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With new mutations of COVID-19 continuing to emerge, raising concerns about the ability of vaccines to manage them, the University is one of a handful of academic medical centers across the country testing COVID-19 samples for the variants and sequencing them.

“Because of our geographic location, it’s very important for us to develop these capabilities,” says Dr. Stephen D. Nimer, director of the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the University of Miami Health System and Miller School of Medicine, who developed the University’s COVID-19 testing program for patients and employees. “If we are able to find other variants, we can then determine whether they are covered by our vaccines and whether they actually cause more severe disease—all of this information is helpful for the world to know.”

Dr. David Andrews, an associate professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the Miller School, is leading a collaborative initiative to track and sequence the emerging variants. Early this year, his team began collecting and testing positive COVID-19 samples for the variants from patients at UHealth Tower and Jackson Health System’s three hospitals, along with University faculty and staff members. By mid-March, the team had ramped up its sampling capacity to 200 samples per week. Simultaneously, a third of the COVID-19 positive samples are also taken for genetic sequencing, a more labor-intensive operation at the Miller School’s Department of Neurology, the team of scientists sequences the samples and feeds them into a global public database to compare against existing variants.

“Something that would have taken weeks or months to do was accomplished in a matter of months,” Fauci remarked.

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, whose career as an infectious disease expert has spanned six U.S. administrations, shared his insights on the evolving coronavirus with a virtual audience of students and faculty members at the Miller School of Medicine’s Department of Medicine’s Grand Rounds, a monthly lecture series that often features outside experts.

As the school’s Hoffman Ratzan Endowed Lecturer, Fauci, the longtime director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, offered a 40-minute talk on “COVID-19 in 2021: Lessons Learned and Remaining Challenges.”

Although noting the decline in case numbers, Fauci cautioned that since first being detected in the United States, the virus had surged three times and each surge had built on the previous one, raising the stakes for hospitals and the overall number of deaths.

“The key here is to get everyone vaccinated to get ahead of the curve so that variants such as the Brazilian P1 or others that have properties of immune escape don’t escape,” says Andrews.

Dr. David Andrews, associate professor at the Miller School of Medicine, reviews data with senior medical technologist Ranjini Valiathan, center, and Paola Pagan, executive director of laboratory operations for UHealth.

Medical technologist Haider Saleh loads COVID-19 samples into a DNA extraction instrument used to detect the U.K. variant.

“Medical technologist Haider Saleh loads COVID-19 samples into a DNA extraction instrument used to detect the U.K. variant.” — Dr. David Andrews

Fauci Discusses Pandemic Lessons, Challenges

The infectious disease expert shares his perceptions about the coronavirus with the Miller School of Medicine community

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Two Worlds Converge

Extended reality (XR) initiative is enhancing ways to live, work, and learn

School of Nursing and Health Studies student Jackie Ferrera wears Magic Leap goggles to develop an application that helps familiarize nurse anesthesia students with a hospital operating room.

Through its new XR Initiative, the University is advancing interdisciplinary efforts to reimagine teaching and learning while supporting students and faculty members who work with extended reality (XR) technology, which explores the interface between physical objects and digital environments. “We live in an age where technologies are rapidly converging, and new computational environments like XR are thriving in collaborative settings,” says Kim Grinfield, chair of the Department of Interactive Media in the School of Communication. “As a relatively small campus with a very diverse faculty, the University is uniquely suited for this interdisciplinary collaboration.”

Founded on the premise that immersive environments seamlessly blending the real world with digital information are destined to become the next pervasive platform for a variety of fields, the initiative is seeding its value in a range of schools and departments. At the School of Nursing and Health Studies, faculty members and students are developing an application using Magic Leap goggles to teach nurse anesthesia students how to familiarize themselves with the operating room. “One of the biggest problems novice learners and junior students face when first introduced to the clinical setting is their lack of confidence and familiarity in the operating room environment,” explains Greta Mitrova-Vladon, D.N.P. ’13, assistant professor of clinical. “Teaching in simulation using XR helps prepare them for the high-risk scenarios they’ll face.”

Dr. Lee Kaplan, director of the UHealth Sports Medicine Institute, is using XR technology to enhance the patient experience at The Lennar Foundation Medical Center. Kaplan helped create an application, co-sponsored by the Miami Clinical and Translational Science Institute, that provides patients the opportunity to virtually tour the main aspects of what they will actually experience on their surgery day. The simulation is geared to decrease anxiety and thereby improve results.

The University’s alliance with South Florida-based Magic Leap, founded by Rony Abovitz, B.S.M.E. ’94, M.S.B.E. ’98, is likewise supporting XR research. President Julio Frenk says the partnership is transforming learning and incorporating spatial computing into the University experience. “Miami is like the Alexandria [Egypt] of the 21st century, a major connector of cultures and influences, and the University is perfectly positioned to advance this exciting, collaborative technology,” he notes.

Jeffrey Duerk, executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, foresees the University leading the way for implementing this technology in the South Florida community. “XR technologies provide limitless potential for fostering collaboration between all of our schools and colleges, which will lead to new inventions and enhanced ways to live, learn, and work,” says Duerk.

The XR Initiative is part of the Roadmap to Our New Century, the University’s strategic plan outlining priorities in advance of its centennial in 2025.

“These technologies are both immersive and interactive, giving students access to hands-on learning and letting them experience remote places without the incurred risks or costs. The possibilities are endless,” says Grinfield.

Elevating Indigenous Perspectives

First-ever course heightens awareness of Native Americans’ rights, issues

Caroline LaPorte, J.D. ’14, has long felt an ingrained responsibility to broaden awareness about Indigenous peoples, an urging rooted in her own history as an immediate descendant of the Little River Band of the Ottawa Indians (Bear Clan) of Manistee, Michigan.

This spring LaPorte manifested that passion, teaching “Introduction to Native and Indigenous Peoples and Perspectives,” a first-ever course at the University that explores the historical injustices and contemporary issues Indigenous people face and the impact of Native American social justice movements on these issues.

The course is the first step of a broader initiative spurred by a group of faculty and staff members who believe that a new narrative of U.S. history is much needed and who ultimately seek to launch a Native American and Global Indigenous Studies (NAGIS) program at the University.

Their efforts are backed by a University Laboratory for Integrative Knowledge (U-LINK) social equity grant. A first event hosted a virtual conversation with Miccosukee environmentalist and educator Betty Osceola, with additional online events taking place throughout the semester.

“We hope to make the Indigenous past and present of South Florida, our hemisphere, and the world a more meaningful realm of scholarly inquiry and social engagement for the entire University community, recognizing the need to support and amplify Native American and Indigenous voices,” says Tracy Devine Guzman, an associate professor of modern languages and literatures who is co-leading the U-LINK team.

Will Pestle, an anthropologist professor who co-directs the NAGIS initiative, said the group was thrilled for LaPorte, a scholar who is well-versed in Native American issues, to join the initiative, since many of the existing University faculty members who study indigenous topics—including himself—are more involved with groups outside of the U.S.

UHealth Gets a New Leader

CEO is a “true partner in building bridges”

Joe Echevarria, B.B.A. ’78, was appointed CEO of UHealth–University of Miami Health System and executive vice president for health affairs at the University, a position he had held on an interim basis. The former CEO and longtime executive of Deloitte LLP will guide UHealth’s comprehensive health network, which includes three inpatient hospital facilities and more than 30 outpatient locations in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Collier counties—with more than 1,300 physicians and scientists.

“Joe’s leadership acumen and financial expertise are precisely what the health system needs at this point in its trajectory,” says President Julio Frenk. “During his time as interim CEO, Joe has recruited several key leaders to UHealth and developed transformational plans to enhance crucial business functions in support of our clinical, education, and research missions.”

The president credits Echevarria’s leadership and stewardship—along with the dedication and sacrifice of UHealth professionals—with enabling the academic health system to successfully navigate the challenges of COVID-19. “Having a CEO who listens to their team and provides clarity is imperative, and Joe has done that during a very challenging year,” notes Dr. Tanit Ferreira, chief medical officer of the University of Miami Hospital and Clinics.

Dr. Henri Ford, dean of the Miller School of Medicine, says the new CEO is “an outstanding choice” to lead the health system. “Joe Echevarria is a true partner in building bridges to shared objectives, someone able to bring different people to the table and build consensus,” he says.

A graduate of the Miami Herbert Business School, Echevarria is a certified public accountant who served in multiple leadership positions over a 36-year career with Deloitte, the multinational professional services firm. A University trustee for seven years, he retired from Deloitte in 2014 and holds positions on the boards of several companies and organizations.
Whitely and Ugalde appointed to new leadership roles

New Senior Vice Presidents

Patricia A. Whitely, Ed.D. ’94, and Aileen Ugalde, I.D. ’91, both longtime University leaders renowned in their fields, were promoted in early February to senior vice presidents for the units they have led for a combined 39 years—the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of the General Counsel, respectively.

While the two launched their University careers in distinct eras—Whitely in the 1980s and Ugalde in the 1990s—both garnered a reputation for being forward-thinking leaders who were instrumental in raising the stature of their divisions.

President Julio Frenk recognizes Whitely as among the most accomplished student affairs leaders in the country and celebrates her “outstanding work in managing the student experience through a myriad of global challenges.”

Professor’s exhibit featured at New York’s MoMA

At the Intersection of Architecture and Race

Germaine Barnes’ architectural installation “Spectrum of Blackness,” which celebrates the range of Black cultural identity in Miami through the lens of architecture, formed part of a spring 2021 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.

Barnes, assistant professor of architecture, was one of 10 Black architects, designers, and artists selected by the prestigious museum to develop new works for “Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America,” a first-ever, all-Black exhibition that juxtaposes urban space with racism and injustice in the United States.

Barnes adhered to all the COVID-19 precautions and traveled to New York for the opening in late February. “I didn’t want to have any regrets about missing this historic moment within the architectural world,” he says.

Originally from Chicago, Barnes has explored Black culture themes in exhibits in Miami that featured the traditional use of the front porch and the dining table. “I try to make my work relatable and to create work that other African Americans who are not architects can still interact with,” he explains.

For this installation, composed of 12 digital collages, two drawings, and a 3-by-5-by-11-foot spice rack sculpture, he chose three lenses—porches, kitchens, and water—to explore Black culture in Miami through items of ethnic familiarity and personal relevance.

While he already had a body of work about porches to draw from, a University provost’s grant, awarded in the fall, prompted his focus on the kitchen as a new topic. “Developing the exhibit was an opportunity to test a lot of my initial research,” he explains. And he included water as a theme “because you can’t talk of Miami without talking about water, and I’m hyper aware of it.”

Inaugural Frost Institute Rises

Construction begins on the Frost Institute for Chemistry and Molecular Science

The first deck of the five-story, 94,000-square-foot Frost Institute for Chemistry and Molecular Science took concrete shape in the beginning of the year, and construction continues apace on the research hub where world-class chemists and molecular scientists will sync ideas with experts from other disciplines to tackle a myriad of global challenges.

Slated to open in the summer of 2022, just east of the McAlmroe Fountain on Memorial Drive, the institute is the first of a planned group of interdisciplinary research centers that will operate under the Frost Institutes for Science and Engineering umbrella.

It “is hard to overstate the role this building will play in moving discovery science forward,” says Leonidas G. Bachas, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and interim director of both the institute and Frost Institutes umbrella, who is seeing a dream come true. “Completion is still a year and a half away, but to watch the progress from my window is very gratifying.”

A landmark $100 million gift in 2017 from longtime benefactors Phillip and Patricia Frost gave flight to the institutes, which are destined to elevate the University’s science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) endeavors.

Jeffrey Duerk, executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, notes that the inaugural institute’s location underscores its importance.

“Chemistry and molecular science give rise to everything that we can see and touch, from the air we breathe, to our thoughts, to the objects we use daily—from our cells to our cellphones,” Duerk says. “It’s fitting that the first of the Frost Institutes is rising at the center of the Coral Gables Campus, where it will propel the University’s trajectory as a leader in STEM research, education, and interdisciplinary discovery.”

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Professor’s exhibit featured at New York’s MoMA

The Business of Opportunity

School’s virtual lecture series explores leadership in times of crisis

President John F. Kennedy famously noted that the word “crisis” when written in Chinese is composed of two characters, one that represents danger and the other opportunity.

With the onset of the pandemic a year ago, the Miami Herbert Business School honored the focus of its existing speaker series to “leadership in a time of crisis” and shifted the venue from the Storer Auditorium to an online platform.

As the pandemic has evolved, a cadre of trailblazing executives—representing an array of sectors, from airlines and ancestry to technology and vaccines—have shared acumen and advice for fostering opportunity in dire straits with a wider audience than ever before.

“As we face one of the greatest challenges to the business community in our lifetimes, it is invaluable to hear the messages shared by these global business leaders on important lessons learned during previous crises, as well as on the leadership traits that should guide decision-making today and tomorrow, when we will need to work together to rebound from the impact of this pandemic,” says Dean John Quelch. Spurred by recent months have included Ajay Banga, CEO of Mastercard; Stephen A. Schwarzman, co-founder of the investment firm Blackstone; Anne Wojcicki, CEO and co-founder of 23Me; Eric Yuan, Zoom CEO and founder; and Patricia Russo, chair of Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

With travel and cost barriers eliminated, the lecture series has observed a surge in its registrants and global reach.

Before COVID-19, the lecture series drew about 250 people on average from the Miami area; now, in virtual space, an average of 1,000 viewers from more than 30 countries log on.

President Julio Frenk recognizes Whitely and Ugalde as leaders in their fields.
Inaugural Racial Justice Grants Awarded

New program supports student-led research initiatives, service projects, and activities that focus on racial justice and equality

As part of the Racial Justice Pilot Grant Program, 13 student-driven projects that seek to foster equity, inclusion, and racial justice across the University and in the greater South Florida community were selected to receive collective funding of more than $55,000 in this first year.

The pilot program, coordinated by the Office of Civic and Community Engagement, Multicultural Student Affairs, and the Butler Center for Service and Leadership, serves as a component of the University’s 15-point plan that was conceived and implemented following the wave of protests for social justice and the rise of incidents of anti-Black racism across the country last summer.

“The Racial Justice Grant Program allows the University to live the mission and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff to be put on paper,” says Christopher Clarke, director of Multicultural Student Affairs, noting that close to 40 proposals were submitted.

Monique McKenny, a fourth-year doctoral candidate and a graduate assistant to the three coordinating offices, guided the grant proposal process, which included workshops and informational sessions. The final proposals were selected by faculty and staff members of the Standing Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

President Julio Frenk announced the final 13 grant recipients in a letter to the University community in early April. Robin Bachin, assistant provost for civic and community engagement, noted that the student teams will collaborate with faculty and staff members and community partners to tackle a broad spectrum of issues.

“It is so exciting to see the breadth of the projects our teams will be developing,” says Bachin, who is also a Charlton W. Tebeau associate professor of history.

“The projects really reflect the diversity of our academic scholarship and teaching at the University, as well as the vibrancy of our local community.”

Grantees will address issues relating to disparities in health and education—strengthening the pipeline of qualified candidates aspiring to higher education, STEM careers, and the arts—as well as the persistent disparities and vulnerabilities that communities of color face with respect to the impacts of climate change.

Renee Dickins Callan, Ed.D., assistant vice president for student life and co-chair of the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, describes the program as a mutually beneficial, hands-on learning experience for students and the community.

“It’s my hope that our University continues to foster sustained, meaningful, and cooperative relationships with the greater Miami community,” says Callan, “that each project brings about innovative ideas that inspire others to contribute in whatever way they can to making a difference.”

Live Music Returns

Frost Music Fest ‘21 puts live music back in the spotlight

With superstar soprano Renée Fleming headlining an eclectic lineup of talented musicians, live music returned to the Coral Gables Campus this spring with a six-hour musical extravaganza: Frost Music Fest ‘21.

The free outdoor concert was held on the intramural fields in front of a limited live audience of students enrolled in on-campus classes and faculty and staff members cleared to return to campus. COVID-19 safety protocols were enforced. Ten student ensembles, which totaled 180 students, performed an array of musical genres—jazz, rock, Latin, R&B, classical, and more.

Fleming’s performance at the concert was backed by the all-student Frost Symphony Orchestra, led by world-renowned Maestro Gerard Schwarz, and special guest pianist Shelly Berg, the dean of the Frost School of Music.

The Frost Band of the Hour, as well as Frost School Grammy- and Latin Grammy-winning faculty members. Singer-songwriter John Spillhoff, whose hit singles have netted more than 100 million streams, performed a set with the American Music Ensemble.

Frost Music Fest ‘21 was also livestreamed, and it offered audience members an opportunity to donate to the Travis Zucchin Opportunity Scholarship Fund in tribute to the gifted musician who tragically lost his life.

Tracking COVID-19 in Wastewater

Last fall, as the University expanded its efforts to detect and stem the spread of COVID-19, Helena Solo-Gabriele, B.S. ’87, M.S. ’88, professor of environmental engineering and associate dean of research for the College of Engineering, led a project to search for COVID-19 in wastewater.

“Research has shown that people will start excreting the virus in their faces and urine before showing symptoms of COVID-19, so the idea is to use wastewater measurements as an early warning for a potential outbreak,” explains Solo-Gabriele.

Her team includes Stephan Schünke, a professor of molecular and cellular pharmacology at the Miller School of Medicine, and Christopher Mason, an associate professor of physiology, biophysics, and computational genomics in computational biomedicine at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City, together with approximately 40 University of Miami students and faculty and staff members.

Last fall, the team began regularly collecting and analyzing wastewater samples from all three campuses. In January, their efforts were bolstered with a two-year, $5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Eric Kohetz, vice provost for research and scholarship, who has been leading the University’s COVID-19 testing, tracking, and tracing efforts, says the new funding will help the team expand its efforts.

“It’s incredible that this team was able to leverage something they were establishing to support the University’s management of COVID-19 for a broader scientific impact.”

Language Can Affect Pain

A new University psychology study suggests that the language a bilingual person speaks can affect physical sensations, depending on “the cultural association tied to each vernacular.”

“The Researcher Workbench is a major milestone in fulfilling the promise of the All of Us program, but for now it may be one of the best kept secrets in biomedical research,” says Dr. Stephan Züchner, professor and chair of the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation Department of Human Genetics and lead principal investigator for the program’s Southeast Enrollment Center (SEEC), which also includes the University of Florida, Emory University, and Morehouse School of Medicine.

“What’s exciting is that it opens biomedical data access to many qualified investigators, including people in the social sciences, basic sciences, sports, and even the arts—the possibilities are endless,” he says.

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The study highlights, first, that Hispanic/Latino communities are not monolithic and that the factors affecting bilinguals’ psychological and physiological responses to pain can differ across individuals,” says Gianola.

Access to All of Us Data

University investigators across all disciplines, who have been providing privacy-protecting data access to many qualified investigators, including people in the social sciences, basic sciences, sports, and even the arts—the possibilities are endless," he says.

Dr. Olavec Carrasquillo, professor of public health sciences and chair of the Division of General Internal Medicine, who is the SEEC’s participant engagement lead, says the most exciting aspect of the program is its success in recruiting minorities, noting that “we’ve seen really robust and good efforts at assisting those who are included.”
Nine student-athletes, including Jose Borregales, D’Eriq King, and Jaelan Phillips from the football team; soccer players Selena Fortich and Tyler Speaks; and rowers Sara Hansen, Taylor Kuligowski, Abigail Schweenger, and Maren Stickley were tapped into the Omicron Delta Kappa national leadership society. “Our athletics department strives to help our student-athletes excel in all aspects of their college life,” says President Julio Frenk, “and I am thrilled to see them continue to meet this level of success in the classroom.”

Brothers ‘Del’ Power the ‘Canes

For the baseball ‘Canes, one of the best surprises of the season was the dynamic play of the Del Castillo brothers, Christian “Delly” and younger brother Adrian “Del.” The brothers Del are back playing together for the first time since Christian was 11 and Adrian 9. And, on any given day, one of the two was leading the team in batting average or runs driven in, according to David Villavicencio, associate director of athletics communications. Adrian, a power-hitting catcher, is a major league prospect who powered the team in a range of offensive stats last year. Yet Christian—who transferred to the University to pursue a graduate degree in biochemistry after starting for three years on Seton Hall’s baseball team and earning his undergraduate degree last year—has proven to be the major surprise.

“He’s consistently come through in a big spot—it’s been awesome and a very positive addition,” says Villavicencio. The chance to come home to Miami, pursue his graduate degree, and play for the Hurricanes he grew up loving offered an opportunity Christian wasn’t about to pass up. He balanced the demands of baseball and graduate studies this season by taking many classes online and having supervisors who offer flexibility for lab and research tasks. Younger brother Adrian continues powering his way toward a chance at playing in the major leagues. With such a Cinderella season, Christian might adjust his sights as well, yet “he has the opportunity to be really successful outside of sports,” notes Villavicencio.

Ajagbe Is Back on Track

Despite the forced break caused by the pandemic, track and field star Debbie Ajagbe picked up where she left off, winning both the shot put event and ACC Field MVP in indoor competition again this year and, in the first meet in outdoor competition, shot-putting a personal best 16.37 meters.

“After my performance in the indoors, I’m ready for more,” says Ajagbe, a senior. “After everything with the pandemic, I was really happy to see that I’ve still got it and was able to come back and basically start up where I left off.” Ajagbe grew up in Miami and, prompted by her three older, very athletic siblings, excelled early in track and field, earning a spot on the varsity team while in seventh grade. “They would say ‘you’re not just smart, you could be athletic, too, if you wanted to’ and pushed me to play sports—especially basketball,” she remembers. “But at the end of the day, I fell in love with track and stuck with it more.” Ajagbe has brought that same spirit to excel on the field and in the classroom to the University. A candidate in the five-year mechanical engineering program, next year she will earn both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees. And, because of pandemic eligibility, she plans to return for another year of competition.

Event coach Cory Young gets lots of credit from Ajagbe for helping her to improve her technique and bolster her confidence. And, her long-term goals still include the Olympics, which were postponed to this summer. “First, I’d like to make it to trials and then maybe to the Olympics,” she says. “This year is just a really good collegiate year for me and, regardless of the Olympics, I’ll try to make a U.S. team for any of the world championships the following year.”

Platform Power

Six University of Miami divers, four men and two women, earned the opportunity to compete in the 2021 NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships in Greensboro, North Carolina, one of five regional meets. Senior team captain Zach Cooper led the cadre of divers, taking third overall in all the men’s platform to notch All-America honors for the third time. “He was so locked in this whole trip and this whole year,” says head diving coach Randy Ableman. “I knew he was going to perform well, and he came through.”

In women’s competition, Emma Gullstrand and Mia Vallée—making their first trip to the championships—both turned in top-10 finishes on springboard events. Four Miami divers—Cooper, Vallée, Gullstrand, and Brodie Scapens—earned All-America recognition this postseason. Jack Matthews was an honorable mention All-America in both springboard events, and Max Floroy finished 18th in the men’s platform preliminaries. “They’re a hard-working group and really on the right track,” says Ableman. “We were good at the conference meet, better at zones, and even better at NCAAs. For the kids who performed, I’m really proud of our results.”

To hear about the challenges the winners of the first University of Miami Athletics Trailblazer Award faced and the legacies they’ve seeded, why outside linebackers coach Ishmael Aristide pivoted from a corporate career to college coaching, and how director of recruiting David Cooney approaches his responsibilities in South Florida high schools, tune in to “Behind the U,” the official podcast of University of Miami Athletics. Launched in December 2020, the weekly podcast offers a lively series of entertaining and engaging interviews with Hurricanes past and present.
As Facebook moves to manage the hate speech and misinformation that circulates on its platform and as calls intensify to reform the legislation that grants internet providers immunity for content on their sites, University of Miami scholars survey these and other critical issues impacting the unruly world of social media.

Sam Terilli, chair of the Department of Journalism and Media Management in the School of Communication, and John Newman, associate professor in the School of Law, offer insights on Facebook’s Oversight Board, the independent body created to rule on emblematic hate speech, misinformation, and violent content posted on the platform.

Neither professor is optimistic that the board is sufficiently empowered to address the core issues relating to content, and both doubt its ability to manage the avalanche of controversial content produced continuously by Facebook’s more than 3 to 4 billion users worldwide.

“Clearly, Facebook has gone to a great deal of trouble—creating an independent endowment for funding [the board], selecting very interesting people from a wide cross section, and even giving the board clear authority to make decisions on its takedowns,” Terilli remarks.

“Yet providing an avenue for people who are upset with what they post, all the rights that are taken down is half the problem at best,” Terilli adds.

Newman identifies four concerns that could undermine the board’s effectiveness: judge selection, case selection, judicial bias, and the court’s subject matter jurisdiction. Yet most concerning for Newman, whose core expertise is in antitrust regulation concerning for Newman, whose core expertise is in antitrust regulation, is the reform or repeal of Section 230.

If Kysha Harriell, M.S.Ed. ’99, M.S.Ed. ’01, Ph.D. ’10, were to offer a juggling performance with a hat for each of her University responsibilities, it would surely be a mesmerizing show.

Her titles are many: executive director of the Office of Academic Enhancement; clinical professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Sport Sciences, in the School of Education and Human Development; chair of the Residential Faculty Program; and senior residential faculty in Mahoney Residential College. Additionally, Harriell chairs the Ethnic Diversity Advisory Committee of the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA).

“I was an athlete myself. I wear a lot of hats, but there’s a lot of weird, unique, and cool overlap,” she laughs. “And at the center of all these roles are the students—I want to do all I can so everyone feels they have the opportunity to be the best they can and find a job they’re passionate about, just like me.”

Growing up in Washington, D.C., Harriell enjoyed watching professional football games with her dad, but one game in particular proved most meaningful.

“An athletic trainer is a licensed and certified health care professional—an emergency medical technician, nurse, and physical therapist combined in one,” she explains.

She’s excited to have just finished writing two chapters in a soon-to-be-published book on women in leadership positions. And recently, she began focusing on recruiting veterans who have experience with being a medic or in medical services in the military to athletic training.

Whether in the classroom, the residence halls, or the Office of Academic Enhancement, or speaking to groups around the country, a common fabric binds all the hats Harriell wears: passion for educating about her field and an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

—Michael R. Malone
DCC XI Ignites Global Support to Raise $6.3 Million
Participants and volunteers virtually and in person supported the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center

Parts of the 11th annual Dolphins Challenge Cancer (DCC) event on April 10 had to be reimagined to ensure safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the enthusiasm of the thousands of participating supporters of Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center—both virtually and in person—could not have been stronger. Cries of “One team, one fight!” could be heard throughout Hard Rock Stadium much of the day as cyclists, walkers, and runners crossed the finish line, their fundraising efforts bringing in about $6.3 million, so far.

“The DCC has raised over $445.5 million over the past 11 years, 100 percent of which goes directly to Sylvester,” says Dr. Stephen D. Nimer, director of Sylvester, who led the 100-mile ride. “Those funds have played a significant role in helping further innovative cancer research.”

The Miami Dolphins made a record-setting $75 million commitment to fund research at Sylvester, part of the University of Miami Health System and Miller School of Medicine, last November. University President Julio Frenk launched the DCC’s 35-mile ride, which left from the University’s Coral Gables Campus. Jacqueline Travisano, executive vice president for business and finance and chief operating officer for the University, served as DCC chair for the past two years.

“Last year, the DCC was the last major event we held before the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic,” Frenk told participants.

“Today, it is the first major event as we anticipate an end to the acute health emergency—thanks to the heroic efforts of health care workers and the astounding feat of science that delivered vaccines in less than a year.”

Tom Garfinkel, president and chief executive officer of the Miami Dolphins, opened the 15-mile ride by thanking the cyclists and reminding them that “you don’t have to have cancer to fight cancer.”

Laurie Silvers Elected Board of Trustees Chair
The double alumna, attorney, media entrepreneur, and philanthropist has been a trustee for the past 15 years

Media entrepreneur, prominent attorney, and philanthropist Laurie Silvers, A.B. ’74, J.D. ’77, is the new chair of Miami’s Board of Trustees, becoming the only third woman to lead the body that governs one of the top private research institutions in the nation.

Silvers—who has served as a trustee for the past 15 years, chairing several initiatives, including the investments committee—is co-founder of the SyFy channel. Her meteoric rise in the media industry followed a 10-year career as a communications attorney. She is currently the co-CEO of Hollywood.com, the majority owner of four Florida FM radio stations, and a co-founder and the majority owner of the global news organization Mphis—which counts the Miami Heat, Orlando Magic, and Cleveland Browns as its minority owners.

Along with her husband, Mitchell Rubenstein, Silvers is a passionate supporter of the University of Law, creating an endowed distinguished professorship and funding student scholarships. The Laurie Silvers Mitchell Rubenstein Hall, which houses the school’s award-winning clinics, is named in her honor.

Other new positions on the board include Manuel “Manny” Kader, chairman and CEO of MBM Auto Group, and Johnny C. Taylor Jr., B.S.C. ’89, president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management, as vice chairs. Geisha Williams, B.S.I.E. ’83, and Marvin Shanken, B.B.A. ’65, founder and chair of M. Shanken Communications, Inc., are rejoining the board as regular trustees. The board also elected Christopher Chen, M.D. ’00, CEO of ChenMed, as alumni trustee, and Landon Coles, the 2021-22 Student Government president, as student trustee.

New ex-officio trustees are Carlos Guzman, B.B.A. ’83 (president-elect, Citizens Board), president and chief operating officer of ATM Global Brands, and Marchel Wadsworth, B.S.C. ’83 (president-elect of the Alumni Association), president of USA Today Network, president of news at Gannett Media, and publisher of USA Today.

The board also elected Christopher Chen, M.D. ’00, CEO of ChenMed, as alumni trustee, and Landon Coles, the 2021-22 Student Government president, as student trustee.

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One of the top private research institutions in the nation, Miami—once the “new kid in town” led to a sense of chaos and, in North Florida, being the “new Black kid,” he says, made him a target.

“Harassment? Jokes? That’s daily life and just how it is being Black in America,” he says.

Because the local school was “not a vibe,” his parents transferred Crosby and his brothers to a private school and drove an hour a day to take them. Things got “really heated” there, too, when Crosby made some “pretty insensitive” comments that prompted calls for his suspension by white parents and students at the school.

“I would have been,” he remembers, “except the one Black professor at the school threatened to quit her job if I was suspended.”

He was sanctions were to write a paper about the incident.

Crosby wrote eight pages—

force of Gravity
Sophomore Julian Crosby creates Gravity
Magazine to inspire appreciation of Black culture

When Julian Crosby met with officers of the National Association of Black Journalists to strategize for what would become Gravity Magazine, the first publication on campus dedicated to celebrating Black creative excellence, he envisioned an outlet for Black students to share their personal narratives while also inspiring all students to better appreciate the many contributions of Black culture to society. Gravity, an online publication that debuted in August 2020, surfaced in the wake of the unrest related to the killing of George Floyd and the galvanizing impact of the Black Lives Matter movement.

“When this was the timing, I didn’t want it to be a product of BLM or to be a marketing gimmick that the school got behind,” says Crosby, a Hammond Scholar, Foote Fellow, and honors student. “There are huge, huge social crises at the foundation of what we’re doing, but I was just trying to foment some type of peace.”

At its core, he explains, “Gravity is a safe space for Black art to thrive, a space where you can come, write, paint, or create in a very tense time.

“Ever since I was little, I’ve always used art as a type of escape—like quitting my basketball team to perform in the school musical,” he continues. “I’ve always been a writer and always been into art as a way of expressing myself and venting frustration.”

He grew up in a military family—his dad was an engineer who worked on nuclear submarines—and moved regularly, all over the country before settling for a decade in Jacksonville, Florida, where Crosby went to high school.

Four other siblings—one of them a twin brother—provided lots of companionship. Yet always being the “new kid in town” led to a sense of chaos and, in North Florida, being the “new Black kid,” he says, made him a target.

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Launched this year but built on more than a decade of investments in computing infrastructure and expertise, the Institute for Data Science and Computing is positioning the University at the core of the data revolution.

A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO GLOBAL WARMING, CONCRETE PRODUCTION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GLAUCOMA, ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF IRREVERSIBLE BLINDNESS IN THE WORLD—except perhaps at the University of Miami, where two faculty members hope to show how data science and computing can address critical problems in their respective fields.

An assistant professor of civil, architectural, and environmental engineering, Luis Ruiz Pestana aims to use machine learning to create the first computer model that simulates how concrete deteriorates over time. His ultimate goal: Develop a more durable microstructure for concrete, enabling bridges, buildings, and highways to last centuries, rather than decades.

An assistant professor of ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Dr. Swarup Swaminathan is using advanced statistical modeling to comb thousands of patients’ records for clues that will predict which individuals are at greatest risk for rapidly progressing glaucoma—so sight-saving interventions can begin before it’s too late.

Both of their ideas have paradigm-shifting potential but, for now, are budding experiments supported by new interdisciplinary grants from the University’s Institute for Data Science and Computing, or IDSC (pronounced i-disk). Formally launched early last year—just before the novel coronavirus pandemic shut down most of the world—IDSC evolved from one of the University’s most successful experiments, the Center for Computational Science (CCS), with the ambitious mission to transform the University into a global epicenter of data science through research, education, ethics, and workforce training.

BY MAYA BELL
“Data is everywhere. Everybody creates it, everybody uses it, and every day it grows in volume, velocity, variety, and veracity,” says Nick Tsinoremas, vice provost for research and computing and the founding director of both CCS and IDSC. “The question is, how can we use data as an asset? How can we extract information and gain insights from complex data sets to solve complex problems? And what are our responsibilities? How do we ensure the data is secure? That we are using it ethically? That we do good with it, that we make a difference in our community—and the world?”

When Tsinoremas, an international leader in computational genomics and bioinformatics, launched CCS in 2007, it was hoped the center would become the hub for the high-performance computing and software engineering needed to elevate the University’s problem-solving research. But nobody knew if it would work. After all, the institution had no advanced computing cyber infrastructure, no culture of sharing resources across disciplines or campuses.

“Everyone was putting their own computing power in their closets or under their desks,” recalls IDSC deputy director Ben Kirtman, professor and director of the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, who joined the University and CCS as program director for climate and environmental hazards. “So the whole concept of bringing together resources to produce something greater than the sum of the parts was a new idea. We didn’t know if faculty would embrace that.”

Thirteen years later, thanks to the University’s vision and investments in one of academia’s largest centralized cyber infrastructures and expertise in software applications that support research and data-driven discoveries, CCS’s successor is poised to catapult the University into the center of the data revolution and help propel Miami’s emergence as an international tech hub.

Even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, IDSC launched its new grant program to pair researchers who have big ideas with data scientists, spearheaded education initiatives to meet local workforce needs and promote an understanding of data science among students and the public, and established numerous academic and industry partnerships that are advancing real-time solutions to real-world issues.

“We will advocate for data science education for every student at the University because every student needs to be data science savvy.”

—Nick Tsinoremas, Vice Provost for Research and Computing

IDSC has developed a first-of-its-kind COVID-19 early detection platform that enables local residents to self-report symptoms and researchers and decision-makers to visualize data and identify hot spots.

Ph.D. Student Tomas Pribanic hopes his silent drone will be an urban cargo delivery game-changer.

Researchers are exploring the interface between the human brain and technology through a collaborative international initiative.

“Data science is advancing real-time solutions to real-world issues—helping humans solve complex problems.”

—Jeffrey Duerk, executive vice president for academic affairs and provost

SUPPORT FROM PHILLIP AND PATRICIA FROST AND THE KNIGHT FOUNDATION PROVIDES NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD THIS REVOLUTION.
It won’t be long before everybody will depend on data science to do their work.

Now recruiting the initial endowed faculty chairs, Tsinoremas says they will likely include leading experts in smart homes, smart cities, and digital health, which are key areas of IDSC research, along with programs in earth sciences, data ethics, data visualization, communication, and design. And their addition, he says, will not only draw more renowned technological expertise to the University and the community but also help the institution meet its goal of infusing data science throughout the curriculum and ensure that every student, from music to math majors, graduates with a degree of data-savviness—if not a new master’s degree in data science.

In collaboration with various schools and colleges, CCS and IDSC spearheaded the creation of the University’s new master’s degree program in data science, which has tracks in technical data science, data visualization, smart cities, and marine and atmospheric science. Launched last fall with 15 students, the master’s degree program attracted more than 50 applicants for this fall.

Also new this fall: the first introductory course in data science for first-year students. Called Data Science for the World, it was developed under the guidance of Mitsunori Ogihara, a professor in the Department of Computer Science and program director for big data analytics and data mining. New leading IDSC’s workforce development and education initiatives, he has long believed that every college graduate should know how to do basic computer programming and data analysis.

“Today, that is a fundamental skill of a college graduate,” Ogihara says, “because the more data you have, the better-informed decisions you can make.”

But the most vital role of the IDSC chairs will be to bring new ideas and insights to the highly skilled and collaborative data scientists already at the heart of the institute and catalyze research with industry and government partners that will generate a new wave of data-informed practices and solutions to real-world problems—something that is already well underway.

A prime example is IDSC’s collaboration with General Electric Global Research to develop smart technology that will promote healthy aging at home—improving quality of life while reducing health care costs. Among the ideas being explored are apps that would remind seniors to take their medications or sensors that would check their vital signs every day and alert them to potential dangers—like a sudden step down into their garage or high levels of pollen or pollutants outside their home.

“The need for these things was obviously accelerated by the pandemic, but it was also driven by the desire of many aging individuals to not move to assisted living facilities or nursing homes, and, instead, to age gracefully in the comfort of their own homes,” notes Yelena Yesha, visiting associate professor and IDSC’s chief innovation officer who, among many initiatives that capitalize on real-time data, is also collaborating on a blockchain project to detect and track fake news by identifying the source in real time.

Today Tsinoremas is confident that the University’s unparalleled infrastructure, which allows real-time analysis, will attract more top talent who can help drive data science research, applications, and training to new heights. Just during the past few years, the University installed Triton, one of the fastest supercomputers in the nation that, customized for the University by IBM, can process artificial intelligence and machine-learning workloads in real time.

The University is also the first to deploy AT&T’s 5G+ and multi-access edge computing technology, which will deliver more data from the internet to wireless devices at a faster pace. And, it has invested nearly $5 million in the University of Miami Laboratory for Integrative Knowledge, a key element of the University’s Roadmap to Our Next Century aimed at nurturing the cross-campus collaborations the University envisioned when it recruited Tsinoremas to launch its fledging “experiment” 13 years ago.

Now, with IDSC’s own first round of interdisciplinary grants, early-career researchers like Ruiz Pestana and Swaminathan, who both joined the faculty in 2019, have the opportunity to use IDSC’s powerful computation and analytic resources to test their ideas for transforming the production of concrete or identifying patients with aggressive glaucoma—and are eager to become skilled data scientists themselves.

“All of these things that we are funding have potential to be transformative science breakthroughs. Some are going to hit. Some are going to miss. That’s the nature of science,” says Kirtman, who now leads IDSC’s Atmosphere, Ocean, and Earth Science program and predicts that it won’t be long before everybody will depend on data science to do their work. “It wouldn’t surprise me if there’s a button, an app on your phone, that you’ll be able to ask certain kinds of questions and is going to use data science to produce the answers.”
BY ROBERT C. JONES JR.

A long-range system spearheaded by Ben Kirtman, a University of Miami atmospheric scientist, is helping to predict weather hazards weeks in advance.

They said it couldn’t be done—that a forecast model capable of predicting environmental hazards up to 30 days out was impossible. But Ben Kirtman, who as a teenager became fascinated by the impacts of weather after heavy rains flooded his Southern California home’s basement, proved the naysayers wrong.

Pooling the powerful resources of the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science with entities like NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Kirtman spearheaded the creation of a model that has been every bit the scientific version of a crystal ball when it comes to producing accurate, real-time, and long-range forecasts for a multitude of weather events.

THE SUBSEASONAL EXPERIMENT

SubX

A long-range system spearheaded by Ben Kirtman, a University of Miami atmospheric scientist, is helping to predict weather hazards weeks in advance.
Since its rollout four years ago, the Subseasonal Experiment, or SubX for short, has performed remarkably well, accurately predicting a variety of harsh weather events. These include the severe cold wave that hit the midwestern United States and eastern Canada in early 2019, the Fourth of July heat wave that enveloped Alaska later that year (temperatures reached 90 degrees in Anchorage), and the extreme rainfall from Tropical Storm Isaias that drenched the Caribbean and U.S. East Coast in the summer of 2020.

But what makes those forecasts and others so exceptional is the time factor. SubX generated those weather outlooks weeks in advance—and in the case of Isaias, nearly a month before the storm even formed.

Its latest forecasting feat? Early this year, it accurately forecasted nearly a month in advance the collapse of the Arctic polar vortex that brought freezing temperatures, snow, and ice to many parts of the U.S., with Texas being hardest hit.

**“Heatwaves, floods, droughts, fire, the increased or decreased likelihood of hurricanes—it was designed to predict it all.”**

—Ben Kirtman, atmospheric scientist

A plethora of different forecast models is the key to SubX’s exceptional precision. In addition to forecasts produced by the Rosenstiel School, NASA, and NOAA, SubX incorporates models from the U.S. Navy, Environment Canada, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research, creating real-time weather outlooks three to four weeks into the future.

“The diversity of tools—in this case, multiple forecasts—is critical,” explains Kirtman, professor and director of the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the Rosenstiel School, as well as deputy director for the University’s Institute for Data Science and Computing. “Just like the diversity of ideas in an institution is important to come up with the best solution, the diversity of prediction tools is important here because any one model has biases,” he says. “If we had used only one tool that wasn’t very good at predicting the breakdown of the polar vortex, we would have missed accurately forecasting that event.”

The degree to which those six models will agree varies. In some cases, one model may break from the others, rendering a completely different forecast. “You want to factor in the chance that you might be wrong, and the best way to explore a realistic assessment of the range of possible outcomes is to use a multi-model approach,” Kirtman says.

Five of the six models predicted the 2021 polar vortex breakdown, with the forecast generated by the Rosenstiel School being the most accurate, according to Kirtman. “But there’ll be times when our model isn’t the best,” he explains. “Sometimes, it’s going to be the best. Sometimes it’s going to be the worst. Sometimes it’s going to be the middle of the pack. That’s the strength of the system.”

And whether it be one model operating best over the Indian summer monsoon region or another that performs well over Southern California, each has its own strengths and weaknesses, Kirtman notes. “It’s also dependent on what time of the year the forecasts are made. If we’re in an El Niño or La Niña year, some models may perform better than others,” says the researcher, referring to the periodic changes in Pacific Ocean sea surface temperatures that can affect weather around the globe.

Along with atmospheric data, all of the models factor in oceanic conditions. “In the past, we haven’t done that,” Kirtman notes.
MODELS POWERED BY SUPERCOMPUTERS

The process by which those models are constructed is grounded in computing. In a comprehensive process of data assimilation, SubX scientists incorporate an abundance of information—culled from satellite telemetry, weather balloons, ocean buoys, drones, and radio sondes—into each of the six models, feeding the data into powerful supercomputers that make the complex computations required to produce the forecasts. “The entire international observing system is leveraged,” Kirtman says.

The Rosenstiel School relies on the power of Triton, the supercomputer of the University of Miami Institute for Data Science and Computing, to build its forecast. With upgrades of each model occurring at different times, SubX will continuously evolve, Kirtman points out. “Every year or so there’s a new version of a model coming into the system and an old model cycling out. So that leads to constant improvement.”

SubX is not the first forecasting tool to use a multi-model approach. Ten years ago, Kirtman played an instrumental role in developing the North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME), a seasonal forecasting system consisting of several different models from a conglomerate of North American-based modeling centers.

But the NMME differs from SubX in the type of models used and the frequency in which they are issued. “The overlap is in the basic concept that the multi-model approach is the best technique for producing well-calibrated, robust estimates of what future weather is going to look like,” says Kirtman.

“With the NMME, we’re looking at what’s going to happen six to nine months from now, so the update cycle is much less—once a month, actually. SubX has a much higher frequency of forecasts. We want to know what weeks and four are going to look like. So we’re updating that forecast every seven days.”

The SubX forecasts are global in nature, and regional and local forecasters can use them to construct more location-specific forecasts for their area, “a detailed outlook of what’s happening over Miami, for example,” Kirtman indicates.

While SubX has been remarkably accurate in forecasting environmental hazards like the collapse of the polar vortex and the subsequent frigid weather that sent Texas plunging into a deep freeze, the project is still experimental and lacks the official NOAA endorsement that’s been bestowed upon the NMME. “SubX data aren’t run through a government computer. So getting people to use it when it doesn’t have that umbrella over it has been a challenge,” Kirtman says. But given the experiment’s success rate, that could and quite probably will change.

BENEFIT TO SOCIETY

In the hands of emergency managers, utility companies, and corporations, the publicly available SubX data can be a powerful tool, allowing such entities to make critical decisions such as when to stockpile energy resources, insulate pipes, or reposition line workers and bucket trucks. Such entities are already making use of SubX’s publicly available data. But to what extent, Kirtman isn’t sure.

“We know a little bit just based on what they’re asking for. The Air Force once asked for specialized graphics, for example,” Kirtman recalls. “But the way to think about the interaction with users is that it covers an entire range. Some users are very sophisticated. They’ll download our data directly and not tell us anything about what they’re doing and produce all kinds of value-added products. And we encourage that. We like to hear back from them once in a while,” he adds.

“A lot of private sector folks are using it. But they don’t tell us about it. We try to document how much they’re downloading, but we don’t know how they’re benefitting from it because a lot of what they do is proprietary.”

With SubX being funded by NOAA, an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce, that process, according to Kirtman, “is exactly the way it should happen, driving economic return. We provide the backbone. Whether that be in a particular region or for a particular business sector, they’re driving their decision-making based on the output of our forecasts.”

What Kirtman does know is that people in the energy and agricultural sectors can be very sophisticated in how they’re using SubX data. A public utility company in the region ahead of the harsh conditions. “Or if they’re a farmer in Florida and know there’s a freeze coming three to four weeks from now, they have plenty of time to pivot in terms of protecting crops,” Kirtman explains.

And therein lies the strength of long-range forecast models like SubX. “The better the forecast, the better the goal that’s actually going to happen—whether it be a once-in-a-hundred-year event that you should be prepared for, or is it a once-in-a-thousand-year event that’s just too remote of a possibility to control for,” Kelly notes. “But most everyone should be aware of weather risks. They should have been prepared for it. And that points to the value of having good long-range forecasts.”

While SubX can help emergency managers and utilities prepare for natural disasters like the brutal winter storm that devastated Texas, there is a certain amount of pressure on our team to start to seek out people who are interested in using it,” Kirtman says. It is a difficult process to build that kind of trust, but the SubX team seems to be winning over more constituents.

“It is a difficult process to build that kind of trust, but the SubX team seems to be winning over more constituents. As scientists, knowing that we’re working on something that’s actually going to be an issue, it’s a nice feeling,” he says. “People are making decisions to save lives and protect economic security using the data we produce—and that’s huge.”

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People are making decisions to save lives and protect economic security using the data we produce—and that's huge.

—Ken Kirtman

NEARLY A MONTH IN ADVANCE, SUBX ACCURATELY FORECASTED THE COLLAPSE OF THE ARCTIC POLAR VORTEX THAT BROUGHT FREEZING TEMPERATURES, SNOW, AND ICE TO MANY PARTS OF THE U.S. WITH TEXAS (ABOVE) BEING HAREST HIT.
Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, the University of Miami is accelerating innovations, technologies, and initiatives that will lead to a stronger, more resilient institution by 2025.

THE NEW ROOF ON THE FROST INSTITUTE FOR CHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR SCIENCE IS AMONG THE OBVIOUS CHANGES; OTHERS AREN’T AS VISIBLE—unless you peek inside classrooms where professors who hadn’t attempted online teaching before are experimenting with extended reality platforms to immerse students in new worlds. As the University of Miami marches toward its centennial in 2025, the institution is emerging from the yearlong tumult inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic on a new and accelerated course envisioned by the Roadmap to Our New Century. Adopted in 2018, the strategic plan guiding the University toward the century mark prophetically states that priorities are driven by “our capacity for resilience and renewal in the face of unprecedented changes affecting our community and all of higher education.”

President Julio Frenk says the way faculty, staff, and students navigated and leveraged unforeseen circumstances gives him great confidence that the University is rising to its potential. “In some areas of endeavor, including remote learning, telehealth, and telework, we have seen more progress in the past year than we had in the prior decade,” Frenk says. “We have witnessed—and will continue to embrace—not only our resiliency in the face of challenges but our ability to truly transform the way we think and interact.”
That was evident in two University-wide initiatives that gained considerable momentum over the past year. The ‘Cane Commitment committee, co-chaired by Robin Bachin, assistant provost for civic and community engagement, and Renee Dickens Callan, Ed.D. ’94, executive director of student life, is exploring how the University can equip every student with the “practical intelligence”—such as the ability to be effective team members and creative problem-solvers—they’ll need to navigate the changing workplace and world.

And the Resilience Academy committee, co-chaired by Rodolphe el-Khoury, dean of the School of Architecture, and Sharan Majumdar, professor of atmospheric sciences at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, began developing the framework for an academic unit that can address the impacts of climate change and other perils.

The empowering forces of innovation are perhaps most evident in the priorities aimed at shaping the education revolution. Along with the Division of Continuing and International Education and Academic Technologies, the new Platform for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (PETAL) stepped up with workshops, resources, and a new mentoring program designed to advance the art of teaching and the science of learning in a new world.

To date, 170 faculty members have each completed six PETAL workshops, and more than 540 have taken at least one.

“All of a sudden you had to look at how you teach, what you teach, and the way you teach, which has not been part of our research-focused training,” says Laura Kohn-Wood, dean of the School of Education and Human Development. “What’s so great about PETAL is that it says, ‘We’re going to be excellent in teaching, and we’re going to provide the resources so we can be.’”

Three new teaching awards, for mentorship, innovation, and experiential learning, will recognize the best of the best. The University also committed significant resources to its XR Initiative, which already boasts more than 40 extended reality projects aimed at enhancing learning, informing research, and improving clinical and commercial operations. Established last year, it was built with industry partners on the premise that environments that blend the real world with digital information and virtual, augmented, or mixed reality will shape the future of communication, education, health care, and work.

“These technologies are both immersive and interactive, giving students access to hands-on learning and experiencing remote places without the incurred risks or costs,” says Kim Grinfeder, chair of the Department of Interactive Media in the School of Communication, who spearheads the initiative.

The University’s mission-driven research priorities also gained momentum, some fueled by the emergence of COVID-19 and the growing awareness of the pernicious effects of structural racism.

In response to both challenges, the University of Miami Laboratory for Integrative Knowledge (U-LINK) awarded its first rapid-response grants. Drawing 70 ideas in 10 days, the initial grants supported proposals aimed at broadening the understanding of COVID-19 and mitigating its impacts.

The second set, aimed at advancing dialogue about and solutions for racial inequalities, drew 25 proposals from the most diverse representation of faculty since U-LINK began in 2017 to foster the interdisciplinary collaborations essential to addressing complex problems. Most of the seven winning proposals focused on local disparities, among them the lack of Black students in the University’s own research labs, which has troubled Ashutosh Agarwal.

An associate professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering, Agarwal spearheaded the Joint Academic Nurtureship for Underrepresented Students (JANUS) to address a known cause: Black students who must work to afford college usually can’t volunteer in a lab to gain the experience they need to pursue advanced degrees and research careers. Now, paid internships with some of the University’s most notable researchers are giving 10 JANUS scholars that experience. In turn, the students are mentoring underprivileged high schoolers who, the hope is, will follow in their footsteps.

The University’s other strategic investments in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) also have made tangible progress since 2017, when longtime benefactors Phillip and Patricia Frost launched the Frost Institute for Science and Engineering with a $100 million gift to elevate the University’s STEM endeavors. The inaugural center, the Frost Institute for Chemistry and Molecular Science, broke ground on its five-story wet lab building last October.

Four months later, just before the pandemic brought the world to a standstill, the second Frost center, the Institute for Data Science and Computing (DSC), attracted a combined $12 million endowment from the Frosts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to help transform the University into a global epicenter of data science.

By this side of the world we find ourselves well positioned to come out of the pandemic because we didn’t just come to a halt,” says Gregory Shepherd, former dean of the School of Communication who is overseeing the Roadmap as interim vice provost for academic innovation. “In some ways, Zoom facilitated the work because it became easier to come together. We’ve had the gift of both faculty and staff time devoted to developing projects, and a lot of mutual appreciation has grown from that.”

EDSC is now positioned to propel Miami’s emergence as a hemispheric innovation hub, which the pandemic also accelerated. Combined with South Florida’s warm weather and lower cost of living, the growing shift to working from home is attracting new tech entrepreneurs, start-ups, and venture capitalists. And they will, no doubt, look for University graduates capable of growing—and growing with—their ventures.

In addition to the University’s new Master of Science in Data Science program, EDSC is spearheading the effort to ensure that every student graduates with a degree of data-savviness.

That’s already happening at the ‘Cane Angel Network, an investment start-up for University-affiliated start-ups. The network was built from scratch by graduate students who, under the guidance of managing director Jeffrey Camp, wrote the manual and vetting process for matching promising start-ups to potential investors.

So far, ‘Cane Angel Network students have brought five companies to potential investors, but because they collect the same information from many others that don’t make the cut, they are looking for patterns that suggest which ventures are likely to be successful—patterns that will grow clearer as the data grows.

With its hands-on learning and drive to mine solutions from ever-increasing reams of data, the network is already following the University’s new north star. Now, Camp foresees a future where more classes will offer similar levels of experiential learning. “At the end of the day, you’re ultimately teaching someone to do something,” he says. “So, getting past the teaching part to the doing part seems like a natural progression.”
Howard Schnellenberger led the Miami football program to its first national championship in 1983 and laid the foundation for an unprecedented run of success. He is known not just for the work he did on the field but for the impact he had on the University and in the community.

When Howard Schnellenberger arrived at the University of Miami, he took one look at his new players and made them a promise. “It was a demand, not a negotiation, that we were going to win a national championship. It wasn’t about hoping or believing a fairy tale. We were there for that, and for all of us that he coached, he changed our lives. That first meeting set the course for his history and changed the history of the University of Miami,” Bailey continues.

Schnellenberger was “the face of Hurricanes football,” says Jay Brophy, a former Hurricanes linebacker. “Without him, I don’t know where I’d be. He helped me believe anything was possible if you were willing to work for it. He was the role model for all us young men—tough, strict, and most of all, honest. He was totally loyal to his family and his team and was the best, smartest football coach I ever played for.”

For much of his career as a college coach, Schnellenberger was recognized as a program-building pioneer. Before he took over at Miami in 1979, the team was floundering, and the school had discussed the possibility of either playing at a lower level or eliminating football completely.

Four years later, Schnellenberger’s Hurricanes upended the college football establishment, edging powerhouse Nebraska 31-30 in an Orange Bowl thriller to win the national title.

He brought to Miami a pro-style passing attack he’d honed as the offensive coordinator for the Miami Dolphins during their 1970s glory days and made it a priority to build his roster with players from South Florida, recruiting from Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties in a way no program had before.

Today, the bulk of the Hurricanes’ roster still hails from the “State of Miami,” and current head coach Manny Diaz has made it clear that keeping South Florida’s best players at home remains one of his biggest priorities. “I don’t know that there is Miami football without Howard Schnellenberger, not the way we know it.” Diaz says. “It’s hard to imagine the state this program was in when he came here. If you look historically throughout college football, there are the blue bloods, and it’s very, very hard to join that group. Howard Schnellenberger came here, and he took down the establishment… You could talk about the football program, [but] he elevated the entire University to a different status in the country. And the entire Hurricanes community will be forever in debt to him.”

President Julio Frenk emphasizes that Schnellenberger’s players would be without their coach, says Bailey. “But then I realized that for everybody who played for him, for everybody who knew him, for everybody who was associated with him, he would always be with us for the rest of our lives. “It’s easy to talk about his football success, that’s the easy part to see,” Bailey continues. “What you don’t see are the thousands of lives that he saved, the thousands of boys he turned into men, the thousands of kids without whose guidance would have gone the wrong way instead of the right way.”

Former Canes defensive lineman Ed Hudak, B.C.’97, M.A.A. ’97, now Coral Gables chief of police, especially remembers his former coach’s leadership example. “When you see the head coach has a cot rolled into the coaches’ locker room because he doesn’t go home during two-a-days, you realize the commitment he has,” Hudak says. “I learned about commitment from him, and I use that lesson every day in my job with the police department.”

Schnellenberger is survived by his wife Beverlee, his sons Timothy and Stuart; his grandchildren Joey, Marcus, and Teather; and his great-grandchildren Tyler, Lacie, and Harper Ann. He was predeceased by his son Stephen and great-grandson Angel.

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“The entire Hurricanes community will be forever in debt to him.”

—Manny Diaz, football head coach
It was an event like no other, for a time like no other: a three-day virtual celebration of Black excellence featuring notable institutional, student, and alumni leaders—all joined by a common interest in advancing the University of Miami’s commitment to racial justice, diversity, and inclusion—coming together to lead enriching conversations that increase awareness and help ignite change.

Developed by the University of Miami Black Alumni Society (UMBAS) in partnership with the Division of Development and Alumni Relations, “Our Story: Black Excellence” included activities and forums centered on advocacy and on building health, education, and wealth among Black alumni. With the aim of addressing inequities affecting the lives of Black people within our community, carefully planned session topics included investing, systemic oppression, confronting injustice, and the cost of racism.

“Participants had the opportunity to learn, engage, and grow through a series of thought-provoking sessions reflecting on the challenges, truths, and triumphs often experienced within the Black community,” says Dorean Gordon Williams, senior director for special constituencies at the University of Miami.

They engaged in a conversation with former alumni student leaders, connecting past struggles to present experiences to inspire positive change. Also included in the discussion was Gregory Adams, A.B. ’76, former United Black Students president; Landon Coles, the 2021-22 Student Government president; Ronnie Graham, Student Government president; Abigail Adeleke, 2020-21 Student Association; and Blaise, B.B.A. ’97, former Detroit Lions football player, and Nicole Henry, B.S.C. ’00, award-winning American jazz singer. Two financial executives—Alice Vilma, B.B.A. ’98, alumni trustee and managing director at Morgan Stanley, and David Mullings, B.S. ’00, M.B.A. ’03, chair and CEO of Blue Mahoe Capital Partners—led a conversation on why leadership matters.

Prior to his current role as president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Johnny C. Taylor Jr., B.S.C. ’89, helped raise more than $100 million over eight years at the helm of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, transforming the lives of students at historically Black colleges and universities.

Now, Taylor, who attended the University of Miami as an Isaac Bashevis Singer scholar and has served on the Board of Trustees since 2017, is transforming lives at his alma mater by funding an exhibit that teaches viewers about the impact Black students, faculty, staff, and alumni have had on shaping the University throughout the years after its 1961 desegregation. His gift will create the Johnny Taylor Family UTrailblazers Experience, an outdoor kiosk on the Coral Gables Campus with interactive touch screens displaying content created and curated by the University of Miami Libraries.

“My history is deeply embedded in South Florida and in the University of Miami,” says Taylor. “My grandfather established the first hospital in Broward County to serve African Americans, a tremendously important addition to the community,” he adds. “Today, I want to take a step to celebrate the University of Miami’s first Black students, our trailblazers, and shine a light on the accomplishments of those students and future generations of students who are making a difference in the areas of diversity and inclusion.”

The interactive kiosk experience on the Coral Gables Campus will highlight the past, present, and expected accomplishments of University of Miami Black students who are trailblazers in their own right. “Johnny Taylor is lifting up stories that are an incredibly important part of the University of Miami’s history,” says Josh Friedman, senior vice president for the Division of Development and Alumni Relations. “We are extremely grateful to him and his family for making this extraordinary commitment.”

Taylor has grown SHRM to more than 350,000 members in more than 105 countries, impacting 115 million workers. He is a force in government discussions around workplace issues—from sexual harassment to paid leave—and is the chair of the President’s Advisory Board on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He also served on the White House American Workforce Policy Advisory Board.

Prior to joining SHRM, Taylor held executive leadership positions in both the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors, including Viacom’s Paramount Pictures, Blockbuster Entertainment Group, and Compass Group USA. He was recently named Professional Society CEO of the Year by CEO Update for fostering workplace innovation, securing a seat at the policy table for human resource professionals and creating more equitable workplaces.

The Johnny Taylor Family UTrailblazers Experience grew out of an initiative established by the Black Alumni Society in 2012. Several members, including Denise Mincey-Mills, Phillips E. Tyler, and Antonio Junior—all 1979 graduates—began to unearth the stories and struggles of the first Black students which, until that time, had been buried in the library archives.
Enhanced Lecture Series Amplifies Alumni Voices

Virtual panel discussions feature changemakers exploring hot-button topics

When alumnus Stu Bloch, A.B. ’64, and his wife, Ambassador Julia Chang Bloch, made a gift to establish the Distinguished Alumni Lecture Series in 1995, their aim was to highlight University of Miami alumni who have brought distinction on themselves and their alma mater. By 2019, Stu Bloch was looking to expand the series and bring it to a wider audience of students, alumni, and friends of the U. With his enthusiastic support, the University transformed the series into a virtual panel discussion of timely, important issues. It highlights dynamic speaker lineups, rich content, and an interactive feature that draws scores of listener questions and comments.

The first of the refreshed series, which examined the role of law and executive director of the Law and Economics Center,artner, Neal Sonnett, A.B. ’64, J.D. ’67, founder and managing partner, Neal Sonnett, P.A.; and Raquel Rodriguez, A.B. ’82, J.D. ’85, shareholder, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney.

“When highlighting these changemakers in this new format showcases the depth of intellectual knowledge at the institution and offers a deeper connection to the University of Miami,” says Stu Bloch, “Julia and I are proud to support a program that gives a voice to today’s alumni making a difference in their respective fields.”

A Reading List By and For ‘Canes

Alumni authors publish narratives featuring adventure, activism, and insight

If you are seeking a great read or a compelling tale, look no further than these recently published books by fellow ‘Canes.

For an inspiring memoir with a touch of the magical, check out “Sobremesa: A Memoir of Food and Love in Thirteen Courses” by Josephine Caminos Oria, M.A. ’92. The book tells the story of Caminos Oria, a C-level career woman turned food entrepreneur, traveling to her family’s homeland of Argentina in search of belonging. There, she discovers love, mystical encounters, and rare family recipes.

“The Lady of Silk and Steel: From Everest to Embassies” by Sue Cobb, J.D. ’78, offers adventure. Cobb’s life, recounted in this memoir, includes a childhood on a California farm, graduating law school at 41, becoming a U.S. ambassador, and coming within 900 meters of becoming the first American woman to summit Mount Everest.


If you’re looking for fiction, then “One of the Good Ones” by Maika Mouilite, M.B.A. ’16, and Maritza Mouilite explores prejudice and racial justice. The second book by the sister–writer duo tells the story of siblings embarking on a trip to honor their sister, a teen activist killed mysteriously at a social justice rally, and the surprises they encounter.

And if you’re interested in tools for success in business and in life, make sure to read “The Boardroom Buddha: 5 Universal Principles to Achieve Greater Success and Happiness…Today” by Dean Myers, B.B.A. ’80, M.B.A. ’81, former global vice president of The Coca-Cola Company.

Alumni Stay Engaged, Keep Learning

For those longing to relive their University of Miami days, the latest edition of the UM Experience offered that opportunity

In non-pandemic years, the annual Alumni Association’s Audrey R. Finkelstein UM Experience brings hundreds back to campus for lectures on timely topics with distinguished faculty members. For the spring 2021 version, “Class Is Back in Session,” the virtual classroom took center stage and drew alumni from near and far.

Faculty members from a range of disciplines presented thought-provoking lectures showcasing their research. Benjamin Kirtman, from the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, revealed methods for predicting extreme weather events over timescales. David L. Steinberg, from the School of Communication, shared tools for positively affecting listeners and winning arguments. Emmy Award-winning composer Carlos Rafael Rivera (“The Queen’s Gambit”), from the Frost School of Music, spoke about the challenges of composing music for film. And Claudia Townsend, from the Miami Herbert Business School, examined the many and varied psychological influences on our decision-making.

Delivering the keynote address, Laura Kohn-Wood, dean of the School of Education and Human Development, explored recommendations for reducing the stigma of mental illness and introducing social policies to alleviate problems associated with the ailment.

Artist Xavier Cortada, A.B. ’86, J.D. ’91, M.P.A. ’91, was the moderator of the event, which concluded with a special networking opportunity for alumni to meet and speak with featured faculty members.

UM Experience is made possible through a generous endowment created by the late Audrey R. Finkelstein, A.B. ’38, whose involvement with the University spanned more than seven decades. The next “Class Is in Session” event will be held online on September 23, 2021, at 10 a.m.

There’s an ever brighter day on the horizon at the U.

Join us for a special Homecoming celebration as we shine a light on the University of Miami’s Campaign for Our Next Century.

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For Evan Peskin, right, the passion for helping the hungry began in high school.

“I am thankful for the winding road that got me here.” —Eddie Alvarez

Artistic Skills Draw Alumnus to a Successful Career

Eddie Alvarez, B.F.A. ’03, majored in painting and graphic design when he attended the University. He never expected his professional path to take him to his current position as an award-winning newspaper designer and art director at The Washington Post. A few years later, he began working for the Gannett Corporation to design pages for 15 newspapers in the Northeast. Alvarez had no news experience, but his supervisor noticed Alvarez’s passion for creative design and hired him. Soon, Alvarez was producing the sports pages. When an opening at The Washington Post came up, a former colleague floated Alvarez’s name. The management liked his eye for design; so in 2015, Alvarez joined the storied newspaper.

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Doctor Nourishes Souls with Good Samaritan Meals

A nonprofit, co-founded by a University alumnus, delivers thousands of pounds of perfectly edible but hard-to-sell food weekly from local retailers to the needy. “In my opinion, eating is one of life’s greatest pleasures,” says Evan Peskin, A.B. ’12, M.D. ’17, M.B.A. ’17, whose passion for nourishing souls began in high school. “And I’ve never been hungry in my life,” he adds. “It just feels unfair that other people are, when so much good food is wasted every day—especially in the middle of a pandemic.”

So, it’s no surprise that Peskin and two friends—Jacob Schofield, J.D. ’17, M.B.A. ’17, and Win Rutherfurd, and two friends—Jacob Schofield, J.D. ’17, M.B.A. ’17, and Win Rutherfurd, both Miami lawyers—founded Good Samaritan Meals, a small nonprofit with a big mission: putting good food in the mouths of the hungry.

Good Samaritan’s small but dedicated army of some 20 volunteers collects between 3,000 and 5,000 pounds of food from local grocery stores, restaurants, and bakeries every week. The volunteers then distribute their haul to such organizations as Lotus House, Camillus House, and Miami Rescue Mission, as well as the community refrigerators that another nonprofit, Buddy System, began installing in food deserts—neighborhoods with limited access to affordable, nutritious food—last summer.

Since then, Buddy System has connected Good Samaritan Meals to some of its most reliable volunteers, like Lily Winter, a University sophomore who’s connected Good Samaritan Meals to some of its most reliable volunteers, like Lily Winter, a University sophomore who’s studying health sciences and plans to be a nurse practitioner.

“It’s not a chore, I really love it,” says Winter, who delivers the boxes she stuffs into her old Land Rover to the community fridge in Coconut Grove and the Miami Rescue Mission. “It makes me happy knowing I am helping someone—even in this small way. I know it’s a tiny dent in a huge problem, but we need a lot of small dents to make a difference, and in this case, all you need to do is it is a car.”

With such volunteers, Peskin could delegate his weekly visit to Mamma Leone Bakery in Miami’s Edgewater neighborhood. But he and his wife, Abby Pooch Peskin, B.S. ’12, whom he met when they were juniors and now works as a child therapist at the University, have grown too fond of owner Giampiero Di Persia and his wife, Benedetta.

“They were the very first people to support us, and to see him makes my day better,” Peskin acknowledges. “If there were more people like them, the world would be a better place.”

For Di Persia the feeling is mutual. “We don’t want good food to go to waste, and we like to feed people in need. But it was too hard for us to do on our own,” Di Persia says. “We are blessed to have someone do the footwork.” —Maisy Bell

To volunteer, donate food, or learn more, follow Good Samaritan Meals on Facebook or Instagram @goodsamaritanmeals.

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Alumna’s Love for Music Strikes a Chord in Teaching

"It was very challenging, but I feel like a much better teacher because of the training I received at Frost.

— Nerissa Manela

Frost School of Music alumna Nerissa Manela was recently named Rookie Teacher of the Year by Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

I really enjoy making an impact on students’ lives," says Nerissa Manela, B.M. ’15. “Knowing that a lot of my students aren’t going to grow up and be musicians or teachers is OK. But knowing that I can influence who they become because of the experiences in my classes is really meaningful and motivates me every day.

The elementary school teacher’s love of music began when she asked her parents for violin lessons at only 6 years old. It was a gift that ultimately helped develop her passion for the arts, which she carries on today as a music teacher at Morningside K-8 Academy in Miami.

And Manela’s drive to impact every student led her to her recent selection as Rookie Teacher of the Year by Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

“IT was such an exciting feeling when I found out I won. I was overwhelmed by the support from all of my colleagues and friends and people I’ve worked with over the years of my career. I’m really set me up for success in my career.”

Manela explains that the award was motivating and reinforcing because, “The arts are so often the first on the chopping block. And as any arts teacher can tell you, the arts are where all the dots get connected between the English and the social studies and the math and the sciences,” she declares.

“It is definitely encouraging to see how much students are realizing how much students can achieve in music class.”

She hopes to further her studies in music education and to continue educating the next generations of teachers.

“My professional goals are to get my Ph.D. in music education and eventually be in a position to primarily educate future teachers,” Manela says. “I want to continue making important connections, not only within UM, but within the greater community, so I can create a strong network for my students like I had when I was at the University.”

— Amanda M. Perez

Alumna Managers Rover’s Maneuvers to Mars

The months of careful planning, software simulations, and meticulous troubleshooting had finally come to an end. After a journey of nearly 300 million miles through space, Perseverance—NASA’s most advanced and sophisticated robotic rover ever—was ready to perform the most critical stage of its ambitious mission: landing on Mars.

Any one of a number of things could go wrong during the 7-minute vehicle’s descent and touchdown on the red planet. And as NASA engineer Erisa Hines Stilley, B.S.M.E. ’02, sat at her workstation on the second floor of Building 230 of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California, she pondered all the potential pitfalls, knowing that any one of them could doom a mission eight years in the making.

Would the massive supersonic parachute, designed to slow the rover’s descent, deploy? Would the rover land upside down or on a hillside? Stilley and the NASA 2020 entry, descent, and landing (EDL) team she led would just have to wait and see.

Because it can take anywhere from seven to 22 minutes for a radio signal to reach Earth from Mars, Perseverance would already be alive or dead on the Martian surface by the time they learned its fate. “And that was pretty stressful—the waiting,” Stilley says.

Their patience was rewarded. During a 420-second period referred to as “the seven minutes of terror,” Perseverance performed the perilous EDL sequence entirely on its own, successfully landing in the 28-mile Jezero Crater to begin searching for signs of past life.

For Stilley, who fell in love with the space program after a visit to Kennedy Space Center as a child, Perseverance is the most challenging endeavor of her storied NASA career that has seen the University of Miami College of Engineering graduate work on two Mars missions and the Altair lunar lander.

“So much has to go just right,” Stilley says. “Because the physics of Mars is so drastically different, we cannot test our hardware systems fully on Earth. We rely heavily on end-to-end computer simulations, essentially giving the rover an assumption about what its position and velocity will be at a very specific time. It then uses that information as the seed of knowledge to get to the target on the ground that we specified.”

Though the Mars 2020 surface team has now taken over, Stilley and the rest of the EDL team are still keeping busy, poring over Perseverance’s landing data to reconstruct exactly what occurred. “To the extent that it’s important to the next mission, it’s an opportunity to catch mistakes,” she explains.

While Perseverance was her biggest challenge, it was not her favorite NASA project to work on. That distinction belongs to Curiosity, which is still roaming around and exploring the Martian landscape more than eight years after it landed there. For that project, Stilley served as rover planner and driver, working closely with scientists to map out strategic routes and then executing those drives. “EDL is a cool job,” Stilley points out, “but when you’re driving a rover around on Mars, there’s not a lot that can top that. I’ve been in the very enviable and rare position at JPL of having done both, and I try not to take that for granted.” — Robert C. Jones Jr.
Allen B. Goldberg, A.B. '64, was a past president of the Florida Bar and served as chief financial officer at Tampa. He continues to lead teaching and supply chain activities on its campus in Sarasota, and is involved in leadership and project management. Faber started teaching at Tampa in 2001 in a variety of positions, including the chair of the department, and is currently chair of the University of Miami's Department of Business and Economics.

Kendall P. Leonard, M.M. '81, is an active musician, producer, and professor of music and music business. His most recent book is "Music for the Kingdom of Shadows: Creative Accompaniment in the Age of Spirituality."
Brendan M. Morris, B.S.C. ’18, is the writer, directing, and producing force behind the film *MAKE OF INCH* an independent feature film shot entirely in China. The film won him the Breakthrough Director Award at the Film Romanoffs, and at the City of Miami Beach Crow Collection of Asian Art.

Myna A. Miller, J.D. ’11, has been promoted to counsel at Seyfarth Law where she focuses on the firm’s human resources and labor law practice. She has worked on cases brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act and the WARN Act and has been an expert witness on Code on behalf of foreign investors seeking to take advantage, administratively or judicially, of the benefits offered by third parties. She serves as the Latin America regional director for the firm.

Jason D. Antos, B.B.A. ’06, was appointed to the position of Head of White House to the White House Council on Environmental Quality and is the senior director for water. He serves as senior counsel on the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and has dedicated 20 percent of his career focusing on energy, water, and ocean-related legislation.

Carmen M. Rodriguez, B.S.C. ’13, is the co-host of the podcast Taxmunch, which recently won the Best of the Best in Cuban American. It invites two websites a stream on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other sources. She currently writes a book on the making of the city’s press corps, NYP. Antos is a professional journalist and is a member of the 1983 TV movie “The Day After.” He is currently writing a book on the making of the city’s press corps, NYP. Antos is a professional journalist and is a member of the 1983 TV movie “The Day After.”

Rebecca F. Greenfield, B.A. ’10, M.B.A. ’16, is a first-time author of “Consumer-Driven Care: Changing the Game,” which she co-authored with the late Dr. David W. Bell, B.A. ’16, J.D. ’15, Arlene Y. Mayer, B.A. ’55, and Sallatalia, B.Ed. ’60. The book explores the impact of recent healthcare legislation and the changing landscape of healthcare delivery.

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

In Memoriam
The University’s executive vice president and provost from 1986 to 2000, Luis Glaser died in December at the age of 87. While a University of Miami student, Glaser served as chief of personnel for the Iron Arrow Honor Society and president of the Student Senate. After graduating from law school and serving in the U.S. Army, Glaser was a circuit judge before being appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in 1977, serving as chief justice from 1998 to 1999. While in that role, he created the Fairness Commission to address areas of bias in the courts. Later, as founder of the Alliance for Ethical Government, he led a successful initiative to fight public corruption in Miami-Dade County. The Justice Gerald Kogan Endowed Scholarship Fund at the School of Law, where he taught as a full-time faculty member, supports law students who demonstrate Kogan’s integrity, scholarship, and devotion to public service.

A former Florida chief justice, Gerald Kogan, B.B.A.’75, J.D.’75, died in March at the age of 80. While a University of Miami student, Kogan served as chair of the Board of Governors. He graduated from the University of Miami School of Law and served as a justice of the Supreme Court of Florida. Kogan was a circuit judge before being appointed to the Florida Supreme Court in 1977, serving as chief justice from 1998 to 1999. While in that role, he created the Fairness Commission to address areas of bias in the courts. Later, as founder of the Alliance for Ethical Government, he led a successful initiative to fight public corruption in Miami-Dade County.

Kogan’s alma mater honored him by establishing the Justice Gerald Kogan Endowed Scholarship Fund at the School of Law. The fund supports law students who demonstrate Kogan’s integrity, scholarship, and devotion to public service.
Nearly 3,800 students were awarded degrees during the University’s first in-person commencement ceremonies since 2019, with many attending the events on the open-air field at Hard Rock Stadium.

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