WITH FULL HEARTS
Mary Lou and Marc Seidner are all in for BC.

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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.

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 ’76, P’04
University Trustee
Co-Chair, BC Board of Regents
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 unpredicted 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.”

Be a Beacon opens doors at a time of growing need

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

OUR VIEW: WHY FINANCIAL AID MATTERS
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

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

HABIB GORGI
PLC CO-CHAIR
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 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 chance 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—of whom are good people. One thing we all have in common: we care about our kids, and we want to help.

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.
the mind of Luke Jorgensen ’91, P’21, ’23, moves a few paces ahead of his mouth. In speech, he leaptrogs 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 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...
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 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 unabated 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 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 unabated 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 performance of A Child’s Christmas in Wales.

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Jorgensen (front row, second from the left) poses with a candy cigarette, trying to look tough for this production of The Princess Bride, 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.

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

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

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 2022 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 fairies, reimagined as Indian deities. Interpersed throughout the show were bombastic dance sequences, performed by elaborately costumed characters.

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’15. “He flat-out deserved that part, too,” says Jorgensen.
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**

Marc Seidner 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 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**

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

**FOR MARY LOU AND MARC SEIDNER ’88, P’24, GIVING BACK TO OTHERS IS A WAY OF LIFE.**
Leadership and Ethics’s Lunch during the Winston Center for Marc Seidner addresses students helping others. And more often than not, stay, the Seidners are fully committed to colleagues or providing students a place to Whether they are mentoring younger
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 scholars-athletes who need it most. They recently established the Murphy Family Scholarship to honor Mary Lou’s late mother, and their latest pledge 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 made to the groundbreaking Be a Beacon campaign for financial aid, which supports BC’s commitment to need-blind admission.

“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. Mary Lou 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...
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 Energy Systems 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 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.”

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

Learn more about Laura Steinberg and the Schiller Institute: bc.edu/schiller

IN FOCUS: SEIDNER FAMILY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SCHILLER INSTITUTE

Laura Steinberg

Laura J. Steinberg sets the stage for a research explosion

For Mary Lou and Marc, their contributions to society go far beyond their philanthropies. 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.

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“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.”
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 part of a larger body of work or time in history.

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

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, but we also had to zoom out and see the bigger picture 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.

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.

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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.

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 Gazar 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.

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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 31st president of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts.

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