



# BEACON

SIGNAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN ADVANCING BOSTON COLLEGE

SPRING 2021

## WITH FULL HEARTS

Mary Lou and Marc Seidner are all in for BC.

### INSIDE

#### Parents Leadership Council

A passing of the torch

#### Be a Beacon

A successful first year

#### The show must go on

Theatre arts at BC

# CONTENTS



**2** Be a Beacon brings to light the tremendous power of scholarships at BC. Read about the impact it's had in year one.

## BOSTON COLLEGE PARENTS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

**4** The Parents Leadership Council enters a new era as Suzie and Habib Gorgi hand over the reins to new co-chairs Peter and April Kelly.



When BC needs them, Mary Lou and Marc Seidner answer the call. Get to know these University citizens and learn why they're so passionate about helping others.

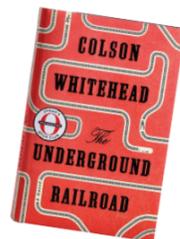
## THE IDEA EXCHANGE



**18** BC's long-term success is only as good as its plan. Mara Hermans is using her art history background to shape the University's future.

## 20 BEACON BOOK CLUB

BC Law Dean Vincent Rougeau makes his selection for the book list that honors the legacy of Fr. Neenan.



## 8 OFFICE HOURS

Peek behind the curtain as Theatre chair Luke Jorgensen talks teaching, COVID adaptations, and some of the more interesting things you'll find in his office.



Meet Laura Steinberg, the researcher who plans to lift BC to a national leadership role in addressing critical issues in energy, health, and the environment.

# BEACON

ISSUE 5 • SPRING 2021

[beacon.bc.edu](http://beacon.bc.edu)

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT**  
Jim Husson

**EDITORIAL**  
Eric Bushnell  
Jill Caseria  
Kevin Coyne  
Dan D'Onofrio  
Diana Griffith  
Betsy McLain  
Stella Rinaldi  
Jacqueline Tynes

**PRODUCTION AND DESIGN**  
Sheila Frazier  
Bob Monahan  
Jennifer Yoo

**CONTRIBUTIONS**  
Scott Hultman  
Bianca Whitworth Luzon  
Megan Tiede

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
John Deputy

Please send correspondence to [scott.hultman@bc.edu](mailto:scott.hultman@bc.edu).

Boston College Alumni

@bcalumni

@BCAlumni

© 2021 Boston College Office of University Advancement  
Beacon magazine is published by the Boston College Office of University Advancement. All public rights reserved.



# OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

## Greetings Fellow Eagles!

As we know through our faith traditions, spring is a time of new life. It is marked on campus by the abundance of colorful flowers and in the hopes and dreams of our students, especially those who are graduating with the spirit and energy required to tackle any challenge that comes their way.

The following pages feature stories of BC community members whose generosity gives life to opportunity for our exceptional students. Everyone you will read about shares a fierce commitment to ensuring a brighter future for the University and the world. They personify the Jesuit ideal of *magis*—doing more for Christ and therefore doing more for others.

Over the past year, the Be a Beacon campaign for financial aid—which you can read more about on the next page—has reinvigorated BC. I am thrilled to co-chair this crucial initiative with John Fish, Phil Schiller, and Marc Seidner, who is profiled here alongside his wife, Mary Lou, and who has been a wonderful partner with me at the helm of the Board of Regents. We deeply appreciate the commitment to BC's future from all those who so generously invested in scholarship assistance.

At the heart of our collective success is the strength, resilience, and optimism demonstrated by the entire Boston College community in recent times. In the face of unprecedented circumstances we adapted and overcame, and you'll see several examples of that throughout this magazine, particularly in the Theatre Department, in institutional planning, and in Campus Ministry.

Our greatest hopes and aspirations for our beloved institution can only be realized with the support of the BC family, and I want to reiterate my thanks—and the thanks of everyone here at Boston College—for your continued engagement and partnership.

There is so much to be proud of and excited for as we reflect on our accomplishments and look ahead to what we can continue to achieve together.

With warmest wishes,

*Susan Martinelli Shea*

Susan Martinelli Shea '76, P'04  
University Trustee  
Co-Chair, BC Board of Regents



BEACON is a publication exploring the significant advances made possible at Boston College through the generous and forward-thinking philanthropic investments of both individuals and organizations. Their partnership has helped to bring about remarkable progress in the University's academic and societal mission. We are grateful.



# SHINING A LIGHT ON OPPORTUNITY

## BE A BEACON OPENS DOORS AT A TIME OF GROWING NEED

For Lillie Marie Ferreira '22, a first-generation, low-income student, attending a university like Boston College felt like an impossible dream. It's a feeling that has grown all too common: the cost of higher education continues to rise, and families across the nation, and the socioeconomic spectrum, are navigating unpredictable financial challenges.

This reality is what drove Kate '93 and Mike Ascione '93 to make a gift to student financial aid—the kind of gift that makes a BC education possible for students like

Lillie, after all. It is also what inspired Boston College to launch Be a Beacon—a bold, \$125 million fundraising effort to support financial aid and scholarships at the Heights. This monumental campaign, at its core, represents a reaffirmation of BC's commitment to need-blind admission and to meeting full demonstrated need for qualifying undergraduate students, a commitment shared by only 20 national research universities in the United States.

In this time of great need, BC donors have responded with remarkable generosity and compassion, exceeding all expectations. In early February, Be a Beacon reached its initial fundraising goal, yet the campaign continues to raise vital awareness of the intense and ongoing hardships facing many BC students and families. On the waves of this momentum

and recognizing there is much work left to do, BC is extending the campaign with aspirations of raising a total of \$200 million.

As Be a Beacon charges into its second academic year, it is poised to continue ensuring that all students—undergraduates, athletes, and graduates in every school—will benefit from the most robust financial assistance possible. Every donor has their own reason to give; every gift has its own story. There is a common thread: a faith in the power of a BC education—to transform not only individuals but the world—and a conviction that it belongs to everyone.

For the Asciones, their gift reflects a commitment to the greater good. "It is our personal responsibility, an expression of Jesuit values and our mission to serve others, to work to provide access to a BC education for all," they said. "Our world needs well-formed citizens who are steeped in their education and have a

reflective view of their identity and purpose."

Jennifer and Steven Capshaw '93 share a similar belief in the power of student formation to promote change and cited it as a motivation to give. "At BC I learned there are things in life more important than yourself," said Steven. "BC challenges young adults to use their talents in service of others, making the world a better place. We want to help close the gap to make these opportunities available to those who work just as hard but have fewer resources."

Like the Capshaws, when Peggy '85 and Greg Strakosch '84, P'14, '16, '17, made their gift, they considered what BC has meant to their family. "We know BC changes lives for the better, which leads to a better society," they said. "It transformed our own lives as well as those of our children, and it continues to enrich them today. We want to help other families share that joy." ■

## OUR VIEW: WHY FINANCIAL AID MATTERS

“ Boston College has been an exceptionally formative place for me. I have already grown immensely in my faith, compassion, and character through friendships and mentorships on campus. I am also closer to bettering the world through biomedical research. My ultimate goal is to become a medical researcher and find the causes of, and cures for, chronic and terminal illnesses.”

**Lillie Marie Ferreira '22**

Recipient of the Thomas A. Rosse Family Scholarship, Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences

“ I realized that there was a lack of Black, male role models in the human services and mental health fields, which motivated me to elevate myself to the next level. My MSW degree will open many opportunities for me to continue making an impact in the community, and to inspire others to push themselves to achieve greatness.”

**Jason Madden, MSW'22**

Recipient of the Dr. John F. Lawrence Fellowship, Boston College School of Social Work

“ It is our personal responsibility, an expression of Jesuit values and our mission to serve others, to work to provide access to a BC education for all. Our world needs well-formed citizens who are steeped in their education and have a reflective view of their identity and purpose.”

**Kate '93 and Mike Ascione '93**

**CAMPAIGN MILESTONES**

**\$141.2M**  
raised

**19,332**  
donors

**1,517**  
scholarships

Read more and learn how you can Be a Beacon at [beabeacon.bc.edu](http://beabeacon.bc.edu).



**BE A BEACON**  
CAMPAIGN FOR FINANCIAL AID

# PARENTAL GUIDANCE

## A CHANGING OF THE GUARD FOR THE PARENTS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

### SUZIE AND HABIB GORGI, P'12, '21

Youssef, Kate, Habib, Suzie, Maddie, and Alex Gorgi



AS

the parents of four, Suzie and Habib Gorgi, of Providence, Rhode Island, easily recall the bittersweet moment they dropped off each of their children at their respective colleges for the first time.

“They were each different, yet all were filled with a mix of emotions, anxiety, and, at times, a few tears,” Suzie remembers.

Whether the distance is a car ride or a plane flight away, for so many parents it can feel difficult no matter the number of miles

from home. For international parents, it can feel even scarier. “The adjustment is so hard for some because they are sending their kids thousands of miles away to live and study in a new environment,” says Habib.

At BC, the Gorgis found a sense of connection to their children's new home by joining the Parents Leadership Council (PLC). The

“The PLC gives parents a voice and a seat at the table.”

HABIB GORGI  
PLC CO-CHAIR

parents of two Eagles—Kate '12 and Maddie '21—Habib and Suzie are co-chairs of the PLC, a relationship that has deepened their involvement with Boston College. In fact, joining the council was a way to connect to this new place quickly. “Getting involved in the PLC early on was a way for us to really understand the University from the inside—the opportunities and risks, the long-term strategy, and the operating issues,” Habib says. In this leadership role, the Gorgis have welcomed families who are eager to support the University's initiatives and also consider it their duty to take the time to get to know as many new BC moms and dads as they can.

In just weeks, Maddie will graduate from BC and her parents will hand over the PLC reins to BC parents April and Peter Kelly, P'22, of Northern California.

From their home in Northern California, April and Peter can see the redwood-dotted peak of Mount Tamalpais. Raised in The Golden State, the Kellys love to hike the trails through the mountains and spend as much time as possible outdoors.

Their daughter, Rachel, is a junior in high school; their son, Miles, is a junior at Boston College. It's a long trip, door-to-door, but Miles fell in love with the Heights early on. He first learned about BC from his high school friend Ian Buehler '21. “The more Miles heard about BC's student life through Ian, the more he pictured himself there,” says April. “Every time we were in New England, we would stop at BC. Miles loved the people he met, the campus, the sports, and Boston.”

Getting involved with the PLC that first semester was a natural transition for April and Peter. “We were used to

CONTINUED



Parents Weekend 2018

“If we hadn't jumped in early, we wouldn't have built connections to other families, and we wouldn't have understood all that happens at BC.”

PETER KELLY, P'22

### APRIL AND PETER KELLY, P'22

April, Miles, Rachel, and Peter Kelly



knowing other families and being engaged in our kids' schools," April says, "so joining the PLC was a way for us to meet parents from all over the country and around the world. The PLC has really been the link to keeping us connected and involved with BC, especially being so far away."

Peter can point to the moment he knew Boston College was the right choice for their family. "We were at an event for new parents that featured Fr. Leahy, [senior vice president for university advancement] Jim Husson, and the Gorgis. It was the triple crown of impressive BC leaders who advocate the importance of getting involved," he explains. "It was then that we knew we wanted to be more engaged with the University, and the PLC was the way to do that. If we hadn't jumped in early, we wouldn't have built connections to other families, and we wouldn't have understood all that happens at BC. Having a few connections among the administration and other parents is really, really good."

Over the years, the Gorgis have embraced their role as University ambassadors. Before COVID-19, they hosted in-person welcome events for first-year students and their parents, attended the annual Pops on the Heights and the Wall Street Council Dinner, and gathered new BC parents to join them in tailgating on campus before football games. Although the pandemic has changed the physical locations for these time-honored traditions, Suzie and Habib have



Parents Weekend 2019

continued to invite PLC members to come together in a virtual environment, connecting parents and University leaders on screen to help them get to know each other and share perspectives. They also enjoy spreading the word about the value of a Boston College education. "At BC, we have seen how Kate and Maddie experienced a discipline in education and how BC has played a role in their personal, ethical, and spiritual formation," says Habib. "Boston College has helped give them perspective on how they could live their lives in addition to having a career. They've been given room to explore their passions and find their purpose in the world."

PLC, Suzie says, is about more than just getting parents engaged in the BC community, it is also about raising money to support the institution's strategic initiatives. The Gorgis directly support programs that enhance the BC experience and open an education at the Heights to more students. "Habib and I are so committed to supporting scholarships right now, especially knowing how hard it is for some families to afford to send their kids to college," Suzie says. "I was a scholarship kid. I didn't have a choice in where I went to college; I went where I got a full scholarship."

Ongoing communication between the administration and parents is key to building what Habib refers to as the triangle—the relationship between the institution, the parent population, and students. "BC is very respectful of all parents," he continues. "The PLC gives parents a voice and a seat at the table." Regular updates from University administration also help parents become more engaged. "Once parents get to know the administration and leadership, it becomes a fairly easy decision for them to support BC. We know where the dollars are going," says Habib. Under the Gorgis' leadership, the PLC has grown significantly: from 371 families to 480 families—a record high—representing 75 countries and all 50 states, says Rita Kincaid, director of parent development. "We are so grateful for their time and energy—both of which contributed to the Council's success," she adds.



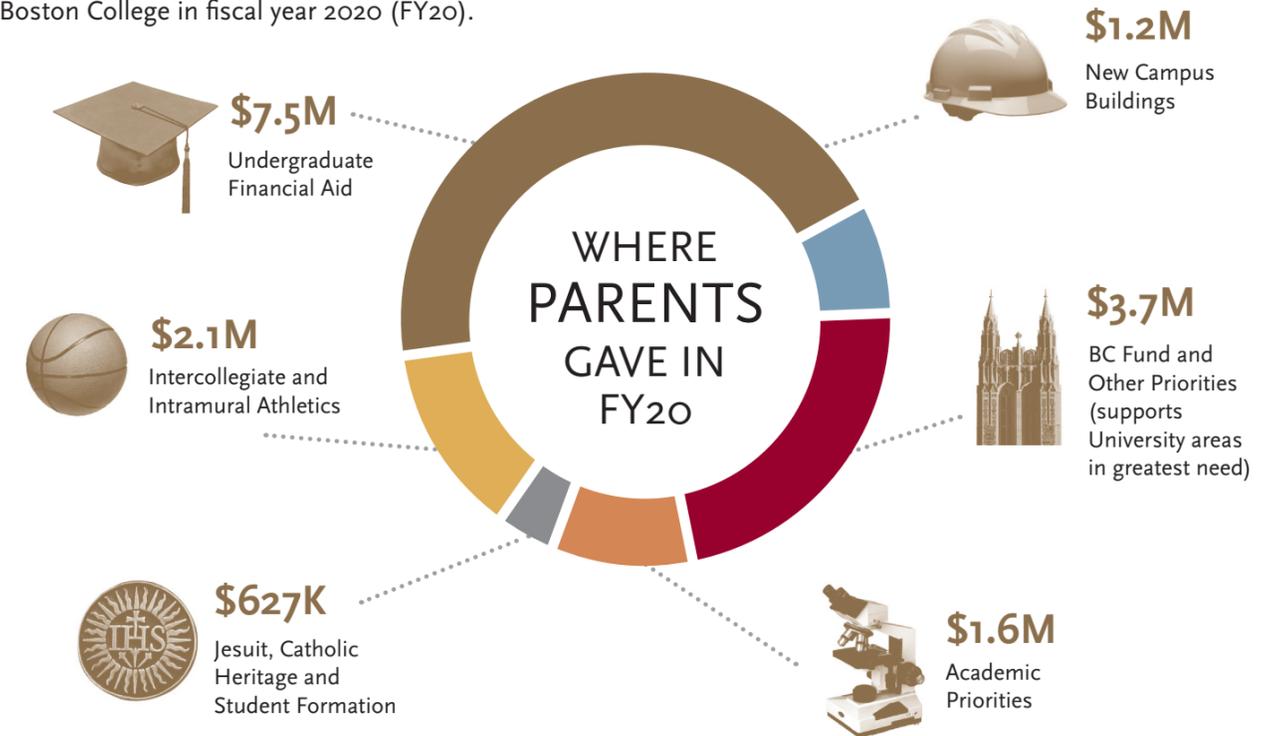
International Parents Reception 2019

**“We have seen how Kate and Maddie experienced a discipline in education and how BC has played a role in their personal, ethical, and spiritual formation.”**

HABIB GORGI

## STRENGTHENING OUR FOUNDATION

Current parents gave **more than \$16 million** to Boston College in fiscal year 2020 (FY20).



When BC asked April and Peter to co-chair the PLC, there was no hesitation. "We were a little surprised, but super-excited," April says. "Peter and I did not grow up in the Catholic faith, and our kids didn't go to Catholic schools. But Fr. Leahy's words to parents during Orientation Mass a few years ago really spoke to me. I was so moved by everything, thinking how we all should be living by the Jesuit values of giving back to the community and being of service to others," she reflects. "I was very much on board, Catholic or not." "We are honored, excited, and a little nervous to fill the Gorgis' shoes," says Peter. "It will be a pleasure to get to know the University better and get to work with the staff. A little part of us feels like, 'How can we do this?', but Suzie and Habib have assured us that we will have all the support we need."

"Parents play a big role in the life of Boston College and its growth. Suzie and Habib have been incredibly active over the years, as ambassadors, philanthropists, volunteers, and counselors," says Husson. "Their enthusiastic leadership, generosity, and dedication has encouraged more parents to engage with the University, which has helped make BC stronger. We are so excited to be in the same partnership with April and Peter as they transition from PLC members to co-chairs," he continues. "They, too, bring deep commitment, integrity, and insight to the role and represent all the best characteristics that make the BC community special."

"Leading the PLC has been a pleasure," Habib reflects. "We met and talked to a lot of parents, all of whom are good people. One thing we all have in common: we care about our kids, and we want to help grow Boston College when and where we can." ■

## WHAT'S THE PLC?

The Parents Leadership Council (PLC) is an active, diverse group of deeply engaged parents who have distinguished themselves as leaders at Boston College through their annual philanthropic support as well as their volunteer efforts for the University. Members of the PLC connect with one another and with BC's academic and administrative leaders through special communications and campus and regional events grounded in our Jesuit, Catholic mission.

Council members receive invitations to special events throughout the year featuring key BC leaders, including University President William P. Leahy, S.J., and Provost David Quigley. PLC members provide feedback and guidance on a wide range of University priorities. All members of the PLC have made a significant commitment to Boston College and support the University with an annual leadership gift of \$10,000 or more.

Serving as ambassadors to BC means fostering relationships with fellow parents to broaden their knowledge about the University and encourage their support. PLC members also host and attend first-year send-offs, parent receptions, and other events. On campus, council members attend an annual meeting and BC's signature events and social events, such as Pops on the Heights and tailgating.

For more information, please visit [bc.edu/plc](https://bc.edu/plc).



BOSTON COLLEGE  
**PARENTS'**  
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



## OFFICE HOURS

**FOR A SELF-DEPRECATING “GUY WHO NEVER LEFT,” BC’S THEATRE DEPARTMENT CHAIR LUKE JORGENSEN ’91 STILL DERIVES A LOT OF JOY FROM HIS WORK. WE SAT DOWN WITH HIM TO FIND OUT WHAT KEEPS HIM AT THE HEIGHTS.**

**T**

he mind of Luke Jorgensen ’91, P’21, ’23, moves a few paces ahead of his mouth. In speech, he leapfrogs mid-sentence to an illustrative anecdote or a funny interpolation before returning to his original point. Talking with his hands—an actor and teacher, if nothing else—he is a generous conversationalist, an attentive listener. There is a warmth and a magnetism to his eager garrulity. He seems, unusually so for someone neck-deep in both the academy and the arts, entirely without pretension.

Jorgensen’s office, a closet-like room cluttered with all manner of books and props, is messy in an endearing way. During normal times, a slew of students would congregate outside his door, chatting and reading while waiting to meet with him. Today, it is quiet. A few students tinker with props in the workshop, a few colleagues wander around the green room and backstage. Everyone, of course, is masked. More than any one room, it seems that the entirety of Robsham Theater is Jorgensen’s office, community center, playground—he is at home here.

This has been a strange year for Jorgensen in many of the ways it has been a strange year for everyone. Shortly after he accepted the position of chair of the department he has worked in since completing graduate school at Northwestern 25 years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic brought just about everything to a halt. Still, he retains his sense of humor, joking about spending the past year indoors, bingeing TV shows, bulking up

# THE SHOW GOES ON

his quarantine belly, and thinking about finally getting around to gardening. But coming back to campus last fall, Jorgensen, his colleagues, and his students, were adamant about bringing theater back (safely) to the Heights.

“[Coming back this fall,] I was really committed [to the idea] that, if everyone did it correctly, we could make something,” he says. More so than the finished product, the journey is imperative to Jorgensen. “Make the thing,” he repeats, almost mantra-like. “Of course I want the show to be good. But for me,” he continues, “it’s so much more

CONTINUED

exciting to see a student develop and be able to experience that thrill when a show goes well and you just know you nailed it. Because it's hard! There are so many moving parts to make that thing happen."

**Experience can be a generous teacher.** Since the pandemic upended campus life, Jorgensen and his team at Robsham Theater have proved willing pupils, adapting remarkably to the new normal. After putting on two productions in the fall, they built on their success by bringing another three plays to the stage so far this spring semester, with a fourth in the works. They have found or created ways to make their safety adjustments work in favor of their art—for example filming their production of *Twelfth Night* and setting it during a plague (complete with a character donning a Renaissance plague mask), using a measuring stick to keep actors socially distanced during rehearsals, or even putting actors in individual sealed plexiglass boxes for a new play set during COVID (though Jorgensen jokes about the dubious legality of subjecting students to these innovations).

As for his students, he cannot speak highly enough of them and their commitment. "The students have really responded because this is so important to them. They have been so careful so that these productions can happen. I really admire them for that," he says.

Jorgensen's brief tenure as chair of the Theatre Department has certainly been saddled with its share of challenges, but he does not betray any signs of exhaustion. Rather, he seems genuinely excited—albeit with a healthy dose of caution—about producing the upcoming shows and teaching his classes. He says, "For me, the nature of doing theater is, 'What's the next project?' You get to travel, in a sense—What's the next world I get to live in with my students?"

**Perhaps Jorgensen's experience growing up** in a theatrical home (his parents met in graduate school, where his mother studied acting and his father directing) accounts in part for his undeterred passion for theater after all these years. "Growing up in a dysfunctional, artistic family, theater was an outlet for me," Jorgensen says. "My father [a theater professor at Stonehill College] passed away when I was 10, and theater became a great place for me to hide and develop. I think that made me really defensive of the kids I teach. I believe in making a safe space where they can be themselves."

It is easy to see how this upbringing informs his approach to teaching theater—from the kids he directed at the Tufts University children's theater summer program for 25 years to the young adults he instructs at BC. Jorgensen often talks about theater as a laboratory, a kind of exploratory space. "Developmentally, I can't think of anything more important," he says. "It lets students try on different hats. You can practice different emotions and new situations."

Jorgensen has a deeply egalitarian sense of who and what theater is for, and it shines through in his words as much as his educational and creative decisions. He is firm in his belief that every college student—especially those studying in other fields—should be in a play or take an acting class, if only to learn how to talk in front of people. "I also hope we're making

## Mementos & Miscellany FROM LUKE'S OFFICE

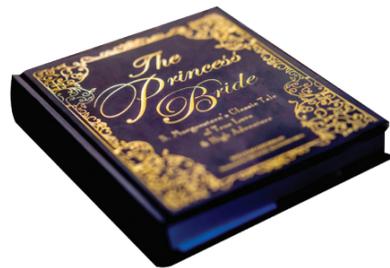


A gift from his PhD advisor, the sword sheathed behind Jorgensen's desk was used to knight him upon earning his doctorate at Tufts.



Jorgensen (front row, second from the left) poses with a candy cigarette, trying to look tough for this production of *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

"Thanks for giving this nerdy 13-year-old a home" ends the note inscribed in this copy of *The Princess Bride* from a former children's theater actor who created the illustrations for this edition.



This [robotic] chicken has been used in a lot of shows, including musicals, and was turned into a rat for *The King Stag*. "It really wows the crowd," Jorgensen swears.



“

The students have really responded because this is so important to them. They have been so careful so that these productions can happen. I really admire them for that.”

LUKE JORGENSEN '91

theater fans," he adds, "and that we're opening them up to this world of understanding entertainment a little differently than before."

When asked about his proudest career moment, his mind immediately goes to shows—the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Noises Off*, and *Peter and the Starcatcher*—before settling on a former student who had recently reached out to him. Now a physician, the student emailed Jorgensen a decade after taking Introduction to Theatre just to share how much he enjoyed the class. "There are a lot of people, I think, who see Robsham as home," Jorgensen says, a contented smile curling across his face. "Hearing things like that," he says, "makes up for the constant feelings of impostor syndrome—like, why do they let me do this? Like my brother says, 'Yeah, you have a PhD, but it's in clown school.' And I say, 'No! They don't give a PhD for clowning.'" ■

## BOLLYWOOD MEETS BC FOOTBALL

While performing theater during a global pandemic was novel to Jorgensen, he is no stranger to trying new and unconventional things on the stage, and he encourages his students to do the same.

During the 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a show he looks back on with immense pride, Jorgensen chose to set the play in a mythical colonial India, even enlisting the BC Bollywood dance troupe Masti with the roles of the faeries, reimaged as Indian deities. Interspersed throughout the show were bombastic dance sequences, performed by elaborately costumed actors.

If that was not inventive enough, consider whom he cast as Oberon: the 6'6", 300-pound former starting left guard for BC football, Nate Richman '11, MBA'13. "He flat-out deserved that part, too," says Jorgensen.



FOR MARY LOU AND MARC SEIDNER '88, P'24, GIVING BACK TO OTHERS IS A WAY OF LIFE.



# BETTER THAN THEY FOUND IT

“**Y**ou can't imagine a more dramatic move for a child.” That's how Marc Seidner '88, P'24, describes how he felt, as a four- or five-year-old in the early 1970s, when his family migrated from Sydney, Australia, to Montreal, Canada. “It literally was the other side of the world, not to mention the climate being flipped upside down.”

Marc didn't know it, but moving to North America ultimately helped set the course for a successful future. Growing up in Montreal he was within driving distance of Cape Cod, where Marc's family would spend a month each summer in the Bass River village. Part of the family tradition was to make a pit stop in Boston on the way down and on the way back. “I fell in love with Boston at a young age for its history, culture, people, institutions,” Marc says. “It was always in the back of my mind that I wanted to go to college there.” In high school he made his first visit to Boston College. He was instantly attracted to the campus and its Jesuit values and set his sights on the Heights.

Marc planned to be the first member of his family to attend college, but he was unsure of what he might study. By a stroke of good fortune, the answer came during the second semester of his senior year in high school, when a new elective in economics was introduced. “I took it in and just sort



MARC SEIDNER SUB TURRI YEARBOOK PHOTO, 1988.

of fell in love with it—the flame was lit,” Marc recalls.

At BC, he was a self-described “okay” student. “I tried to strike the right balance between studying hard, having a good social life, being a good friend, and developing lifelong friendships.” After being hooked in high school, Marc made economics his major and eventually drew further inspiration from members of the faculty who would become his mentors, including Richard Tresch and Catherine Schneider. It proved to be the jumping-off point for a stellar career in the asset management industry. He is now chief investment officer of nontraditional strategies at PIMCO and head of portfolio management in the firm's New York office.

After three-plus decades of climbing to the pinnacle of his profession, Marc has earned the proper perspective to say definitively what separates the best in his field from the rest. “One of the things that some portfolio managers and asset managers forget is it's not about us,” he says. “It's not about ego. It's about generating returns for others. Every dollar we create in terms of return—whether it's for a schoolteacher's retirement or a state pension plan—is helping someone.”

The lessons he's learned have also taught Marc how to look forward. In fact, he regularly takes younger members of the team under his wing in the hopes that it will inspire them to develop the same passion and drive to make a difference in other people's lives. “As my career has evolved, it's less about me and my professional development,” he says. “My goal, my passion, and my desire right now is to leave this place better than I found it.”

The pay-it-forward philosophy that Marc applies to his work life “absolutely aligns” with the ways in which he and his spouse, Mary Lou Seidner, P'24, manage other parts of their personal lives, especially their philanthropy.

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Mary Lou grew up a bit more locally than Marc did. A native of Medford, Massachusetts, she was taught to always value the opportunity to learn. “My family felt very strongly about education,” says the 1990 Merrimack College graduate. “I was a partial-scholarship student, and my grandmother loaned me some money for my last year. She never went to college, so it really instilled in me how important it was.”

Mary Lou and Marc met while they were both working at Fidelity, and it didn't take



The Seidner family has long enjoyed attending football games at Alumni Stadium.

long to start developing her own affection for BC, which only deepened as they became parents to two daughters, Casey, who is a sophomore at Lehigh University, and Alexis, a first-year Eagle.

“BC is a special place, and it captured the heart of my family years ago,” Mary Lou says. “Lexi especially has loved BC since Marc and I took her to her first football game. It was all her idea to dress up as Doug Flutie for Halloween when she was four years old!”

“Whether it's the Schiller Institute or the Shea Center for Entrepreneurship, in the way they capture minds and thoughts and ideas and give students a platform to create and innovate, with the Jesuit foundation of trying to solve problems for others, it's all very exciting.”

MARC SEIDNER '88

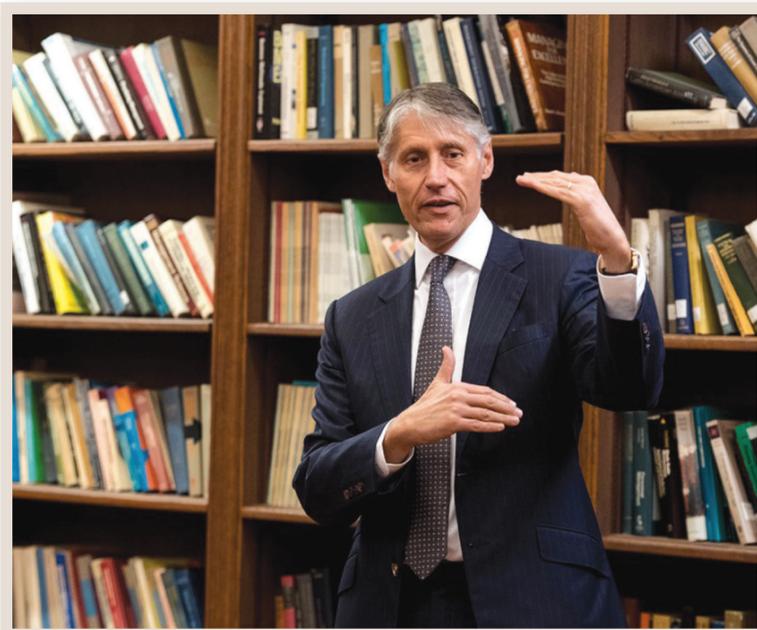
Becoming BC parents has enabled the Seidners to see the University from a completely different perspective. “You definitely get a deeper appreciation,” Mary Lou says about her newest BC role. “I'm trying to be as hands-off as possible, but at the same time I'm listening to Lexi talk about how excited she is about her classes—it's amazing.”

CONTINUED

As someone who knows what it's like to attend BC, Marc has taken a similar approach, allowing Lexi to discover her own passions, live her own experiences, and chart her own course. "I view it like a highway," he says. "Our role as parents is to provide the guardrails to ensure that the direction of travel is still forward, the speed is appropriate, and that there's not too much wavering. It's up to you to decide what lane you want to be in and how you want to drive the car."

Late last fall, with COVID-19 protocols in place, many students opted not to leave Massachusetts over Thanksgiving and semester break. The Seidners invited a few of Lexi's friends to live with the family at their apartment in Downtown Boston. The guests left a strong impression.

"They're what comes to mind when you think of BC students: genuine people, driven to succeed, and so much more adaptable than we would have been," Mary Lou says. "I just feel really lucky that I've had the opportunity to meet them. When I'm 99 years old, I want to look back and say, 'Okay, we've raised some really good



Marc Seidner addresses students during the Winston Center for Leadership and Ethics's Lunch with a Leader program in 2016.

people who are ruling the world right now.' I think our kids are on that path, and I think Boston College is a big part of it."

#### UNIVERSITY CITIZENS

Whether they are mentoring younger colleagues or providing students a place to stay, the Seidners are fully committed to helping others. And more often than not, BC has been the beneficiary of their gifts of

time and money.

The Seidners have emerged among a core group of BC community members who contribute in meaningful ways to the University as a whole, especially when it comes to supporting major initiatives or areas of particular need.

"Marc and Mary Lou together embody the best of the Boston College community," says Provost and Dean of Faculties David Quigley. "As longstanding supporters and now as parents, they have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of a BC education. Their generous support has enabled progress on several of our most important initiatives. We have been blessed to have the benefit of their leadership as we work together to advance the University's distinctive mission."

They are inspired to give by what they see happening at the Heights. "One of the great parts about BC is what hasn't changed—it has evolved certainly—but the core curriculum and the foundational education that every student receives supply that passion for lifelong learning that is critically important to anyone's success," Marc says.

For many students, simply coming to Boston College can be a pipe dream, achievable only through significant financial support. To help remedy that, the Seidner family has established three scholarships to give opportunities to the deserving students and scholar-athletes who need it most. They recently established the Murphy Family Scholarship to honor Mary Lou's late mother, and their latest pledge was made to the groundbreaking Be a Beacon campaign for financial aid, which supports BC's commitment to need-blind admission.

Why do they do it? "We're so impressed with the student body. BC continues to accelerate the caliber of students that it's attracting, which makes it a better place," Marc says. "It's empowering BC to enable dozens or hundreds or even thousands of kids to follow in those footsteps. And it all links back to the grounding and the complete education—not just academic but also as a person—that came from the four years I spent there."

#### FUNDING THE FUTURE

Despite finding success in finance, Marc wouldn't change his BC experience studying in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, although he jokingly mentions his doubts about whether or not he'd be admitted today.

## THE SEIDNER IMPACT

Mary Lou and Marc are making a difference through their philanthropy and service to BC.

#### LEADERSHIP



- BOARD OF TRUSTEES
- BOARD OF REGENTS
- PARENTS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
- BE A BEACON CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIR

#### PHILANTHROPY



Seidner Family Executive Directorship of the Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society



Seidner Family Faculty Fellows Fund, Carroll School of Management



Annual Current Use Giving



Flynn Fund Scholarship



Pops Scholarship



Endowed Scholarship Funds



He has taken notice of the great strides made by the Carroll School of Management under the leadership of John and Linda Powers Family Dean Andy Boynton. "I'm so impressed with the progress that it continues to make in moving up the rankings of the country's—if not the world's—best undergraduate business programs," Marc says. "The passion and enthusiasm that Andy brings, the chairs of departments like [senior associate dean for faculty and Haub Family Professor] Ronnie Sadka, and the ability to attract and retain world-class professors put it in a great position. And it's awesome to see the leadership not resting on its laurels and continuing to press to be better every day."

The respect is mutual. "I've known Marc for years—since he first engaged with the Carroll School almost 10 years ago," Boynton says. "From day one, he's been nothing but completely supportive, engaged, willing, and eager to roll up his sleeves. Marc always asks, 'What can I do to help?' He's a fellow alum with a genuine and selfless desire to help us succeed at Boston College and the Carroll School. All through these years, Marc has been an invaluable partner, a treasured part of our Carroll School team."

As a sign of their belief in the Carroll School, Marc and Mary Lou created the Seidner Family Faculty Fellowship. It is held by finance professor Rui Albuquerque,

whom the Seidners recently met for a virtual conversation.

With BC in good hands, they are also eager to see where it goes next, in particular the physical campus and the strategic vision. That's one of the reasons they have endowed the inaugural Seidner Family Executive Directorship of the Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society, a position held by Laura Steinberg. (See page 16.)

"With this new institute BC is able to combine the formation and the core curriculum with an engineering program and train the next generation of engineers to think holistically about problems and solutions that the world faces," Marc says. "Whether it's the Schiller Institute or the Shea Center for Entrepreneurship, in the way they capture minds and thoughts and ideas and give students a platform to create and innovate, with the Jesuit foundation of trying to solve problems for others, it's all very exciting."

#### RESPECTED VOICES

Charitable giving is not the only way the Seidners give back to BC. Mary Lou and Marc call it an "honor and a privilege" to serve the BC community in a variety of ways. They are active members of the Board of Regents—Marc is co-chair with

CONTINUED

“BC is a special place, and it captured the heart of my family years ago.”

MARY LOU SEIDNER

Susan Martinelli Shea '76—and the Parents Leadership Council. Marc is also a University Trustee. In this capacity, he has lent a pivotal voice in the development and formation of Be a Beacon as co-chair with fellow trustees John F. Fish, Phil Schiller '82, and Shea.

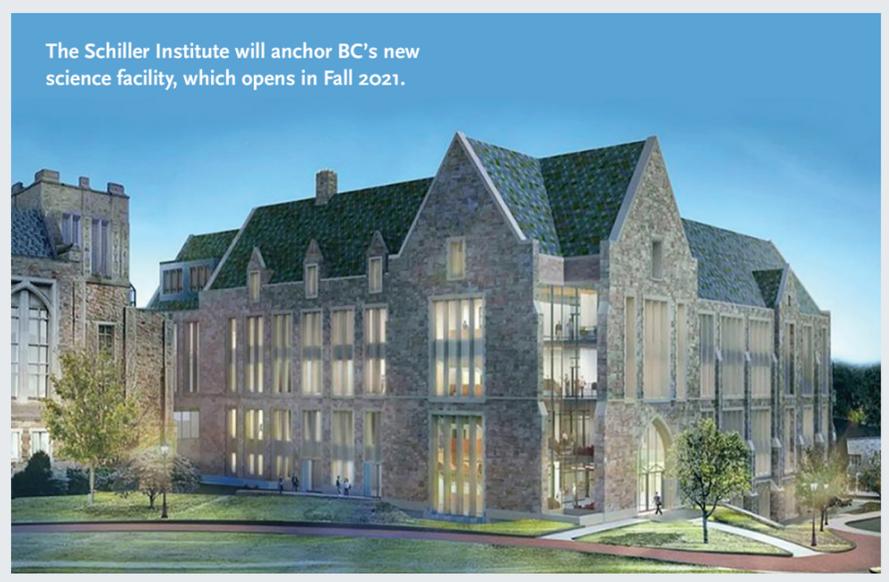
Over the years, Marc has enjoyed the opportunity to return to campus in some less official roles. He is a regular speaker on expert panels, including at the Carroll School's annual finance conference. He has sat in on classes and, in the days following the 2016 election, addressed a group of students at the Winston Center for Leadership's "Lunch with a Leader" series. He shared stories about his life and career and offered sage advice on how to navigate turbulent times, pursue

your passions, and ultimately pay it forward. "Leaving the world a better place can be done through charitable contribution, but more importantly it's achieved through sharing wisdom and perspective and time in terms of volunteering and helping," he says.

Mary Lou's latest adventure is graduate school. She is presently applying to several colleges for a master's degree in nonprofit management and nonprofit leadership, which she sees as an avenue to do more. "Donating is one thing, but I really want to influence what it's like from the ground up," she explains. "I'm an experiential learner, and I'd like to be a more value-added partner, not just someone who writes a check."

For Mary Lou and Marc, their contributions to society go far beyond their philanthropy. They give back not for the recognition or to feed their ego—they simply want to leave the world better than they found it. That doesn't mean they take for granted anything they have received or been able to give back to BC.

"I say with fullness of heart, just thinking about the opportunities I've had in my life, many of them have come because BC gave me a chance, gave me an education, gave me a formation, gave me a quest for lifelong learning that has served me well," Marc says. "The chance to give back as a partner and as a part of the BC community and a citizen is a great pleasure." ■



Center of Excellence for Environmental and Energy Systems.

Steinberg says she is inspired by the Schiller Institute's potential as a catalyst for interdisciplinary research, and by the support shown by the Seidners and others who have made it possible. "What makes us unique is the complete and total commitment of the University—from the highest levels through to the entire BC community—to the success of this institute and the centrality of its role as a University-wide asset."

**A CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION**

Steinberg's first days at the Heights were unusually quiet—the COVID-19 pandemic meant no welcome parties or coffee invites to get to know her new colleagues. Still, she wasted no time building the connections that will support the Schiller Institute's work: convening faculty from diverse disciplines, matching dozens of researchers with new grant opportunities, and helping guide the development of BC's new science facility, where the institute will operate.

One of her first steps was to organize a series of informal "salons" on her back porch where she gathered new faculty from across the University for socially-distanced discourse. At one, two professors who had just met conceived of a new Core course that bridges chemistry and computer science in an effort to develop better ways to capture solar energy.

"That's what came up out of just sitting in my backyard," Steinberg says with a laugh. "There is such a hunger for this, a real thirst for faculty to work together in new ways."

In just six months, Steinberg had helped launch half a dozen new cross-campus collaborations in pursuit of federal research funds, bringing together faculty from social

“The success we have at Schiller will reverberate in all directions across the University, it will raise our national profile. That’s the vision.”

LAURA J. STEINBERG, SEIDNER FAMILY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SCHILLER INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATED SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

work, environmental science, global public health, history, sociology, and more, and helping them navigate the complex, highly competitive application process.

To keep the momentum going, she's introduced a seed grant program that encourages faculty members to collaborate and a similar grant program for students interested in environmental racism, which will culminate with a symposium at the end of the academic year. Together with the influx of 22 new faculty members affiliated with the Schiller Institute, these initiatives will have a multiplier effect on BC's current research operations.

"As we bring faculty together and support them, they will find new pathways to further their scholarship and creative activities, publish more research papers and manuscripts, and secure more grants—and then, there's an explosion of research activities," she says. "The success we have at Schiller will reverberate in all directions across the University, it will raise our national profile. That's the vision." ■

**IN FOCUS:**  
**SEIDNER FAMILY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SCHILLER INSTITUTE**

**LAURA STEINBERG SETS THE STAGE FOR A RESEARCH EXPLOSION**

Laura J. Steinberg has always been obsessed with infrastructure. It started when she was a young girl in New York City, holding her mother's hand as they took the subway to see the Twin Towers and other iconic buildings going up.

"It was very exciting, there was a kind of dynamism in the air," she recalls. "I asked myself, 'How can you construct a subway beneath a river? How can you make it work to serve the people?' And I realized infrastructure is what makes life in communities possible."

Fast forward to 2021 and Steinberg—now an internationally respected engineer and academic—is forging new paths as the inaugural Seidner Family Executive Director of the Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society at Boston College. Her title is nearly as long as her stellar résumé, which most recently includes 12 years at Syracuse University in multiple leadership roles, including founding director of the university's Infrastructure Institute and head of its



Learn more about Laura Steinberg and the Schiller Institute: [bc.edu/schiller](https://bc.edu/schiller)



MARA HERMANO  
Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning

THE IDEA EXCHANGE

THE ART OF DATA

MARA HERMANO BRINGS A FRESH PERSPECTIVE TO RESEARCH AND PLANNING AT BC

As a budding art history student, Mara Hermano learned to analyze artwork through both micro and macro lenses: examining each brush stroke and shadow for clues to meaning, while also viewing the piece as part of a larger body of work or time in history.

Now she brings that same duality of perspective to her work as vice president of institutional research and planning (IRP) at Boston College, which she describes as “one of BC’s most truly interdisciplinary departments.” Since joining BC in fall 2019, she has become a key player in advancing the University’s strategic plan and, most recently, navigating the unpredictable and constantly evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

Born in Manila, Hermano has spent her career honing the expertise in integrated planning that she brings to BC, where interdisciplinary collaboration is fast becoming the norm.

Here, we talk with Hermano about how she got her start, what brought her to the Heights, and where she hopes to take BC next.

**How did you go from an art history major to a career in research and planning?**

**Mara Hermano:** Well, I didn’t wake up one day and say “I want to be a higher ed administrator.” I mean, who does? [laughs] I started working at Christie’s auction house at the heyday of the art market, then I went to the Frick Collection, where I oversaw several major research and archival projects. Then my husband joined the faculty at Washington University in St. Louis—Manila to New York to St. Louis, it was a big adjustment! The WashU chancellor had just merged three units—the museum, the school of architecture, and the school of art—into the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts, and I was his first hire.

**Is that when you got hooked on higher ed?**

**MH:** Yes, that’s where I wrote my first strategic plan, and I discovered that I love planning. That’s my superpower.

**Then you moved back east and took a job at Rhode Island School of Design?**

**MH:** Yes, it was a one-year contract to write a strategic plan, but I ended up staying 10 years, through six positions and five offices. I worked on the campus master plan, I edited a book with the president and 14 faculty, and then I led the self-study for our accreditation process—it was like herding cats, getting all those departments together and on the same page. That’s when I had the idea of bringing all the data—the institutional research part, the strategic planning part, the assessment parts—together, so I proposed and built a new office for integrated planning. I led that for five years and, when I finished my second strategic plan at RISD, well I’m a fan of *The West Wing*, so like Jed Bartlet, it was “What’s next?”

with our partners in Student Services, Facilities, and ITS, we were able to safely offer close to 60 percent of our classes either fully in person or in some form of hybrid, which was a real victory.

**How did you hold up personally and professionally during that time?**

**MH:** I always think about my grandmother. My grandfather was imprisoned during the Japanese occupation of Manila, and she had six kids whom she had to feed through bombings and moving from shelter to shelter. Whenever I think I’m having a bad day, it’s probably nothing compared to what my grandmother had to go through during the war. That image of strength and perseverance is something that is really important to me.



“The Jesuit tradition has always been part of my family’s values.”

MARA HERMANO

**And that was BC? How has that transition been?**

**MH:** My dad went to Jesuit schools from kindergarten through law school, and my mom went to Georgetown, so the Jesuit tradition has always been part of my family’s values. And though RISD is very different from BC in terms of scale, they are both mission-driven in their own ways. Of course, I’ve never had to think about athletics before, so I’ve learned a lot about American football and how much athletics are a part of the campus culture.

**How has the pandemic affected your work?**

**MH:** I had been here six months, and then COVID happened. I have a small team, 11 people, and it was very intense, very fast. We all had our regular work, and then all of us had our COVID hat to put on. So my research team looked at course enrollments and class capacities from the past five years to predict enrollments, and my space planning team applied social distance guidelines and other accommodations. The numbers were shifting all the time, but working

**Another key part of your formation is your training in art history—how does that relate to the work you do now?**

**MH:** Art history is about being able to understand, to look at an object, and to think of the time, the context in which it was made. You zoom in on the details—a petal, a blade of grass, or the pencils used—but you also need to be able to zoom out to see a bigger picture. It’s the same with data, you have to zoom in on one data point, say the number of undergraduate students in a given year, but you also have to zoom out and see the bigger picture of what was happening in education, in demographics, in politics. A single fact is not helpful; it only answers one question. We need to get better at using data and data visualizations to tell the story of what is happening at BC in the context of how higher education is changing.

CONTINUED

You've been quoted as saying that institutions that have a robust planning culture and can use data effectively are better able to respond to challenges, both academic and cultural. What challenges do you hope to address at BC?

**MH:** Everyone in higher education is thinking about the rising cost of attendance, about racial and social inequities, and about how we contribute to the public good. Can we play a role in rethinking and redesigning what higher education can be? Can the way we collect and report demographic and financial data help inform and advance our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives? Can planning be more efficient and effective so that BC's costs go down and contributions to the community go up? These are the kinds of questions I'm asking as our team thinks about how better analysis and planning can support BC's long-term strategy.

What role does your team have in addressing equity?

**MH:** We've worked to streamline University data so that it's easier to understand, so that it tells a more coherent story. One of our goals is to collect better data and then present it in a more visual, easily understood way. We want to be more intentional about helping our partners understand how race and ethnicity data is reported and analyzed. Only then can BC leaders really measure our success in certain areas and set new goals. That's just one example. On a personal level, I'm on the committee for BC's Forum on Racial Justice in America, where I am chairing the arts subcommittee.

Assuming that things return to normal somewhat this fall, what are you looking forward to?

**MH:** More than anything, more face-to-face contact with my own team, with my colleagues, and with the students and faculty. I also really miss going to all the University's events—the Lowell Humanities Series, art exhibitions, theater performances—what a gift they are! I'll also be mentoring several students and a staff member, speaking to departments and student groups around campus, and I've signed up to be a conversation partner with an international student who's pursuing a PhD in economics. This is what I really love, meeting people from all around the campus and being part of the life of the University. ■

Learn more about Mara Hermano and the IRP at [bc.edu/irp](https://bc.edu/irp).

## BEACON BOOK CLUB

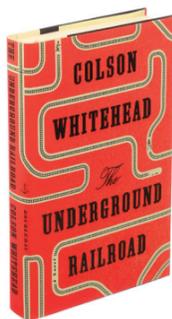
# A TOME FOR THE TIMES

To say William B. Neenan, S.J., left a lasting legacy at Boston College is a vast understatement. During his tenure at BC, he held several positions, including academic vice president and dean of faculties. Above all, he was a friend to the entire community. For nearly 35 years, his "Dean's List" highlighted 27 books chosen by the man himself, and BC received thousands of requests for it. We continue this tradition here with the Beacon Book Club.



VINCENT D. ROUGEAU  
Law School Dean

In each issue of *Beacon*, a leading member of the BC community will add a pertinent or favorite book to the list. Boston College Law School Dean Vincent D. Rougeau's selection—*The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead (Doubleday, 2016)—is fitting for a time when the nation faces a reckoning of systemic racism and deep-rooted racial injustice.



Cora and Caesar are two slaves attempting to escape from a Georgia plantation in this fictional tale of the historical 19th-century path to freedom. Through secret trails, routes, and safe houses, the protagonists journey to avoid certain recapture and death at the hands of the slavecatcher, Ridgeway. Whitehead's stirring novel won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, the 2017 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence, and the 2016 National Book Award for Fiction, among other accolades.

A vocal advocate for change in legal education, Rougeau has been dean of Boston College Law School since 2011. The author of his own book, *Christians in the American Empire:*

*Faith and Citizenship in the New World Order*, he has done extensive research on religious identity, citizenship, and community organization in multicultural societies. He is the inaugural director of the Boston College Forum on Racial Justice in America and president of the Association of American Law Schools. In July 2021, he will be inaugurated as the 33rd president of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. ■



BC grad student Byron Wratee performs in celebration of Black Catholic History Month.



The Mass of the Holy Spirit.



A BC mask hangs outside St. Ignatius Church.



## MOMENTS THAT SHAPED US

### CAMPUS MINISTRY 2020

Led by Vice President Jack Butler, S.J., the work of Campus Ministry adapted to the challenges of the COVID era. These Instagram snapshots look back on the work of staff, students, and volunteers during the past year.



@bccampusmin



Examen is held outdoors to ensure social distancing.



The Pause & Pray retreat on Bapst Lawn.



An Appa service trip in March 2020.



Ignatian Society's Bridget Clark '22 guides reflection in Bapst Library.



Meyers Chambers of the BC Liturgy Arts Group begins the Preaching from Sr. Thea's Kitchen series.



# BOSTON COLLEGE

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT  
CADIGAN ALUMNI CENTER  
140 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE  
CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467

PRESORTED  
NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BOSTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 55294

