, so it’s great that we were able to capture this scientific breakthrough to share with our local community and people around the world,” says Diego Lirman, Ph.D. ’98, associate professor of marine biology and ecology and founder and director of the University’s Rescue a Reef program.

The scientists were able to collect eggs and sperm from about a dozen different colonies during the spawning, which they then fertilized to raise thousands of coral larvae that can also be grown out and replanted as part of a cyclical approach to helping reefs rebuild themselves and remain resilient.

“Spawning in the wild is a critical observation that shows that these restored corals now have the ability to naturally replenish reefs through their own reproductive efforts,” says Andrew Baker, Ph.D. ’99, professor of marine biology and ecology and director of the University’s Coral Reef Futures Lab.

The scientists also observed, collected, and fertilized coral spawn at their underwater coral nursery. In addition, the research team observed several with linear algebra, calculus, and computer programming—which were offered this summer.

The coral spawning and restoration activities are part of the $6 million Southeast Florida Coral Restoration Hub, which has a goal to restore 125 acres of reef habitat in Miami-Dade and Broward counties over three years. Florida’s Coral Reef is the only nearshore reef in the continental United States, and coral cover has declined by at least 70 percent since the 1970s. —Diana Ubed
A Whole New Back to School

Following an adaptive and responsive model, the University of Miami takes every step to safeguard the ‘Canes community while providing students the opportunity to attend classes on campus amid the ongoing pandemic.

BY MICHAEL R. MALONE

CHLOE BEACH, A FIRST-YEAR PUBLIC RELATIONS MAJOR FROM AURORA, ILLINOIS, SAT ALONE IN FRONT OF THE DONNA E. SHALALA STUDENT CENTER AFTER FINISHING HER FIRST CLASS OF THE 2020 FALL SEMESTER—ENGLISH 105—IN THE NEW LAKESIDE VILLAGE. The moment for Beach—feeling a mix of first-day elation and jitteriness, savoring being in college, and starting a new adventure in learning at a whole new level—was indeed wondrous. And the fact that she was here at the University of Miami, together with nearly 7,000 other students, starting classes on time and in person for the fall semester—in the midst of the pandemic that has wreaked havoc worldwide and was still surging in South Florida—was itself a small miracle. One made real by extraordinary dedication, colossal effort, and the University’s willingness to prioritize the purpose and value of education.
“The choice before us is not a binary one—keep campus closed or just open it. Instead, we must creatively devise intermediate solutions, which are both adaptive to the current circumstances and responsive to the varying needs of our students,” President Julio Frenk said in a July 15 message to the University community about the decision to bring students back to campus in the fall. He also emphasized that “providing an exceptional educational experience is the why of our decisions.”

The announcement came four months after the University vacated the campus in mid-March to stem the spread of the virus. Throughout the summer, leadership teams went to work across every facility and unit, scrutinizing details to prepare for the safest possible return for students.

Millions of dollars were invested to retrofit classrooms and common areas into safe spaces for teaching, studying, and living. Signs were erected to remind people to protect themselves and those around them by wearing facial coverings and by keeping 6 feet of distance. New technology was purchased and deployed to enhance innovative teaching techniques.

Meanwhile, quarantined in homes around the country and throughout the world, students and faculty members wrestled with decisions on whether to engage in the fall semester through in-person learning, remotely, or through a combination of both, described as hybrid learning. Split nearly evenly, about a third of students chose each mode of learning.

Frenk’s steady hand, founded on 36 years as a global public health expert, guided the path forward. As the University proceeded with its reopening plans, the president was regularly consulted by national media for his insights and strategic thinking. The stakes were high for universities around the country to bring students back, and many were watching for a successful model.

On campus, senior leadership exercised transparency and delivered consistent messaging that emphasized the four pillars—testing, tracing, and tracking; cleaning and disinfecting; protecting personal space, distancing, and the use of face coverings; and vaccinating—while modeling an adaptive and responsive approach to the evolving situation.

Public Health Ambassadors

Recognizing the effectiveness of peer influence, Patricia A. Whiteley, Ed.D. ‘94, vice president for student affairs, urged the creation of a student-led team of public health ambassadors to promote and monitor for adherence to COVID-19 health and safety precautions.

More than 270 students submitted applications for the program that, when launched, quickly drew national attention. Andrew Wiemer, director of the Butler Center for Service and Leadership and the program’s organizer, alongside Lindsey Woods, the center’s assistant director, interviewed nearly 120 students and ultimately selected 75 of them—including team leads.

“This new team of student-leaders is the embodiment of our ‘Canes Care for ‘Canes philosophy,” says Whiteley.

Camila Trep托, a biology major pursuing a career in medicine, was among those selected. Her entire family had tested positive for the virus, and she felt a duty to apply to serve.

“Thankfully, we had only mild symptoms, but I knew after my experience that I wanted to do everything possible to stop the spread because I personally know how bad it makes you feel and how easily it spreads,” Trep托 says.

New ‘Cane Jacques Calixte was also excited to be an ambassador. “I really wanted to do something that would be able to help the community, so applying for this job felt like the best option,” he says.
As June turned into July, the countdown to the new semester grew more visible. Huge white tents were erected on the green in front of the Otto G. Richter Library to add classroom space for students and teachers could learn while maintaining physical distancing. Residential living areas were cleaned and prepared for students.

In advance of students returning, all faculty and staff were directed to complete the We Are One U: COVID-19 Safety Principles training module—developed by diverse experts at the University and UHealth—the University of Miami Health System—which conveyed evidence-based public health guidelines.

New technology tools were introduced that required everyone visiting campus—students, faculty, and staff—to use a daily symptom checker and respond appropriately to its guidance. An online location density monitor began providing updates in real time with reports on capacity at popular locations on campus.

The student government executive board elected in the spring—Abigail Adeleke, president; Shirly Gelman, vice president; and Amanda Rodriguez, treasurer—continued its critical liaison to parlay students’ concerns.

“We are in a unique position where we talk directly with people making the decisions,” Gelman says. “I want to make students aware that if they are confused, if they need to ask anything, we are people that they can come to.”

For the first time, having closely tracked his social media posts regarding the University’s reopening plans. Frenk offered a “first-quarter update” on progress, praising the collective effort. He noted that “the trends both on campus and in the community so far continue to be encouraging,” but cautioned that most experts expect an increase in cases in the fall.

Many stopped outside the entrance, gazing up at the inspiring six-floor structure before entering to locate their apartment or suite. The impact was unanimous: “Beautiful.” “Gorgeous.” “The architecture is so Miami.” “Amazing.”

“There are so many things in here to see and explore,” says Alexander Miller, a sophomore neuroscience major. “I had a good on-campus living experience last year but am looking forward to apartment living and a more mixed-living experience.”

Let the Learning Begin

The first day of classes on Monday, Aug. 17, had all the South Florida look and feel of a start to the University’s fall semester—searing South Florida heat and blazing sun. Candace Sukie, a nursing student from Miramar, Florida, had three classes on campus her first day and was happy to be able to attend in person.

“Everything feels clean and organized, and the campus is really pretty,” Sukie remarks. “I also like how they assigned seats and spaced out the desks so there was no confusion.” Nouf Behbehani, a first-year student from Kuwait, was excited to begin her environmental engineering studies.

“I really want to become an inventor,” she says. “I hope all the things I can learn this year will benefit me to become an engineer and later an inventor, so I can make a good change in my life and make changes for the environment.”

Donald Henry, a nursing student who hails from Haiti, had a super start to his first college classes. He noted the many safety measures that had been put in place. “Everything—from the bus stop to the classrooms to the cafeteria—was so clean. I believe this was planned out very well.”

A First-Quarter Update

On the last day of August, Frenk and Erin Kobetz, vice provost for research and scholarship and professor of public health sciences and responsible for leading the tracking and tracing efforts on campus, offered a candid appraisal of the scenario on campus.

Both agreed that the trends were positive, and both heartily urged that vigilance continue and that accurate data remains indispensable to navigating the way forward.

“Our priority is to keep the community safe, and it’s very early in the semester. But what we’re seeing indicates that our plan is working,” Kobetz states. “We’re pleased by students’ willingness to accept these new norms while also encouraging one another to adopt and maintain them.”

On Sept. 11, the day after the ‘Canes football team played its first game of the year—another formerly unthinkable feat—Frenk offered a “first-quarter update” on progress, praising the collective effort. He noted that “the trends both on campus and in the community so far continue to be encouraging,” but cautioned that most experts expect an increase in cases in the fall.

“So we must redouble our efforts to make sure we all remain healthy and can successfully complete the semester,” he says.

—Ashley A. Williams, Janette Neuwohl Tannen, and Amanda M. Perez contributed to this article.
From action plans and virtual panels to academic lectures and teach-ins, the University of Miami's response to racial injustice has been far-reaching and all-encompassing.

BY ROBERT C. JONES JR.

The only thing Ronnie Graham really remembers about May 25 is turning on his television set and seeing the disturbing cellphone video of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressing his knee into George Floyd’s neck as the handcuffed Floyd pleaded, “I can’t breathe.” Up until then, “everything else about that day was pretty much a blur,” the third-year University of Miami law student recalls.

It was late Memorial Day evening, and the Floyd video had already gone viral, sparking nationwide protests and demonstrations. But Graham, preparing to bed down in his Miami apartment after a long day of studying, was just getting his first look at the footage. “My initial thought was, ‘How could anyone who was standing there not have done something,’” he says.

During his first two years of law school, the Lake City, Florida, native wrestled with all sorts of pressing legal issues—from sentencing guidelines to the erosion of the Voting Rights Act to whether the death penalty constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. But the question of what he would have done had he been at the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis on that day in May especially gnawed at him.

Though Graham, president of the Black Law Students Association, wasn’t there for Floyd, he took action in another way, organizing a virtual teach-in that explored issues of systemic racism in policing.
This effort was part of a University-wide response to calls for racial justice in the wake of Floyd’s death. From virtual panels that explored the inequities experienced by marginalized groups to a list of student recommendations on how to “address the current state of affairs surrounding the Black student community” to a 15-point action plan initiated by President Julio Frenk to improve and build upon diversity and inclusion at the institution, the University of Miami’s response has been far-reaching and all-encompassing.

“We have been taking a hard look at how we can help heal the pain we see manifest in our communities,” Frenk wrote in a letter to the University community on July 1. “We have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to channel that indignation into urgent and useful action, rather than divisive or destructive behavior.” If anyone knows about the importance of diversity and inclusion, it is Frenk, who was born in Mexico to a German-Jewish father who at 6 years old escaped the persecution of Nazi Germany.

A PLAN FOR ACTION

The following are some of the key measures Frenk outlined in a 15-point action plan.

- An Office for Faculty Inclusion and Diversity would be created, promising to ramp up efforts to recruit, retain, and develop underrepresented faculty members.
- Funding for scholars who conduct research on anti-Black racism and bias would be increased, with a new U-LINK (University of Miami Laboratory for Integrative Knowledge) award being the catalyst for more studies in this area.
- With a Mellon Foundation grant now in hand, a Center for Global Black Studies would be established.
- A racial and climate survey for students and faculty would be conducted during the 2020-2021 academic year, with data gleaned from the review guiding future measures to improve the University’s on-campus racial climate.
- A 15-point action plan, initiated by Frenk, to improve and build upon diversity and inclusion at the institution, was far-reaching and all-encompassing.

The plan came on the heels of a letter drafted and signed by student leaders from across the University that contained an extensive list of recommendations on how the institution could improve the way it supports Black and other diverse communities. Creating new departments and ramping up support for existing infrastructure that serve marginalized and underrepresented communities; revising hiring and admittance practices to bring in more underrepresented faculty members and staff, as well as increase and retain the number of Black students; and allocating more resources to ensure an inclusive environment were among the proposals.

Meanwhile, University Libraries employed the power of the pen in its efforts to combat racial injustice, creating a Racial Justice Resources online guide of books, e-books, films, websites, archives, reading lists, and more “designed to assist our community in educating themselves in figuring out ways to advocate for improved conditions, especially along the lines of race and ethnicity,” says Roxane Pickens, librarian assistant professor and director of the Learning Commons.

“We are living in a unique moment when people are open to learning about the nature and origins of the racial injustice that plagues our society,” says Charles Eckman, dean of libraries and university librarian. “Learning tools such as this guide are critical resources to those seeking understanding and solutions.”
In an effort to spark action, the Black Student Leadership Caucus, in collaboration with the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, brought students together in early June for a Black State of the Union virtual dialogue, leading a conversation on how the University community can create change.

In his role as law student, Graham puts it, the pursuit for racial equality “is a marathon, not a sprint. As a Black man, I’m just hopeful that something will come of it.”

Sumita Chatterjee, a faculty member in the Department of History and in the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, devoted all of her classes during a two-day period to issues of race, showing her students a portion of the HBO documentary “True Justice: Bryan Stevenson’s Fight for Equality,” which detailed the work of the acclaimed public interest attorney and his Equal Justice Initiative dedicated to helping the poor, the incarcerated, and the condemned.

“We reflected on issues raised in the documentary. And students, through written and oral critical reflection exercises, not only highlighted key historical, legal, and social issues raised in the documentary, but also applied it to other problems in contemporary society both in the U.S. and globally,” Chatterjee says. “India and Brazil came up in the discussions, as did the work of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.”

Osamudia James, dean’s distinguished scholar and professor of law and the newly appointed associate provost for diversity, equity, and inclusion, moderated the panel “Unequal Treatment: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Miami-Dade Criminal Justice,” in which Nick Petersen, assistant professor of sociology, presented his research on how Blacks and Black Hispanics are more likely to be arrested, convicted, and incarcerated than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

As law student Graham puts it, the pursuit for racial equality “is a marathon, not a sprint. As a Black man, I’m just hopeful that something will come of it.”

In July, the Miller School of Medicine hosted a virtual panel that explored how the school could work to create a more inclusive atmosphere for Black students, faculty, staff, and for Black and brown patients in health care settings. “Words have so much power,” she says. “They have the power to destroy and, alternatively, the power to build. We all have a part to play in learning how to better interact with one another.”

Miller School of Medicine Dean Emri R. Ford convened a Task Force to Champion Racial Justice to foster a more welcoming atmosphere for Black students, faculty, staff, and patients.

During a series of teach-ins conducted over two days in September as part of a nationwide Scholar Strike initiative, faculty members in several academic departments taught about racial justice. The effort was part of the University’s BIPOC Social Justice Group (BIPOC stands for Black, indigenous, and people of color) in the UM AAUP-Alliance, a chapter of the national American Association of University Professors.

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During that event Student Government President Abigail Adeleke brought students together for the Black State of the Union.

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Later, as the fall semester got underway with strict protocols in place to protect students and faculty from the spread of COVID-19, some researchers reshaped certain aspects of their course content in light of Floyd’s death and the Movement for Black Lives initiative.

For instance, Kate Ramsey, associate professor of history, structured her undergraduate course Modern Caribbean History “to encourage students, more than ever, to think about the legacies and afterlives of the histories we are studying and to make connections to the struggles and movements of our time,” she says. Her students wrote nearly-weekly reflections, and she urged them in emails to “think about how their work can be understood as a history of the present as well as the past.”

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In lecturer Brian Breed’s English 105 courses, he and his students read aloud Brent Staples’ “Black Men and Public Spaces,” an essay that details how strangers read Staples’ blackness as a threat to them. “The experiences of our BIPOC neighbors—whether they are students or staff, faculty, or friends—must be centered if we are to truly understand the world,” says Breed, M.A. ’09, Ph.D. ’15. “I asked my students to read ‘Black Men and Public Spaces’ with me because the essay illustrates how many Black Americans are read as threats simply because they exist and because white Americans are afraid of them.

“We white Americans must stop burdening our BIPOC neighbors with the weight of our fears, and we can only break that habit by listening to them,” Breed continues. “Then and only then can we build a better world together.”

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Research Illuminates the Way Forward

Facing the urgent worldwide need to mitigate the threat and consequences of COVID-19, University researchers across a range of disciplines are helping to advance understanding and generate solutions for communities in Miami and around the world.

BY MICHAEL R. MALONE

NEARLY A CENTURY AGO, OUR FOUNDERS ENVISIONED A GREAT DESTINY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI—ONE IN WHICH WE WOULD HELP DEVISE SOLUTIONS TO THE WORLD’S MOST VEXING CHALLENGES. One of those challenges arrived in the spring and has multiplied in recent months in the form of a merciless pandemic. And the University has stepped fully into the role our founders foresaw, serving as a source of unity, pride, and connection to the community. From a myriad of perspectives and multitude of approaches, University researchers are engaged in the effort to counter and assess the tragedy, and to stymie the advance of the pandemic.

Immunologists and doctors are pursuing a vaccine, engineers are generating materials critical for front-line workers, artists are capturing the virus’s impact visually and aurally, public health specialists are assessing air quality, sociologists are tracking the spread in prisons, and environmental scientists are exploring the beaches and water during closures, amid many other research endeavors.
The University is all in, supporting these talented specialists with investments and grants. Twenty-four University of Miami research teams have received rapid response grants ranging from $5,000 to $40,000 via the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and Scholarship to undertake innovative projects that will provide critical information about the novel coronavirus. Through another eight different proposals, faculty members across multiple disciplines have received internal funding from the College of Arts and Sciences.

At a time when truth and fact are being sorely tested by populist regimes and conspiracy theories, accurate information is critical.

President Julio Frenk, a global public health expert and former health minister of Mexico, says that experts must continue to illuminate the way forward.

“It’s research that is going to get us to the other side of this pandemic,” Frenk says. “We find ourselves in a moment in time where society is clamoring for the experience of experts, and converging research gives universities an incredible edge to help navigate the uncertainty. It’s a moment to rise and shine.”

> HUNT FOR A VACCINE

Natasa Strbo’s expertise on heat shock protein gp96, a powerful immune system activator, has put her in the worldwide hunt for a vaccine against COVID-19. The assistant professor of immunology and microbiology, together with researchers at the University of Miami’s Miller School of Medicine, had already been investigating the protein’s promise for HIV, malaria, and Zika vaccines. With the onset of the pandemic, the team shifted its scientific platform to concentrate on developing a coronavirus vaccine.

Their COVID-19 vaccine remains on track to begin manufacturing soon for preclinical testing. Heat Biologics—the company Strbo’s mentor Eckhard Podack co-founded in 2008—provides critical backing.

While the competition to discover the critical vaccine is fierce, Strbo considers the competition a privilege and an opportunity to carry on Podack’s work and to learn more about the novel coronavirus and the “fascinating little molecule” that she has dedicated her life’s work to understanding.

Strbo credits Eva Fisher and Laura Padula, her research associates, for their painstaking efforts to create the DNA that incorporates the coronavirus genes, and she emphasizes the need for scientists to learn from each other as vaccine development evolves.

“The whole world is a big laboratory,” Strbo says. “And now, more than ever, we must share information so we can adapt the vaccine when needed.”

> THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

When a team of University of Miami physicians, nurses and engineers used a patient simulator to test a new intubation box designed to prevent potential COVID-19 respiratory particles from reaching health care workers who perform critical airway procedures, anesthesiologist Richard McNeer, B.S ’91, Ph.D. ’97, M.D. ’99, suddenly had one of those “aha” moments. He discovered that a Yankauer, a special suctioning tool used in many medical procedures, could actually evacuate most of the particles if it were positioned strategically near the opening of the simulator’s vocal cords prior to intubation.

“It was a serendipitous discovery,” recalls McNeer, a professor of clinical at the Miller School of Medicine. “Suction has been used to remove everything from stomach contents to blood. But this is perhaps the first time it’s been considered for use in suctioning out aerosols.”

Used in tandem, the tube and intubation box are an added layer of protection for health care providers, McNeer said. The intubation box itself is made of acrylic and covers a patient’s head. It has two circular ports through which an anesthesiologist inserts his gloved hands and arms to perform an airway procedure. “We knew that anesthesiologists were at risk of being exposed to splatter and respiratory droplets when performing intubations, so we were trying to find a way to protect them,” says Suresh Atapattu, B.S.B.E. ’96, M.S.B.E. ’01, a biomedical engineer at the Miller School’s International Medicine Institute, who designed the box. He found inspiration for its design from half a world away—a physician in Taiwan who had constructed and used a clear barrier device to protect health care workers when intubating COVID-19 patients.

Atapattu designed and constructed his own iteration of the box. Once the prototype had been perfected, Maxwell Jarosz, architect and manager of the fabrication lab and model shop at the School of Architecture, built others, donating them to medical facilities in South Florida. Some are now being used at Ryder Trauma Center, where McNeer performs airway procedures on patients who are brought in with serious and often life-threatening injuries.

“As for the suction tube, Jarosz is working with McNeer on a design that is more ergonomically friendly than the Yankauer that was initially used. Once the design is finalized, the tubes will be 3D-printed in mass quantities at the School of Architecture.

> “It was a serendipitous discovery.” —Richard McNeer

“Suction has been used to remove everything from stomach contents to blood. But this is perhaps the first time it’s been considered for use in suctioning out aerosols.” —Richard McNeer

> “It’s research that is going to get us to the other side of this pandemic.”  —President Julio Frenk
Kathryn Nowotny, an assistant professor in the University of Miami’s Department of Sociology, together with public health scientists from two other institutions, launched the COVID Prison Project to encourage policies and procedures that better protect one of the most vulnerable but most neglected populations.

The group tracks the pandemic’s impact on the roughly 2.7 million people who are incarcerated and the more than 423,000 employees in state and federal prisons and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers across the nation and in Puerto Rico.

In addition to the altruistic argument for her research, Nowotny cites the radiating impact of the spread of the virus on incarcerated people.

“These are people’s parents, spouses, children, brothers, and sisters, or friends,” she says. “And correctional officers’ parents, spouses, children, brothers, and sisters, or friends.”

“When we talk to prison officials, they will say: ‘Maybe we should be doing it, too.’”

—Kathryn Nowotny

> THE POWER OF ART

Xavier Cortada, A.B. ’86, J.D. ’91, M.P.A. ’91, launched the Miami Corona Project, a three-pronged art initiative that aims to inspire, educate, and engage the public while providing a real-time record of the pandemic’s impact on Miami-Dade County.

Presented as part of the University of Miami COVID-19 Rapid Response, Cortada’s project is modeled on an inspiration he presented 20 years ago in South Africa to memorialize the victims of a different pandemic—AIDS.

“Our goal is to create a space for community engagement, just like we did with the ‘Breaking the Silence’ mural hanging in the Durban Art Gallery in Durban, South Africa,” he explains.

Adam Roberti, B.A.M.A. ’18, director of Cortada Projects, helped to develop the project’s website (cortada.com/corona), where visitors can add their own stories about the pandemic.

“I hope this project serves as an artistic model for how to build community, amplify voices, and ultimately save lives,” Roberti says.

> BEACH SHUTDOWN SHEDS LIGHT

The forced closure of beaches paved the way for research that supported the suspicions of University investigators that beachgoers—and not a nearby water treatment facility—were the source of the unusually high levels of enterococci bacteria that have been contaminating the waters of Key Biscayne Beach.

Helena Solo-Gabriele, B.S. ’87, M.S. ’88, a professor of environmental engineering at the College of Engineering, and her team of graduate assistants obtained the necessary permissions during the pandemic period to analyze beach waters for the potentially dangerous microbes as part of a Village of Key Biscayne-funded study.

Afeefa Abdool-Ghany, an environmental engineering graduate student, and other researchers conducted lab tests of water, sand, and seaweed samples before and after Key Biscayne Beach was closed.

Solo-Gabriele says the team was “astonished” by their findings. “The sand and seaweed were amazingly high in bacteria levels before COVID and then, shortly after the shutdowns, the levels dropped dramatically,” she says.

Maribeth Gilley, a research scientist at the University’s Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies, and James Klaus, an associate professor of marine geosciences at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, are collaborating on the pollution study.

> INDOOR AIR QUALITY

During the April-to-May shutdown period, Naresh Kumar, a University public health scientist who studies the environmental burden of disease, recorded dramatic increases in the levels of harmful substances and noxious concentrations in the air of homes where he had placed environmental sensors.

The intensified use of disinfectants—often times with harsh chemicals containing dangerous compounds—increased dramatically. And the fact that more people were cooking at home, some using gas-powered ranges that produced carbon monoxide that was not ventilated, were largely to blame for the increased pollutants and diminished air quality, his preliminary findings showed.

“It’s what people did inside their residences during stay-at-home orders that contributed to those increases,” Kumar said.

The 33 sensors he placed in residential homes—15 in Miami and 18 in Baltimore—continue to track levels of particular matter and other substances in real time, and a long-range study examining whether those harmful substances led to respiratory illnesses remains a possibility, Kumar says.

> EFFECT ON THE HEART

To discover the extent to which COVID-19 affects the heart, cardiologists and researchers at the Miller School of Medicine have begun multiple studies.

A collaborative study between the school, the American Heart Association, and other U.S. cardiovascular programs seeks to identify the best practices, quality measures, and treatments for patients with COVID-19 and cardiovascular diseases, according to Jeffrey Goldberger, professor of medicine and chief of the Cardiovascular Division.

The research accompanies the University’s recently established COVID-19 Heart Program, which aims to identify and diagnose serious conditions related to COVID-19 at an early stage and protect the heart from serious damage.

Raul D. Mittrani, professor of clinical medicine and director of both the clinical cardiac electrophysiology section and the Electrophysiology Fellowship Program, leads a follow-up study together with other physician-researchers to assess arrhythmia risk.

Another study involves patients with hypertension and other cardiovascular conditions who are taking two types of medications: angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors or angiotensin receptor blockers. Other Miller School researchers are exploring COVID-19 from the biological side, hoping to gain a better understanding of the viral infection process.

—This article included reporting from Maya Bell, Robert C. Jones Jr., and Kelly Montoya.
Lauren’s gift of hope

From victim to thriving survivor, Florida senator and alumna Lauren Book uses her powerful voice to protect children from sexual abuse.

AS PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN FLORIDA’S BROWARD COUNTY PREPARED TO REOPEN WITH VIRTUAL CLASSES IN MID-AUGUST, THE SCHOOL DISTRICT warned employees not to share their COVID-19 status in the workplace or on social media. Issued by the district’s safety chief, the order rankled many educators, but few voiced their objections as loudly and swiftly as Florida Senator Lauren Book. Book, who is running for reelection in 2022, condemned the “see no evil, hear no evil” approach to virus management as “misguided and dangerous.” She demanded the directive be rescinded immediately, and it was.

BY MAYA BELL

Silence will never again be an option for Book, A.B. ‘08, M.S. Ed. ‘12, one of the nation’s 42 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse who, a day before her 18th birthday, publicly shared the dark secret she had kept from her family for six years. Since then, she has become a powerful and persuasive voice for preventing sexual abuse through education and awareness—an advocacy that formally began in 2007, when she and her father established Lauren’s Kids during her senior year in the University of Miami’s School of Education and Human Development.

“So much of who I am and what I am came from my professors,” says Book, now 35 and the happily married mother of 3-year-old twins. “They helped me heal in different ways that I wasn’t in touch with through traditional counseling for trauma. They taught me that I could give kids things that I didn’t have by creating a safe place in a classroom.”

Initially, the nonprofit foundation was little more than a hotline, a toll-free phone number that other victims of childhood sexual abuse could call to confide their shame, their guilt, their fear, and their thoughts of suicide. But in 2010, Book began what quickly became the foundation’s signature Walk in My Shoes trek across Florida. Over the next eight years, she walked thousands of miles from Key West to Tallahassee, stopping at crisis treatment centers, empowering
other survivors with her “It’s OK to tell” message, and influencing the passage of more than two dozen state and national laws aimed at protecting children from sexual abuse and helping survivors heal.

Among them: hard-fought battles against the Catholic Church and the Boy Scouts of America to eliminate statutes of limitation for prosecuting sexual assault crimes against children.

Today, the foundation is one of the nation’s most respected child advocacy and resource centers. Its Safer, Smarter Schools curriculum aims to stamp out the staggering statistics Book learned when in 2010 she returned to the University for her master’s degree in community and social change—1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will be sexually assaulted before they turn 18, and 90 percent of the time their assailant is someone they know, love, and trust.

The curriculum, which teaches kindergartners through 12th-graders how to recognize unsafe situations, avoid traps set by predators, and speak up if they are being victimized, is propelled by another statistic that most motivates Book—that 95 percent of childhood sexual abuse can be prevented with education and awareness.

At last count, Safer, Smarter Schools was taught in 37 states, including Florida, and—through partnerships with UNICEF and Crime Stoppers International—in numerous countries around the world. This expanding reach does not surprise Laura Kohn-Wood. Now the dean of the School of Education and Human Development, Kohn-Wood joined the University in 2009 to implement the master’s degree program in community and social change. She remembers being so impressed with the anti-abuse curriculum that Book developed for preschoolers as a master’s-degree project that she used it with her young son.

“When I met Lauren, she already was a remarkable and incredibly determined young woman,” Kohn-Wood says. “I marveled at how she had survived this horrific childhood to create this incredible model, which was the genesis for Safer, Smarter Schools. She also had something that is hard to teach—and that is vision. She had this vision for how she could use her experience to create a communal safe space to address issues that happen, figuratively, in the dark. That’s perhaps the biggest gift she’s given us.”

Today, with the novel coronavirus pandemic forcing many schools to continue reaching students through online instruction, the foundation’s curriculum and the 10 million education and awareness materials it mails annually may be more important than ever. As schools shut down in the spring and summer camps, sports leagues, and other summer programs were canceled, calls to the Florida Abuse Hotline began dropping. By August, they had plummeted by 26,000, compared with the same time period the year before. Not for an instant did Book, who chairs the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs, think children were suddenly safer because they were home. She knew teachers, counselors, physicians, and other front-line defenders against abuse no longer had a watchful eye on children in harm’s way. Lacking the proper personal protective equipment, even state social workers who investigate abuse reports stopped visiting children in their homes. And, as Book knows too well, home is not always a safe harbor.

Her tormenter was her live-in nanny, a beloved best friend/big sister who joined the Book household when Book was 10. From outward appearances, Waldina Flores showered Book with the affection and attention the girl craved, and her organs were failing. She was self-mutilating. Yet, in 2002, a few months before Flores was sentenced to 15 years in prison, Book managed the first of what would become annual trips to the state capital with her father, Ron Book, an influential South Florida lobbyist. Together, they quietly pushed the Legislature to amend the law that barred her from learning the results of Flores’ HIV test.

“I was angry. I was sad. I was broken,” Book recalls. “And I was determined to fix it. That was really what propelled me to engage in the process and make a difference for other kids.”

By 2006, when Book successfully ran—whoopred—for her first term in the Florida Senate, there were no visible signs of that broken child. Though she was a freshman Democrat in a Republican-controlled chamber dominated by men, she was a force to be reckoned with, a voice for the voiceless that could not be ignored. As the CEO of Lauren’s Kids, she already had numerous legislative victories under her belt and used her insider’s knowledge and growing influence to better protect everything from Florida’s endangered coral reefs to victims of human trafficking.

After the shooting rampage by a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School killed 17 people, including 14 students, Book brought dozens of surviving students to the capital to share their stories and push for what became the first gun-control legislation enacted in Florida in more than two decades. She met with the students what to say, but she made sure they had the opportunity to say it—and perhaps to begin turning their own anguish into healing advocacy.

Some attribute Book’s many accomplishments to the insider’s knowledge and growing influence to better protect everything from Florida’s endangered coral reefs to victims of human trafficking.

Not for an instant did Book, who chairs the Senate Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs, think
We want alumni to know. Your alma mater is here for you. We are bringing the U to you.

― Erica Arroyo

In a discussion moderated by alumna and “Mad Men” television series actress Sela Bammis, A.B. ’07, a panel of successful University of Miami graduates who overcame the 2008 recession shared stories of how they navigated the job search, took risks, and stayed motivated throughout a challenging time. For Scott Key, A.B. ’92, a former Orange Bowl DJ who now heads the sales team for a global marketing firm, the key was to shift his focus. Paige Ford, B.B.A. ’11, a digital marketing expert at Netflix, concentrated on networking. And career development professional Alicia Savage, B.B.A. ’09, pursued micro-credentials.

“Lessons Learned from the Great Recession” was the last of the Alumni Summer Skill-Up webinars, a series featuring successful alumni’s advice and insights to the current career and recruiting landscape. Other topics included career positivity during challenging times and developing skills and connections.

The series was part of a larger effort by the University of Miami Alumni Association to enhance online career resources and digital programming in response to COVID-19. Alumni have online access to new and existing resources, programming, and benefits, including inspiring and educational webinars, courses, mentoring platforms, and an extensive library of digital resources, to support their career growth even in-person events are canceled.

“We are here to support alumni throughout their entire professional careers,” says Erica Arroyo, B.S.C. ’03, M.A.L.S. ’08, associate vice president of engagement, “and especially now as we face one of the most challenging job markets.”

The webinars leverage and highlight the talent, skills, and expertise of the ‘Canes network to offer guidance and resources. Most recently, the Distinguished Alumni Lecture Series brought together four prominent alumni—the Honorable Alex Ferrer, J.D. ’86, Cynthia Hudson, A.B. ’85, Chuck Todd, Hon. ’14, and Maribel Perez Wadsworth, B.S.C. ’93— to discuss the role of media in an election year, moderated by news anchor Jackie Nespeal, A.B. ’89. ‘Cane Conversations, a series led by ‘Canes Communities across the country, features successful alumni discussing a range of topics that has included sustainability, effective storytelling, and the impact of COVID-19 on the entertainment industry.

The first of the series featured University of Miami Trustee Johnny C. Taylor Jr., B.S.C. ’89, president of the Society for Human Resource Management, and Maribel Perez Wadsworth, B.S.C. ’93, president, USA Today Network, and publisher, USA Today at Gannett, who provided insight on navigating the future of the workplace. In another webinar, former NFL player and University of Miami Trustee Jonathan Vilma, B.B.A. ’04, and former global vice president of The Coca-Cola Company Dean Myers, B.B.A. ’80, M.B.A. ’81, shared advice on thriving in any environment.

In addition to digital events, alumni can access a number of tools. These include the Alumni Career Corner, recently launched in partnership with the Toppel Career Center, which provides access to industry articles, resume prep, and career events. Other online resources include the Canes2Canes mentorship and career-sharing platform and Handshake, the University’s official online system for job postings.

Those who are not able to join events live can find them all recorded and published in an extensive digital resource library, which also includes podcasts; online courses; and free master lectures by faculty members, distinguished alumni, and subject-matter experts from across the University’s campuses and the world. Two new massive open online courses, Essentials of Project Management and Cultural Transformation Through Process Improvement, are available exclusively to alumni on demand and at no cost. They are the newest additions to the U’s library of leadership and management courses.

Arroyo says that new online resources are making new friends, connecting with old friends, and staying engaged with the U.

Dozens of alumni tuned in for Coffee with a ‘Cane—informal chats with alumni and faculty experts that covered everything from Earth Week and self-driving vehicles to music and beer—even an afternoon cassette. On social media, a series of ‘Canes Games, including the U edition “tic-tac-toe” and “this or that,” kept alumni and their families entertained.

For the first time, the Black Alumni Society hosted its annual Juneteenth celebration entirely online, complete with Black history trivia, a screening of the TV show “black-ish,” and a discussion of Black independence.

And ‘Canes Communities across the country came together via virtual social hours. Members of the Palm Beach County and Tampa communities, dressed in their best U gear, battled it out in a virtual trivia competition. Broward County ‘Canes answered questions about the University and shared cocktail recipes while Orlando ‘Canes participated in a virtual cooking demonstration. In addition, the Alumni Association organized an at-large ‘Canes Community Bingo Night, bringing alumni together for a fun and entertaining evening and raising money for student scholarships.
Pride Your Ride
Alumni Association unveils new license plate designs

The University of Miami Alumni Association engaged fans from around the world to vote on the University’s next Florida license plate in a single-elimination tournament that launched with eight unique license plate designs and invited alumni, family, and friends to vote in three rounds of matchups. Contest updates and games featured on social media, using the hashtags #PrideYourRide and #Be1of500, provided additional opportunities for fans to show their support for the U and win gear.

“We wanted to give our fans a voice in the selection process,” says Brittany Shaff, assistant vice president for philanthropic giving and digital engagement, “and stir up some ‘Canes spirit.”

The result? There were more than 12,000 votes, 5,000 bracket submissions, 3.2 million impressions on social media, and a whole lot of ‘Canes pride.

And, in response to the many participants who expressed their love for Sebastian the Ibis as part of the voting process, the University released a limited-edition vintage Sebastian novelty plate for any ‘Canes fan across the country.

Funds from every University of Miami Florida license plate and novelty plate go to student scholarships. Since the start of the Florida plate program, nearly 80,000 custom tags have been purchased, raising nearly $2 million for scholarships.

The new official University of Miami blackout license plate will be available to Florida residents in spring 2021 through their local Department of Motor Vehicles office.

Canes Are Driving the Future
Three alumni are helping Ford to build its autonomous vehicle business

When Ford Motor Company decided to build a self-driving business in Miami, it turned to those who know the market best—three University of Miami alumni who were born and raised in the Magic City.

“What Ford is currently testing, and what we are just a few years away from, is technology that allows a driver to disengage completely and a vehicle that will operate without human driver,” Buznego explains.

If you’ve been in Miami Beach, Wynwood, or Downtown Miami over the past two years, you might already have spotted early prototypes, Ford Fusion cars that are labeled “autonomous vehicle” and have a large roof apparatus housing cameras and sensors. They all have two drivers who monitor performance and can intervene if necessary. Part of the mission is to teach the cars to “drive like a Miamian,” Buznego says.

“These pilots will be conducting are around our fleet management and how we service vehicles,” Chong explains. “For example, in a post-COVID world, it will be very important that we build out how we will clean and sanitize our vehicles so that every customer has the best, most trusted experience.”

Rainelli helps facilitate Ford’s collaboration with Miami-Dade County and the state of Florida on the project. Her role also involves engaging in open dialog with members of the community and businesses.

“This is an entirely brand-new mode of transportation and something that the majority of people haven’t been able to experience,” Rainelli says. “If people don’t understand the technology, or trust it for that matter, then it won’t be utilized, nor will it be successful.”

Women of the U
Online series features alumnae who have succeeded in the corporate world

The University of Miami leveraged the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment—giving women the right to vote—to launch a new dialogue series shining a spotlight on influential alumnae who are making their mark on issues women face today.

Called “Women of the U: Leading through Challenge and Change,” the inaugural program featured two members of the University’s Board of Trustees—Martha Marshall, B.B.A. ’66, J.D. ’69, senior vice president and chief inclusion and diversity officer for the Exte Lauter Companies, and Alice Vilma, B.B.A. ’99, managing director, multicultural client strategy, Morgan Stanley—with introductions provided by Yolanda Strader, B.B.A. ’05, J.D. ’09, shareholder, Carlton Fields, and member of the University’s Citizens Advisory Board.

With Vilma serving as the modera- tor, their candid conversation focused on how women can succeed in the corporate world and the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in today’s workplace—a most fitting topic for the historic day on which the event was held. A first-generation American born into a Cuban family, Marshall grew up fascinated by the television character Perry Mason—the original, she points out. As she shared her dreams to become a lawyer and “put bad people in jail,” her traditional grandmother told her that while she felt included because she was the first woman in a male-dom-

inated field “is that you don’t want to mess it up for those who come behind you,” Marshall explains.

She credits her professional success to her willingness to take risks. That meant taking a job as lead counsel for the Playboy Enterprise as it opened its first casino hotel in Atlantic City, joining Cunard Line as general counsel with no background in admiralty law, and culminating with what she calls her “dream job.”

“Inclusion and diversity are part of Exte Lauter’s DNA,” Marshall says. And, she says, the company works at it every day, pushing the boundaries to make it a place where employees can be their authentic selves and in creating an environment that reflects the diverse consumers and communities it serves worldwide.

“We start with the premise that awareness precedes action. We design programs and seminars to raise aware- ness and then we turn that awareness into action,” Marshall says.

The Women of the U Leading through Challenge and Change program featured two members of the University’s Board of Trustees—Marilia Marshall, B.B.A. ’66, J.D. ’69, left, and Alice Vilma, B.B.A. ’99.

After an employee told Marshall that while she felt included because she had a seat at the table, what she really wanted was to know that her voice was being heard and valued, Exte Lauter took its inclusion efforts to the next level. “We launched a program called the ‘Beauty of Belonging’ and had our employees tell us what it meant to them to feel that they belonged, or they didn’t belong,” she says.

People asked how to garner buy-in and allies for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, Marshall says it all comes down to business results. “Our diverse consumer base has been instrumental in getting our word across. The strategy of developing a diverse consumer base—whether it be race, age, or gender— requires a team that shares those same characteristics,” she says.

Vilma reflected a bit of her own career philosophy as part of the discussion, “What I’ve learned is that hard work begets more work. My calling card was that people could count on me to get the job done right,” she says. “When you are up all night grumbling about the work, people are taking notice. That leads to getting stretch assignments, then one promotion and the next.” What ends up happening is you grow your network of people who can be influential in your career.”
Mark Jackson

Mark Jackson, M.A. ’20, newly hired as the sustainability coordinator for the City of Pensacola, has quickly become a voice for the sustainable future of the northern Florida city, advocating for a more robust urban forest environment.

Born and raised on a farm in Paris, Tennessee, Jackson developed an appreciation for the great outdoors. He followed a path into the Marine Corps, where he worked as a mechanic, gravitating toward learning about hazardous materials and environmental risk. While stationed in Hawaii, he risked his life to save his friend and Vietnam-era Marine Corps veteran, who he calls Uncle Rock, a close family friend.

After his military service ended, he moved to northern Georgia to work for the Army Corps of Engineers—assisting in dam, recycling, and pollination projects. After four years, he felt the pull to expand his career horizons.

The University’s 10-month sustainability master’s degree seemed the ideal option. After all, Jackson had long been a fan of the U—and his wife was from Miami—and attaining his goal.

“I wanted to be a part of something greater than myself.” —Kelsey DeSantis

The process of making the video, and all the subsequent media attention, piqued DeSantis’ interest in improving and leveraging her communication skills and led her to enter the School of Communication to pursue her master’s degree in public relations.

Growing up in Southern California, DeSantis was drawn to the idea of military life by the example of the man she calls Uncle Rock, a close family friend and Vietnam-era Marine Corps veteran. She described him as a father figure who taught her about discipline, respect, humility, and character.

DeSantis’ fascination with the world of communications was sparked when she learned that the Ms. Timberlake to the Marine Corps Ball. The video went viral; Timberlake accepted and attended.  

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You are a helpful assistant. I allow other people to see that they can be who they are.” As a gay Haitian-American Black man, who didn’t often see himself represented on TV as a child, he chooses to be vocal about the aspects of himself that he says make him different.

Moise was born and raised in Fort Lauderdale, the son of a Haitian father and American mother. A recipient of the Ronald A. Hammond Scholarship, which covers full tuition, he came to the University of Miami at the age of 16. It wasn’t until his junior year, however, that he discovered a passion for storytelling and switched his major from pre-med to broadcast journalism.

Through the School of Communication and UMTV, the University’s award-winning cable channel, he quickly gained the experience and skills needed for what was to come. “The University of Miami allowed me to grow as a journalist before moving forward into my career,” he notes.

After graduating in 2010 and putting his dream job on hold to travel to Haiti to help with earthquake relief, Moise moved to Atlanta to begin a job at a business and news show on Facebook Watch at the time. Today, he works for ABC News.

“A journalist has a unique ability to change the world through knowledge and inspire others through the stories that we tell,” he points out. “It’s the best job in the world.”

—Lionel Moise continued from page 43

A decorated veteran who served for 30 years in the United States Army, Colonel Alice A. Kerr (ret.), M.A.L.S. ’97, J.D. ’20, recently reached another life milestone: graduating from the University of Miami School of Law. She plans to use her new degree to advocate for other veterans.

Kerr, who grew up in a military family, knew she wanted to be a soldier early on. “For me, service has always been a calling,” she says, “and that’s how I wanted to serve.” She went to college on an ROTC scholarship, after which she immediately joined the Army.

She spent 30 years alternating between active duty military and the Reserves. Deployed to combat during the Gulf War and the Iraq War, Kerr held various leadership roles. Based on her background, expertise, and character, she was also selected to oversee a camp of more than 10,000 soldiers in Iraq, a position until then held only by men and higher-ranking officials.

After retiring from the Army and a 20-year career in IT at the University of Miami, Kerr wanted to help other veterans. She knew that she was in a unique position to do so, understanding the challenges veterans face reintegrating into civilian life, the emotional and physical impacts of combat service, and even the unique military jargon.

It was her desire to serve—and a conversation with Patricia D. White, then the dean of the School of Law—that led Kerr to pursue a law degree in 2016. She hoped to acquire the tools and knowledge she needed to make a significant impact.

“As a law student, Kerr got to work immediately, providing legal support on a number of veterans’ cases. She worked with Legal Services of Greater Miami’s Veterans Advocacy Project, earning the Outstanding Law Clerk award for her dedication to promoting equal justice for all. As a law school admissions ambassador, she encouraged other veterans to return to school.

Kerr now plans to continue this outreach work, while also focusing on policy reform. “A lot of the issues that veterans face—not knowing what they’re entitled to, getting turned down for certain health care benefits—all boil down to a gap in policy and in communication,” she explains.

In celebration of her graduation, Kerr’s wife, Sheryl S. Borg, established the Colonel Alice A. Kerr Veterans Scholarship Fund, which will be awarded to a student with financial need who served their country honorably while on active duty in the United States Armed Forces.

—Alice Kerr

Tori Miller

A lifelong love of basketball helped Tori Miller, B.B.A. ’13, score the job of a lifetime. This summer she was named general manager of the College Park Skyhawks, an affiliate of the NBA’s Atlanta Hawks—and became the first female GM in NBA G League history.

Miller, who graduated cum laude from the University of Miami, credits her time at the U for much of her success. “I went down to Miami during a Harambee Weekend, and I just fell in love,” says Miller, a native of Decatur, Georgia. “That’s how I landed up at Miami, for the best four years of my life.”

While she didn’t compete as a Division I athlete at Miami, basketball has always been an integral part of Miller’s life. “I played all the way through high school. I always joke with people—I’m 5-foot-2, so you would never think that I’m involved in basketball,” she says.

After graduating, Miller spent two seasons as a basketball operations intern with the Phoenix Suns but was unable to secure a full-time job with the team. Undeterred, she embarked on a career in unpaid scouting, splitting her time between Georgia and Delaware to attend local college games.

“I started to get all the emails. I started to get the texts and calls from young girls reaching out, telling me I was an inspiration for them. That’s what really got me.” —Tori Miller

Derek Pierce became general manager of the team, newly renamed the Skyhawks, in 2018, a year before they relocated to College Park. He said that Miller’s enthusiasm and knowledge of the G League were obvious from the start. “She is extremely driven and very passionate about the G League and what it represents,” Pierce says. “She has a great understanding of the league’s inner workings.” In 2019, Miller was promoted to assistant general manager under Pierce, now vice president of player personnel for the Hawks.

“The full import of her ascent to GM did not dawn on her until days after her appointment. “I started to get all the emails. I saw my name on ESPN,” Miller says. “I didn’t understand the magnitude, in the moment. I got texts and calls from young girls reaching out, telling me I was an inspiration for them. That’s what really got me.”

Miller indicated that her time at the University played a meaningful part in shaping her trajectory. “It helped me get out of my comfort zone,” she points out. “I had not gone to Miami, I don’t know if my career would be where it is today.”

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Colonel Alice A. Kerr (ret.), M.A.L.S. ’97, J.D. ’20, left, and wife Sheryl S. Borg, establish a scholarship fund for veteran students.

Alumni Digest

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2016s

Peter A. Wish, A.B. '17, launched the book "The Candidate's 7 Deadly Sins," on March 10th. It combines neurosciences and political psychology to teach a modern way of winning elections. It is a lively and riveting read about his career in the early decades of coaching political candidates.

2017s

Nancy L. Weckworth, M.M. '80, published a book about the story of survival of her husband and life partner John D. Swan, (D.M.A. '71, following massive stroke. The book, “Don't Stop the Music: Finding Your Way in Caring,” was a finalist in the Body Medicine Book Awards and was selected as one of eight best books by the prestigious awarding of a grant and the train manual for anyone who takes care of a family member or friend in addition to managing a career.

2018s

Darrell L. Grant, M.M. '86, has built an international reputation as a pianist, composer, and educator who channels the power of music to make change. Grant recently released a music video of an original song, “Take Flight,” featuring vocalists Michelle Williams. He penned “Take Flight” in 2019 at the request of his son’s eighth-grade teacher, who asked him to write a song that the parents could sing to the children at their middle school class promotion. Since moving to Portland, Oregon, Grant has been named Portland Jazz Hero by the Jazz Journalists Association, received a Northwest Regional Emmy, been named the 2019 Portland Jazz Master, and received a MAP Fund grant. He is a professor of music at Portland State University, where he directs the Legacy Vintage Jazz Institute.

2019s

Donna A. Liberman-Scott, A.B. '69, debuted “Thane the Devil,” a historical fiction novel. Liberman-Scott is an award-winning author of 17th- and 18th-century historical fiction. Before embarking on a writing career, she spent her time in the world of academics. “Thane the Devil” won the first-place Chaucer Award for its historical fiction category and Best Book Award at International Authors & Artists Award.

Ania M. Echenique, B.S. '91, M.D. '91, published a paper in the Journal of Urgent Care Medicine to get the word out on the risk of COVID-19 to try to educate health care professionals on imaging in the early stages in patients presenting with urgent care. Notably, the journal is titled “Chest X-Ray Findings in COVID-19: A National Pediatric Perspective.” In 2019 De Carlos returned to the University to teach a Studio Seminar Studio section at the School of Architecture. Recently, he served as adjunct faculty member at Rhode Island School of Design and Boston Architectural College.

2020s

David T. De Celis, A.B. '91, has been published in the July 2020 peer-review journal “Integrity. De Celis is a founding principal of 20/20 Design, an interdisciplinary firm that often collaborates with artists, educators, and other members of the design and engineering fields. He is the former chair of The Public Art Commission in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he also served on the Mayor’s Arts Task Force. In 2013 De Celis returned to the University to teach an Introductory Architecture Design (WE2001) class at the Boston College’s School of the Arts. Recently, he served as adjunct faculty member at Rhode Island School of Design and Boston Architectural College.

Laura S. Stabile, B.S. '10, is a shareholder at Lewis, Munday, who focuses on insurance coverage and insolvency matters, including debt restructuring and representation of creditors with special emphasis on complex business bankruptcy and commercial litigation. Stabile has been recognized by Florida Super Lawyers (2015-2019). Florida Trend, 2016 “Next Florida Legal Eagle,” and 2018 “Next Florida Legal Eagle.” Top Lawyer (2019-2020) and has received multiple other recognitions.

Celia L. Alvarez, A.B. '94, M.A., M.F.A. '96, M.F.A. '96, recently became the investor in yet another successful Miami startup. She is chairman-elect of the University’s President’s Council and served on the advisory board for The Launch Pad, a collaboration between the University of Miami, Blackstone Charitable Partnerships and The Kaufman Group, which invests in and provides mentorship for students and young entrepreneurs.

Roy L. Weinfeld, A.B. '19, J.D. '19, a credentialed real estate and real estate litigation attorney at the Miami-based law firm, Stahlman & O'Dwyer, and senior advisor to the Miami-Dade County (AREC), Miami Beach Bar Association, City of Miami, Miami-Dade County (AREC), Miami, and Miami Beach commercial brokerages.

Laird A. Lile, J.J.E. '90, L.L.B. '90, is a certified trial consultant and associate professor of psychology at Boston University, and he personally presented it to Neil Armstrong in 1970.

Glenn A. Ogden, B.A. '89, is a longtime community advocate who oversees the course numbering Department of Education’s philosophy and government classes.

Her academic book, “The Chemical Philosophy,” was recently appointed as the Florida Baptist College, (and a Northwest Regional Emmy, been named the 2019 Portland Jazz Master, and received a MAP Fund grant. He is a professor of music at Portland State University, where he directs the Legacy Vintage Jazz Institute.

Mark Vinnegar Jazz Institute.

She oversees the course numbering Department of Education’s philosophy and government classes.

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Mark Vinnegar Jazz Institute.
2000s

David Mullings. B.S. ’10, M.B.A. ’13, was featured on a segment on Bloomberg TV, discussing the topic of Jamaica’s stock market. The interview, “Why Jamaica’s Stock Market is Hot Fuel,” is available to watch on YouTube on the Bloomberg Markets and Finance channel. Mullings, Blue Maho Capital Partners founder, talks about the Jamaican stock market and how hard it is to launch an ETF (exchange-traded fund) on the stock market.

Katherine A. Sanjaya, B.B.A. ’11, M.B.A. ’13, was promoted from associate to associate counselor and continued growing her career in the legal field. Sanjaya has worked with GST LLP and its predecessor, for eight years. Her institutional knowledge comes in handy as counsel, where she is responsible for overseeing GST’s defense in a multi-billion dollar dispute. She has also been responsible for supporting and ensuring the smooth operations of GST LLP’s thriving Miami office.

Mahawa E. Ndeobem, A.B. ’12, released her book “Don’t Be a Stranger: Impressions in Everyday Life,” which was converted from her dissertation that focused on the dedicated students who make the University’s award-winning award-winning student publications possible. Kennedy shared with students how his passion for news started at an early age. As a 12-year-old, he built a news studio in his parents’ home equipped with a police scanner, 14 television sets, and studio lighting.

Betsy F. Earle, B.B.A. ’18, founder of Event Driven Solutions, based in Florida, is proud to announce the celebration of the company’s 10-year anniversary. Earle specializes in trade show logistics, management and corporate events. Earlier in 2020, Earle and her team converted the Miami Beach Convention Center into a manufacturer that has advanced studio lighting and increased demand for the firm’s production equipment and rich production experience in Haigfod (Lianan) Country, China, and Orlanda, Florida.

Samantha S. Chaitram, Ph.D. ’18, is a researcher at the University of the West Indies, and a Spanish interpreter for the Ministry of National Security in Trinidad and Tobago. Chaitram wrote her first book, which was converted from her dissertation and was published by Palgrave Macmillan. Her new book, “The Eighteens to the Twenty-first Century,” is the first to examine the policies of Presidents Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Donald Trump in this context.

2010s

Tyler M. Baran, B.B.A. ’11, social entrepreneur and filmmaker, KPFM, was noted in Cosmopolitan New York Business. Baran works on an important thesis in the real estate world, orchestrating the Women in Real Estate Dining and Networking series and expanding its reach. His film, which features a female executive, was supported by Connecticut Center for Policy and Global Affairs.

Christina A. Bruce, B.S. Ed. ’11, was a member of the women’s rowing team and Christopher M. Malke, M.D. ’12, President 2008-2009, were married on Feb. 12, 2020. In honor of their marriage, the University will remain with the University of Miami and currently works for the Department of Tropical Medicine and the leading brand manager of her factory, Christopher Malke P.C.L, specializing in immigration, property investment, and corporate law.

Meloy J. Evans, B.B.A. ’12, along with five other producers and music producers in Cleveland, A.T. Swartz, A.B. ’12 (Pop/Music) major in Arts and the Middle East and musicology at WGBH in Cleveland, Missouri.

Laura F. Book, B.S.E. ’18, M.S. Ed. ’12, is an internationally recognized child advocate and safety expert, best-selling author, Emmy-winning television producer, and Florida state representative for her service to APRA through substantial contributions toward association goals. The APA is the voice of net for profit, community-owned utilities that power 2 million towns and cities nationwide. Tobrani has been an active member of APRA since 2001 and has contributed an important voice to the goals of APRA.

Brian A. Cavallaro, M.F.A. ’04, produced a virtual graduation with YouTube Originals and the UCLA. The virtual commencement “Graduation Together: America Honors The High School Class of 2020,” had an “amazing list of talent that included Alicia Keys, Zayn, Lady Gaga, and many more who saw their best wishes to the class of 2020 graduates. The celebration also discussed the impact of the pandemic mixed in with musical performances.

Robert J. Kennedy, B.S.C. ’11, host of the E1 series “In the Room,” was presented with the 2020 South Florida Community of the Year Award during an in-person event. Kennedy shared with students how his passion for news started at an early age. As a 12-year-old, he built a news studio in his parents’ home equipped with a police scanner, 14 television sets, and studio lighting.

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2020s

Melanie C. Goergen, Ph.D. ’20, received doctorate in international studies. Her specializations are international relations and international political economy with a focus on European Union trade studies and trade policies. Goergen received her B.A. from Dickinson College. As an European Union citizen, she has contributed to national and international dialogues on future global challenges. Goergen holds two master’s degrees, a master’s degree in history and a master’s degree in political science.

Carol D. Ceccini, B.B.A. ’21, had a successful internship with the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. She was very active and helpful with all the Cleveland Clinic events. Ceccini was also involved in basketball and baseball at the University of Miami Beach.

The University of Miami Alumni Association notes the passing of the following graduates.

Class Notes

The University of Miami Alumni Association Class Notes section provides updates on the passing of graduates. The notes may include details about the individual’s achievements, contributions, and the impact they had on their alma mater. Alumni may share memories, photos, or other tributes to the deceased graduates, helping to keep their legacies alive within the University community.

2010s

Jenny R. Barnes, B.B.A. ’14
Betty Lou Dorson, B.A. ’14
Martin Vein, B.A. ’14, J.D. ’15
Charles E. Biakaloo, B.A. ’15
Sanford J. Reifman, B.A. ’15
Betty L. August, B.A. ’15
Robert T. Mihaljevic, B.A. ’15
Mary L. Hohn, B.A. ’15
William A. Brust, B.S. ’15
Glória M. Dennen, A.B. ’15
Bernard J. Feinerman, B.B.A. ’15
William R. Romano, Jr., B.A. ’15
Peggy L. Cohn, B.A. ’15
Milton Hillman, B.S., M.B.A. ’15, M.D.
Marshall C. Lang, J.D. ’15
George N. Leid Foam, B.A. ’15
Joseph P. McCarthy, B.A. ’15
Gordon N. Williamson, B.A. ’15
Peter Wolff, B.B.A. ’15, M.A., M.D.
Katherine J. Zeafer, J.D. ’15
Theodora A. Gergos, B.S. ’12, M.S.
M. C. Leng, B.A. ’12
Daniel L. Harding, B.A. ’12
Almaz Loo, B.A. ’12
David C. Miller, B.B.A. ’12
Katherine J. Emdin, B.M. ’12, M.S.
Wallace M. Cohan, B.A. ’13
Albert N. Cohen, J.D. ’13
Bar Ilan D. Conrey, B.B.A. ’13
Karen J. Madden, B.A. ’13
Edison W. Bocas, B.A. ’13
Lucie W. Cohen, A.B. ’13
William F. Nolan, B.B.A. ’13
Michael V. Shiveley, M.B.A. ’13
M.D. ’14
Malcolm T. Sordan, B.A. ’14
Patti and Allan Herbert Wellness Center and the University of Miami Alumni Association School of the arts is named in the couple’s honor. Several other schools, colleges, and divisions through the University, as well as the Department of Athletics and the Lowe Art Museum, also honor the memory of classmates with more than $100 million in lifetime giving. Patti and Allan, both members of the Iron Arrow Honor Society, met and fell in love while they were students at the University.

Patti Herbert

Patti Herbert, B.B.A. ’57, a longtime University of Miami benefactor who, with her husband, University Trustee Allan Herbert, B.B.A. ’55, M.B.A. ’58, donated millions to transform academies and student activity buildings at the University, died in July at the age of 84. The Patti and Allan Herbert Wellness Center and the University of Miami Alumni Association School of the arts is named in the couple’s honor. Several other schools, colleges, and divisions through the University, as well as the Department of Athletics and the Lowe Art Museum, also honor the memory of classmates with more than $100 million in lifetime giving. Patti and Allan, both members of the Iron Arrow Honor Society, met and fell in love while they were students at the University.

Mynra Palley

Lifelong developer of the arts Mynra Palley, B.B.A. ’56, died in June at the age of 85. In 2008 Myra and husband Sheldon Shelden, B.B.A. ’55, M.B.A. ’56, donated their personal collection of more than 150 glass art pieces, along with other works of art, to establish the Mynra and Sheldon Palley Pavilion for Contemporary Glass and Studio Arts at the University of Miami. In celebration of the pavilion’s 10th anniversary in 2018, the couple generously sponsored the full reinstallation of the gallery and launched the Myrna and Sheldon Palley Lecture Series, a biennial event that brings leading glass artists to Kohlert Studio at the University’s Coral Gables Campus.
Eugene Sayfe
Eugene J. Sayfe, a world-renowned cardiologist and member of the Miller School of Medicine faculty for more than 35 years, died in May at the age of 85. Sayfe, a graduate of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, was part of the team at the Miami Heart Institute that, in 1969, performed the first heart and kidney transplant in the southeastern United States. At the Miller School, he was an associate professor of medicine and a former medical director of the Executive Health Program. The school’s apprentice program is named in his honor, and every year the Department of Medicine celebrates Eugene J. Sayfe, M.D., Research Day. In 2012 he received the Miller School's inaugural Distinguished Master Clinician Award.

Roselee Roberts
A pioneering woman in the male-dominated aerospace industry, Roselee Roberts, A.B. ’64, died in April at the age of 77. While a student at the University, she met her husband, William “Art” Roberts, B.B.A. ’64, whom she later married. In 1983 she co-founded Women in Aerospace, an industry group designed to support women in the aerospace field. In 2006 she received the University’s Distinguished Miami Alumna Award.

In Memoriam
Roselee Roberts

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree(s)</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roselee Roberts</td>
<td>A.B. ’64</td>
<td>1960-1983</td>
<td>Co-founder of Women in Aerospace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1983-2006</td>
<td>Distinguished Alumna</td>
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Note: The above information is released only to other members of the alumni community or alumni of alumni who request complete group or class reunion information and is shared with outside members who are not related to the University. True. If you would like to know your exact reunion year, please call the Alumni Office for details.

Alumni records of the University of Miami are kept strictly confidential. Alumni records of the University of Miami are kept strictly confidential.
Medical breakthroughs are powered by participation.

You have the power to make a difference. By participating in health research, you can help improve the health of people around the world today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

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REV UP YOUR 'CANES PRIDE

The new University of Miami license plate* hits the road next spring. Style your ride with the University’s sleek, new, all-black design and show off your 'Canes pride. All proceeds support student scholarships because that’s the way we roll at the U.

*Available to Florida residents only

P r i d e y o u r r i d e t o d a y!

alumni.miami.edu/UMplate