

THE MAGAZINE OF LEARNING, LEADERSHIP, AND POLICY

SESP

FALL 2025

Belief Meets Evidence

Lilah Shapiro's classes explore how ideas and people take shape



Dean

Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy

Associate Dean

Coleen T. Coleman (Comm88, MS91)

Associate Dean, Community Partnerships

Carrie Tzou (PhD08)

Associate Dean, Innovation and

Program Development

Kimberly Scott

Associate Dean, Teacher Education

Kavita Kapadia Matsko (MS97)

Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education

and Student Affairs

Susan Olson

Associate Dean, Well-Being

Claudia Haase

Assistant Dean, Research

Jeanne M. Hughes

Managing Editor

Julie Deardorff

Editorial and Design

Jeff Strayer, Henry McGill

Office of Global Marketing and Communications

Image Credits

Talia Arnold, Miriam Bulcher, Mahyar Dini,

Matthew Gilson, League Ready Agency,

Eileen Molony, Sharon Yang

©2025 Northwestern University. All rights reserved. 11-25/14.4M/JS-HM/3597

SESP is published for alumni, families, and friends of the School of Education and Social Policy. Diverse views are presented and do not necessarily reflect the editor's opinions or Northwestern University's official policies.

SESP welcomes your feedback, including story ideas, comments, class notes, corrections, and address changes.

sespalums@northwestern.edu

847-467-3147

Find more stories and ways to connect:

sesp.northwestern.edu

Bluesky: sesp-nu.bsky.social

Facebook: SESPNU

Instagram: @sesp_nu

LinkedIn: sesp.northwestern.edu

X: @sesp_nu



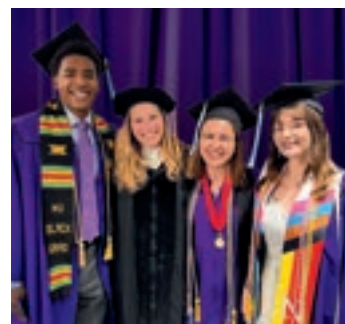
6 The Drive to Save National Service

Alumnus Gary Kosman's mission to help the helpers



10 Learning from Dad

A family's lifelong lessons in resilience



12 Rethinking What's True

Lilah Shapiro teaches students to question the foundations of knowledge

16 A Path to College

Alumna Kate Danielson helps youth in the foster system access higher education



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

DEAR SESP COMMUNITY,

One of my favorite recent videos shows a group of whitewater rafters navigating some of the toughest rapids in the country. Midway through, a paddler nearly tumbles headfirst into the water. His friend firmly grabs him with both hands, pulling him back in the raft.

I think often of this quick, simple, and potentially lifesaving gesture as we navigate today's turbulence, uncertainty, and change.

On one hand, the School of Education and Social Policy is boldly moving forward, hiring exceptional new faculty and launching two important master's degree programs. The first, the accelerated Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics, prepares recent graduates to drive transformative change across industries. Northwestern undergraduates can earn both a bachelor's and master's degree in five years. Participants will learn how to navigate the complex human dynamics that shape modern organizations.

The second new offering, a Master of Science in Technology, People, and Policy, was born of this unique moment in the history of our planet: Technology has never evolved this quickly, and there is no going back. Graduates need to be able to work with policymakers and corporate and educational leaders to help guide the future.

We also ended our 2025 fiscal year having secured \$6.7 million in new gifts and pledges from donors. We've hired amazing faculty members, and Professor Uri Wilensky was awarded the Yidan Prize, the world's highest accolade in education.

But it's also true that there have been significant changes at Northwestern,



starting at the top with President Michael Schill's resignation and the return of now interim president Henry Bienen. These are courageous people. Being president of any university is demanding in the best of times. In the current moment, it is extremely difficult and often thankless.

As dean, I've seen that change can be one of the important constants of the job. Institutions tend to like homeostasis and predictability. I suppose humans and animals do, too. The unyielding pace of change, however, is part of the fabric of the world. And while we can rarely slow it, we can manage our responses to the change and turmoil.

At our recent retreat, I asked faculty, "Do we want to be leaves in the wind, blown around by the whims of policymakers who define our destination for us? Or do we want to determine our pathway forward?"

When you're navigating rough waters, the currents pull and tug at you and the route must be carefully managed. In these moments, it's crucial that we row in the

same direction—and just as important, that we stay alert and ready to help anyone who's at risk of going overboard.

I am confident we will navigate our own whitewater rapids together to make it through the moment and move into the future. But I want our school to control our narrative and direction with a full understanding that things will be difficult. We will be changing. We will be learning. We will be growing. And we will be leading.

I'm proud to be the dean of the School of Education and Social Policy. The students, staff, and faculty are the very best of us.

Warmly,

Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy
Dean and Carlos Montezuma Professor
of Education and Social Policy

From Doubt to Dual Degrees



Julia Narvaez Munguia (BS25) faced a tough decision when she arrived at Northwestern: journalism or education and social policy? For two years she went with her first love at the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications, but she remained passionate about education. When Northwestern launched a dual-degree program through SESP and Medill just before her junior year, Narvaez Munguia couldn't apply fast enough.

In June she became the first graduate of the five-year program in journalism and education and social policy; she's now working as a multimedia journalist at Spectrum News 1 in Louisville, Kentucky. Hailing from Wilmington, North Carolina, the daughter of Honduran immigrants describes graduation as "double the joy," in part because her family attended both schools' convocation ceremonies.

Narvaez Munguia's passion stems from personal experience in underserved schools, where she often skipped class and felt overlooked. "My dream is to report on education at a national level," she says, aiming to hold systems accountable and spotlight success stories.

Coburn Elected to American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Professor **Cynthia Coburn** was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious honorary societies, alongside such leaders as Satya Nadella and Gloria Steinem. She joins eight other Northwestern faculty in the 2025 cohort.

Coburn, the Margaret Walker Alexander Professor, is renowned for her work on long-term collaborations between educators and researchers. Her own research focuses on how educational policies are interpreted and used in the classroom by teachers and school leaders.

Also a member of the National Academy of Education, Coburn has served on advisory boards for the Spencer and Gates Foundations and received numerous honors, including an honorary doctorate from Belgium's UCLouvain and Northwestern's Ver Steeg Distinguished Research Fellowship Award.



New Master's Program Targets Emerging Leaders



SESP's new **Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics** program is designed for recent college graduates who want to become leaders in learning, change, and innovation across today's complex workplaces. The interdisciplinary program builds on the school's legacy of shaping people-focused leaders who know how to consider different points of view and help create meaningful change in all kinds of workplaces, from businesses and government offices to schools and nonprofits.

The program combines simulations, case studies, and client-informed projects to provide real-world leadership experience. The curriculum features nine core courses in people, organizations, and systems thinking, along with electives in areas such as project management, technology implementation, and cultural competence. Students can begin during any quarter; Northwestern undergraduates can begin early through a combined bachelor's-master's pathway.

Says instructor **Terrence Roche**, the program "equips leaders to create human-centered change wherever they go."

Dixon, Riddick Join Faculty



Dixon



Riddick

Two new assistant professors are exploring how people and communities learn, lead, and heal—one through the effects of bereavement on public health, the other through the history of Black education and activism.

Sociologist **Angela Dixon** studies how loss and hardship shape the lives of families over time. Now assistant professor of learning sciences, she also holds an appointment in the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Dixon earned her PhD in sociology and social policy from Princeton University and was previously on the faculty at Emory University. Her research, blending sociology, demography, and public health, builds tools that help policymakers better support people dealing with bereavement and major life disruptions.

Zenile Riddick, a scholar of education and history who recently earned her doctorate at Harvard, joins SESP as assistant professor of human development and social policy. Her research focuses on Black education in the US, especially the roles of Black women as leaders, organizers, and teachers. Her work is shaped by her own education at an African-centered school in Oakland, California, and she has led mentorship programs for underrepresented students.

eLEAP Expands Learning



A new scholarship initiative helps grade school students access high-quality after-school and summer programs. The **Evanston Learning, Empowerment, and Advancement Program (eLEAP)** provides \$500 per eligible student for approved enrichment opportunities in the city. Families can explore options through **Digital Backpack 65**, a platform created by Northwestern's Digital Youth Network to simplify finding local programs.

The initiative, designed to make it easier for students to participate in learning experiences outside the classroom, is a partnership of SESP, Evanston/Skokie School District 65, and the City of Evanston.

"It's all about building an ecosystem," says **Nichole Pinkard**, the Alice Hamilton Professor of Education and Social Policy and founder of Digital Youth Network. "While it may seem straightforward, the data agreements required to connect in-school and out-of-school learning are complex. Our goal is to understand the information infrastructure necessary to simplify this process."



Language Lover Builds Rumaan Academy

Though **Zuviriya Anarwala** is preparing to teach English, it's just one of six languages she speaks. The self-described "lover of languages" also speaks Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, Turkish, and Arabic.

Last year the master of science in education student founded Rumaan Academy to teach women how to read Arabic. With backing from Northwestern's Garage incubator Luminate program, which supports first-generation and lower-income student entrepreneurs, Anarwala transitioned Rumaan from a simple Google form into a full website.

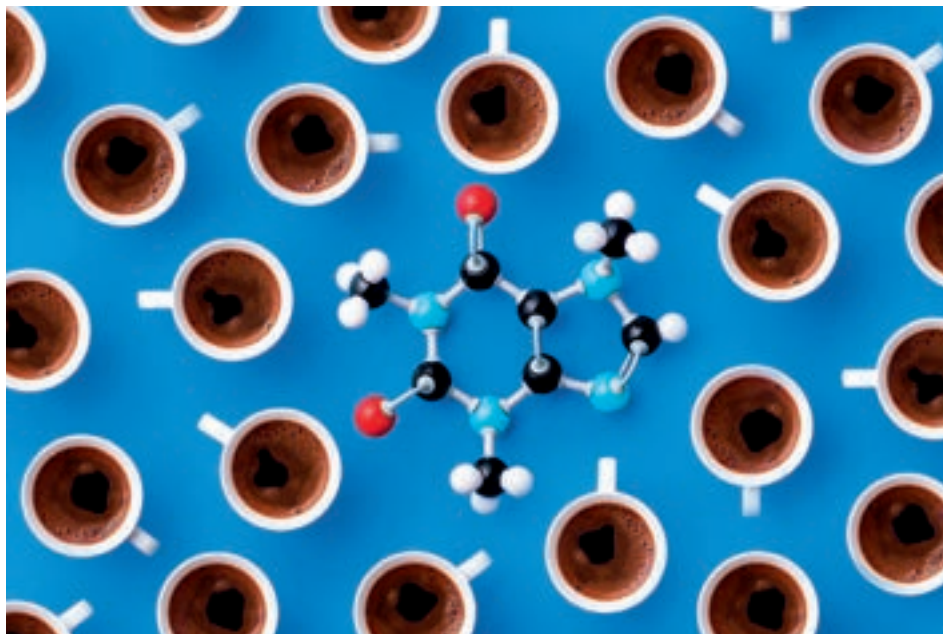
She's now expanding the program through the Garage's Jumpstart initiative, with plans to offer in-person sessions soon. She'll begin her career as a student teacher of English at Illinois's Niles West High School during winter quarter; her long-term goal is to shape educational policy.



Learning Beyond the Lab

Bradley Davey finds science in everyday life

By Alina Dizik



Many educators enter the profession because they loved school. Then there's Bradley Davey, who was expelled at age 15 and ordered by a court the following year to obtain his GED. Ever since, Davey—now an award-winning former teacher and current SESP doctoral candidate—has been on a journey of learning about learning.

"When you lack a formal education, you learn new ideas in new ways—and from and with new people," says Davey, who is pursuing his PhD in learning sciences. "This has been both a challenge and a blessing in my life."

His unorthodox academic path means he often asks questions that many fellow educators can't answer. Those questions now guide his research on interest-driven learning and creating environments where young people help shape how and what they learn.

Davey's complex relationship with education began early. His father died by suicide

"Science is everywhere. We just have to break away from the idea that science is only biology, chemistry, and physics."

—Bradley Davey

when Davey was six, and he later lived with an aunt and uncle. By age 15, depressed and unmoored, he had stopped going to school and was later expelled. Still, he earned his GED, and a mentor encouraged him to try community college, where he began to find his stride.

At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Davey studied German and chemistry; his honors thesis included an original translation of the 300-page novel *Die Weide der Seepferde* (The pasture of the seahorses). During his junior year, he won a Gilman

Scholarship to study and teach in Lüneburg, Germany. He later returned to Germany as a Fulbright scholar, working with lower-income and immigrant students in Frankfurt, then earned a master's degree in urban and education policy from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

Davey came to Northwestern in 2021 to pursue his doctorate after teaching high school chemistry and working at Stanford University as a research fellow in environmental engineering. His research focuses on solving a problem he saw in the classroom: the disconnection between science and everyday life. His adviser, learning sciences professor Reed Stevens, strongly supported his desire to explore science outside a lab setting. Their conversations sparked the idea to study the production of one of the world's most popular commodities: coffee.

After meeting Sam Lowe, director of coffee at Evanston-based roaster Backlot, Davey spent several years learning about the science and technology behind the roasting process. In the International Conference of the Learning Sciences poster presentation "Scientific Practices in Professional Coffee Roasting," Davey and Stevens questioned what counts as science—and where it can be studied. Coffee roasters, for example, prioritize their sense of smell over instrument-generated data. "Conversations about the body's role in science education are needed, as they influence how we teach and learn science," they wrote.

Davey is now designing courses for people entering the coffee industry, building more personal, accessible science education for both college students and ultimately young learners.

"Science is everywhere," he says. "We just have to break away from the idea that science is only biology, chemistry, and physics."



Stephanie Brehm



Peggy Burke



Eugene Lowe



Danny M. Cohen



Mary Goodman



Michael Horn



Jen Munson



Chris Neary



Sally Nuamah



David Rapp



Hannes Schwandt



James Spillane

IN BRIEF

Megan Bang, the James E. Johnson Professor of Learning Sciences, was elected to the MacArthur Foundation's board of directors and was named a fellow of the International Society of Learning Sciences.

Northwestern honored SESP dean **Bryan Brayboy** and **Bang** during an investiture ceremony to recognize the University's most outstanding faculty members.

The Master's in Higher Education Administration and Policy program celebrated the careers of retiring faculty **Stephanie Brehm**, **Peggy Burke**, and **Eugene Lowe**.

Danny M. Cohen was promoted to professor of instruction.

Mary Goodman is SESP's new director of development.

Professor **Claudia Haase** was named SESP's associate dean for well-being.

Professor **Michael Horn** was awarded the Charles Deering McCormick Professor of Teaching Excellence Award for his innovative approach to computer science and his ability to inspire a lifelong love of learning.

Professor **Simone Ispa-Landa** received a Provost's Grant for Research in Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts.

Jen Munson was promoted to associate professor of learning sciences.

Chris Neary, instructional design and technology consultant for the Master's in Higher Education Administration and Policy program, received an inaugural Spirit of Searle Award from Northwestern's Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching.

Professor **Sally Nuamah** was named a Buffett Faculty Fellow to support her international research. Her Ghana-based Exile Archives project will help local leaders document, preserve, and use community knowledge.

Professor **Nichole Pinkard** was elected to the Evanston/Skokie District 65 school board.

Professor **David Rapp** received the Department of Psychology's annual Mentorship Award.

A study led by professor **Hannes Schwandt**, published in the medical journal *JAMA Network Open*, found that, based on early data from the state, California's life expectancy has not rebounded to prepandemic figures.

Professor **James Spillane**, president of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, traveled to the organization's conference in Wales, where policymakers, practitioners, and researchers shared their experiences and expertise.

Professor **Ritu Tripathi** coauthored an article in *AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*. Her video *Using Gen AI to Explore and Decode Cultural Artifacts* was short-listed for the 2025 AI in International Business Teaching and Research competition at the Academy of International Business conference.

Professor **Sepehr Vakil** coauthored the book *Revolutionary Engineers: Learning, Politics, and Activism at Aryamehr University of Technology*.

Professor **Shirin Vossoughi** was named coeditor of the journal *Cognition and Instruction*.



GARY KOSMAN HITS THE ROAD TO SAVE AMERICORPS

From campus roots to national impact, Kosman built America Learns to help the helpers—and to keep service alive when it matters most

By Julie Deardorff

When Gary Kosman (BS00) heard about the #SaveAmeriCorps road trip in June—a grassroots effort to fight devastating federal spending cuts—his first thought was, “I have a car.” Within days, he was on the road.

Over the next month, Kosman drove through Arizona and California, interviewing AmeriCorps members and program leaders to document what could happen if the national service program, launched with bipartisan support in 1994, were eliminated.

He then wrote op-eds, pitched stories to local media, and posted testimonials online to encourage grassroots action.

“AmeriCorps has been a long-standing plan B for persistently underfunded education, social service, and conservation efforts,” says Kosman, founder and CEO of software company America Learns, which works closely with AmeriCorps. “Now it’s been ripped away instantly, and there’s no plan C.”

For 25 years, Kosman has helped the helpers—volunteer and national service workers—do their jobs. Galvanized by potential AmeriCorps funding cuts, he’s now using his experience to raise awareness about the need for the

program. In April the Trump administration shuttered hundreds of AmeriCorps programs in every state, cutting off nearly \$400 million in funding and instructing programs to “cease all award activities.” Immediate effects ranged from teachers losing full-time aides to flood-ravaged communities lacking long-term disaster response teams.

Funding was restored in September thanks to advocacy efforts and the help of both Democratic and

Republican legislators. But the Trump administration is fighting to eliminate AmeriCorps in the 2026 budget. The Senate wants to maintain current funding levels, while the House wants to cut funding by about half and rename the program the America First Corps.

America Learns—founded as a student project—supports more than

300 AmeriCorps programs and 16 state service commissions. The company also helps universities and governments award and monitor research grants. Its secret sauce, Kosman says, is collecting data efficiently and using it in real time to provide instant professional development for frontline workers.

“AmeriCorps has been a long-standing plan B for persistently underfunded education, social service, and conservation efforts.”

—Gary Kosman







“Gary always had vision,” says professor Miriam Sherin. “He’d see what else was possible, how to expand a program’s reach. He also had so much drive—and energy!” Indeed, *The Daily Northwestern* in 1997 tapped Kosman as an “undergraduate to watch” and later observed that he “packed more into four years than most people do in a lifetime.”

Professor of learning and organizational change James Spillane recalls how Kosman, studying social policy, was frustrated by the lack of a course on education policy and persuaded him to create one.

He showed exceptional leadership and was “the model SESP student—committed to learning about schooling and working to improve it,” Spillane says. “His ideas influenced how I thought about the social policy program long after he graduated.”

While at Northwestern, Kosman worked on the national America Reads Challenge literacy campaign, which enlisted volunteer tutors. When he saw the program lacked proper volunteer training, the idea for America Learns was sparked.

“We tutors had the best intentions but no idea what we were doing and no one to

“Gary runs a tech company, but it’s built on emotional intelligence as much as data.”

—Cole McMahon



help us,” he says. “If a student brought homework we couldn’t explain, we’d often get frustrated and do it for them or send the students home with incomplete assignments.”

Having benefited himself from tutoring as a third grader in Los Angeles, Kosman was deeply discouraged. “My inner eight-year-old was screaming at me,” he says. “If we say Northwestern tutors will help, we need to deliver.” As part of an independent study and senior thesis, he developed a process to support Northwestern tutors, which he eventually developed into the software service his company licenses.

“He worked tirelessly to get funding,” Sherin recalls. “He handled design, outreach, and scaling. He was clever about making tutoring resources both useful and accessible.” When he would stop by with new ideas, faculty members would

give feedback, “and he’d come back with something even better. He was impressive, with a huge heart and impact.”

After graduating in 2000, Kosman spent a year with the Coro Fellows Program in Public Affairs, honing leadership skills and learning how government, business, labor, and nonprofits intersect. When he returned to LA, he juggled three jobs while bootstrapping America Learns from coffee shops. In 2003, Echoing Green, the nation’s first social venture fund, invested in his vision.

In 2007, former president Bill Clinton mentioned America Learns in his book *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*. Kosman’s story was later featured in *Creating Good Work* by Ron Schultz, who collected the wisdom of leaders in social entrepreneurship. In 2014, Kosman returned to SESP as convocation speaker, sharing insights on the power of helpful and harmful habits.

As America Learns has grown, Kosman says he is proudest of the supportive culture he’s created for clients and employees in the US, Canada, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, and India. He established a client happiness department



From far left: Kosman made a virtual return to SESP to chat with undergraduates in 2014; an AmeriCorps volunteer helps clear debris after a deadly tornado in Joplin, Missouri; Frankie Hamburger (BS17) works with a Jumpstart student during her undergraduate days.

because “happiness is at the core of everything we do,” including a daily Five Minutes of Fun session and a culture of play.

“Gary runs a tech company, but it’s built on emotional intelligence as much as data,” says Cole McMahon, a nonprofit consultant and AmeriCorps colleague.

For Kosman, creating a culture of joy and psychological safety isn’t just good management, it’s how real change happens.

“People solve hard problems better when they feel seen, supported, and a little less serious,” he says. “That’s true whether you’re in a classroom or writing code.” That same philosophy now fuels his fight for AmeriCorps. “The programs may be under attack,” he says, “but most of the people behind them aren’t choosing to leave the fight. They’re too driven, too hopeful.”

Kosman isn’t leaving either. Whether on Zoom, on the road, or behind the wheel of a scrappy software company, he’s still doing what he started at SESP: showing up for people who make public service possible.

Jumpstart faces uncertain future at Northwestern

Jumpstart is a national AmeriCorps early education program that recruits and trains more than 2,000 college students annually to work in preschool classrooms to help prepare children for kindergarten.

At Northwestern, students work with preschoolers, classroom teachers, and team members at schools in Evanston and Chicago’s Rogers Park neighborhood. This year, however, the program is “under construction” due to potential cuts to AmeriCorps. While the full extent of the cuts is unclear, they are expected to significantly affect students, children, and community partners, says Rob Donahue, director and cofounder of Northwestern’s Center for Civic Engagement.

“We’re looking at severe cutbacks or even total elimination of Jumpstart at Northwestern,” he says. “Among other things, our students will likely lose access to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards, which we estimate have provided over half a million dollars in scholarships and loan forgiveness.”

Jumpstart supports college students serving at-risk preschool children from low-income households. Northwestern’s team contributes hundreds of hours to help children develop the language and literacy skills essential for kindergarten readiness. Senior Sara Pena Figueroa learned about Jumpstart in a child development class during her first year. Drawn to both education and working with children, she spent two years at Learning Bridge Early Education Center in Evanston.

“The whole program changed my trajectory at Northwestern,” says Figueroa, a QuestBridge scholar, Center for Civic Engagement fellow, and SESP’s Wildcat Welcome student director. “I wouldn’t be where I am without Jumpstart.”

Figueroa had wanted to teach since fifth grade, but her Jumpstart experience inspired her to make a broader impact.

“I switched to social policy to drive change in the education sector beyond a single classroom,” she says.

Jumpstart operates in 13 states and the District of Columbia. Due to federal funding uncertainty, chapters have already closed at several institutions, including Boston, Georgetown, and Howard Universities. Northwestern is working with local partners to explore ways to continue supporting preschools despite the expected cuts, especially as other early childhood services like Head Start also face reductions.

Learn more about the Center for Civic Engagement’s efforts to continue serving local preschool partners and supporting student volunteers at engage.northwestern.edu/schools.

Emily Lester's Lessons from Dad

Emily Lester (BS24) learned the power of tenacity from her father. After being diagnosed with ALS in 1993 at age 26, Jeff Lester was given just three to five years to live.

But Jeff, now 58, defied the odds. He saw his daughters graduate from high school and college, published a book, and earned two master's degrees using a computer controlled by his eyes. And though he is quadriplegic and on a ventilator, he stresses the importance of normalcy.

"My father's disability shaped who I am as a person," says Lester, of Lebanon, Missouri. "Physically taking care of him from a young age, knowing that I was responsible for his well-being and life, fundamentally changed how I view the world. He and my mom show me it's always possible to find the good in a bad situation."

It's an outlook that's now helping her as she navigates her own experience with the healthcare system following a diagnosis of myasthenia gravis, an autoimmune disorder that disrupts communication between nerve cells and muscles. Just 48 hours after learning about her condition,

"My father's disability shaped who I am as a person. He and my mom show me it's always possible to find the good in a bad situation."

—Emily Lester

Lester lost her job at a law firm and with it her health insurance.

"It felt like my life collapsed around me," she says. "It was brutal and scary and a lot to handle all at once. But in some ways my life fell into place—like this was an opportunity to be creative, to work toward a career that's meaningful to me again, and to have a renewed sense of purpose."

At SESP, Lester majored in social policy after seeing firsthand how Medicaid policies related to insurance coverage shaped her family's daily life. She also developed a passion for addressing food insecurity and added a global health minor, which allowed her to further





Far left: Lester. Left: Lester with her father, mother, and sisters celebrating her graduation. Above: A young Lester with her father.

examine how health policies affect communities on a human level.

“What I appreciated most about SESP was being surrounded by people who care deeply, not just about ideas but about impact,” she says. “It felt like a space where experience was valued just as much as academic insight.”

Lester is now focusing on managing the day-to-day realities of a chronic illness while beginning treatment, as well as pursuing work that reflects her commitment to making a difference. She hopes to continue working, writing, and telling stories to connect policy to personal experience and highlight the human side of public issues.

“I want to be part of building a world where no one’s ability to access care is

determined by their employment status,” she says. “Living through this has made me more certain than ever that our policies should be shaped by the people who know the stakes firsthand.”

She’s also learning to appreciate that her diagnosis gave her a clarity she didn’t know she needed. Rather than following a “normal” path, she wants to imagine new, untraditional ways to shape her future.

“I’m trying to redefine what success looks like on my own terms,” she says. “And I’m holding tightly to what I learned at SESP: that impact starts with empathy and that lived experience is a powerful foundation for change.”

LESTER’S 10 NORTHWESTERN HIGHLIGHTS

Working with student-run sustainability organization **CAMPUS KITCHENS** to redistribute unused food from Northwestern’s dining halls to people in need.

Receiving the **WILDCAT IMPACT AWARD** for managing Campus Kitchens during the pandemic.

Studying abroad in **SERBIA AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA** in an eight-week program on comparative public and mental health in the former Yugoslavia.

Presenting at **TEACHX** with Noelle Sullivan, global health studies program director and professor of instruction, on supporting neurodivergent learners.

INTRODUCING 2024 SESP convocation speaker Mitchell Jackson.

Writing a paper on health policy during an internship at the **US DEPARTMENT OF STATE**.

Serving as a **RESEARCH ASSISTANT** to professor Diane Schanzenbach to study the impact of SNAP and WIC programs.

Interning with **COMPASS GROUP USA** and Northwestern Dining, where she analyzed food waste data, supported the student food pantry, and contributed to sustainability initiatives.

Participating in **KNIGHT COMMUNITY SCHOLARS** through Student Enrichment Services.

Honoring her **HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER** Ryne Emerick by nominating him for the Morton Schapiro Distinguished Secondary School Teacher Award. He received the award, which is presented to former teachers of five graduating Northwestern seniors.



What Does It Mean to Know?

By Julie Deardorff

Lilah Shapiro is known for asking her students to question the presence of gravity. She may break into song at the end of the quarter. And in both her classroom teaching and her research, she has no trouble exploring polarizing topics.

Faye Berger (BS23) was dreading a required SESP class that tackles the hairy issue of what it means “to know.” Days before her first journal assignment was due, she was near tears. “My brain just doesn’t work like that,” Berger told instructor Lilah Shapiro. Shapiro firmly dismissed her concerns, encouraging Berger to do the assignment in her own way, then offering extensive, evenhanded feedback. After every class, Shapiro checked in and offered to meet, for as long or as briefly as Berger needed.

“She made me eager to learn,” says Berger, who went on to take two more of Shapiro’s classes and serve as her research assistant. “She worded her thoughts on my work in such a way that I was not just proud of it; I was excited to tackle the next assignment and do even better.”

It’s a common sentiment among students who have taken Shapiro’s classes, worked with her on research projects, or completed senior honors theses under her careful guidance. In a world shaped by divisive social media, misinformation, and political polarization, Shapiro helps students think carefully and critically about complicated topics, from gun ownership and religion to antisemitism.

“She taught me to challenge everything, and that all knowledge is constructed, an idea I initially struggled with,” Berger says. “Now I take it into every situation I face.”

Research that doesn’t happen

Shapiro, a sociologist and the Charles Deering McCormick Instructor of Excellence, studies belief systems large and small. Her research is timely and relevant, always involves students, and often touches cultural flashpoints. In 2021 she received a Provost’s Grant for Research in Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts to explore gun owners’ relationships with religion and faith. Why, she wondered, do some people believe that owning a gun makes them safer even when data says otherwise?

“We tend to think of ourselves as rational and evidence-based individuals,” Shapiro says. “But it often doesn’t matter how much data somebody is presented with. They’re going to believe what they need to believe so their world makes sense to them.”

She paused that research in 2022 after a gunman opened fire during an Independence Day parade in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, killing seven people. Her husband had been

standing just feet from one of the victims, and Shapiro knew two of those killed and many who were injured.

"I tell students about the factors that shape the research that happens—and the research that doesn't," she says. "Sometimes the most urgent and important work gets set aside or reshaped because of personal, political, or environmental factors." Though she still draws on insights from the sidelined work when she teaches, "I had to step away. I wasn't in the right headspace."

Antisemitism: In the eye of the beholder?

Shapiro's next project, though, was informed in part by public responses to the shootings. She had already begun exploring what gets labeled as antisemitism and who gets to define it, topics that students debated in class. While the desecration of a Jewish cemetery is a clear-cut example, she says, some considered the Highland Park shootings antisemitic because many of the victims were Jewish. She disagrees.

"People interpret and experience antisemitism differently

depending on their background," she says. "I'm trying to understand how and why people think about it the way they do. That's crucial if the broader goal is to combat all forms of social prejudice, not just antisemitism."

She initially planned to interview Jewish and non-Jewish students and intentionally recruit students from groups like Students for Justice in Palestine and NU Community Not Cops—groups that have both been accused of antisemitism. By including their views, she hoped people could get a better, fuller understanding of how antisemitism is understood and felt by a wide range of people. This bigger picture might also help open the door to important conversations among different groups, she says. But when Hamas attacked Israel in October 2023, she redesigned the research to account for heightened emotional and political tensions.

"I hope this research can help find areas of misunderstanding or knowledge gaps," she says. "That might allow for more productive dialogue both within and across groups. Moving beyond group-based, polarized thinking is crucial for learning."

Empowering students

Shapiro is known for instilling confidence and bringing out a love of research in her students that they often didn't know they had. "She sounded so unflinchingly certain that I would succeed that it made me believe it myself," says Sumaia Masoom (BS18), who now works at Visa.



"She taught me to challenge everything, and that all knowledge is constructed, an idea I initially struggled with."

—Faye Berger

Since 2012 Shapiro has sponsored 84 student applications for undergraduate research grants; of these, 69 were successful. Every year she advises multiple senior honors thesis students; last year she worked with five. She excels as a research mentor because she's willing to invest in teaching undergraduates about the research process, says Megan Wood, associate director of the Office of Undergraduate Research.

"It isn't about how her own research area aligns to the undergraduate's interests," Wood says. "She knows that mentorship is about teaching elements of research like how to write a research question, how to scope a project into something achievable, and how to support her mentees when their projects don't go according to plan."

The invisible green goblin

In another life Shapiro, a qualitative sociologist, might have been a long-form podcaster. Unlike quantitative





researchers, who analyze numerical data, she focuses on stories and meaning.

"People are fascinating," she says. "My job is to figure out what makes them tick and how they make meaning in their life."

After earning undergraduate degrees in English and vocal performance from Oberlin College, Shapiro completed her doctorate in comparative human development at the University of Chicago. During a 2011 fellowship at the Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, she began to explore the gap between how people think they make sense of the world and what they actually do, and this divide still shapes her work today. In her signature course, Understanding Knowledge, she asks what it means to know, how knowledge is produced, and who gets to define it. She challenges students to examine how they know what they know and how to engage thoughtfully with such ideas as conspiracy theories and extremism. Topics range from the Flat Earth Society to vaccine skepticism and the theory of relativity.

Social policy major Juniper Shelly recalls how, in the first class of the quarter, Shapiro dropped a pen and asked students why it fell. When they chorused "gravity," she responded, "How do you know it isn't an invisible green goblin

pulling it to the ground? Can anyone prove that's not true?" Shelly was initially skeptical. "I knew it was gravity—science has proven it," she says. But as the course progressed, she saw Shapiro's deeper message: that many established truths are shaped by belief in the scientific method and faith in "experts."

The course was also unique because Shapiro encouraged students to examine the role played by their own identities, biases, and assumptions in creating knowledge. Through debate and diverse readings, "Professor Shapiro expanded my mind," Shelly says. "She made us take on perspectives we didn't agree with and pointed out the way our like-mindedness shielded us from having challenging conversations about politics and identity. She presented debates that seemed foreign to many of us, like the notion that science is a human-made creation, comparable to religion. The rational way she laid out arguments that many of us would have easily dismissed helped open my mind."

SESP undergraduate Catherine James loved the class so much that she now brings prospective students to sit in when she gives campus tours. "Some even join the discussion," says James, who is studying learning and organizational change.

"The rational way she laid out arguments that many of us would have easily dismissed helped open my mind."

—Juniper Shelly

"I walked away feeling like it changed how I think. She doesn't sugarcoat anything, and she makes room for opposing views. That helps you grow."

For Berger, now a strategy analyst at Deloitte, the last day of class was one of the most memorable. Shapiro, also a classically trained musician, stood in front of her 30 students and sang parts of the farewell song "For Good" from *Wicked*, whose lyrics describe meeting someone who changes your life.

"Professor Shapiro was that person for me," Berger says. "She challenged me and every student in her class to chase our curiosities. She motivated me to seek answers to questions I didn't know I had. And she fundamentally changed the way I think about the world and my position in it."



Turning Lived Experience into Lasting Change

Alumna Kate Danielson founded Foster Progress to help young people in the foster care system get to—and through—college

By Alina Dizik

For Chicagoan Aminata Harley, the decision to take a job at Foster Progress, a nonprofit that helps teenagers in the foster care system apply to and succeed in college, felt deeply personal. That's because Harley was once one of those teens herself.

"You just don't know what you don't know," says Harley, who credits her Foster Progress mentors with helping her graduate from Bowdoin College. "Being in foster care and not having a parent means there's a layer of basic knowledge that's missing."

Harley was exactly the kind of student that SESP alumna Kate Danielson hoped to reach when she founded Foster Progress in 2016. Her belief that "education is the great equalizer" has shaped her career, from teaching in public schools to running mentoring programs and ultimately founding one. Since its launch, the organization has helped more than 100 foster youth navigate the college journey and transition to adulthood.

"College is such a privilege," says Danielson, who earned her master's in education and social policy from SESP in 2009.

"Being in foster care and not having a parent means there's a layer of basic knowledge that's missing."

—Aminata Harley

"But it's a privilege we need to open up to more people."

The need is acute. Only 8 to 12 percent of children age 13 or older in foster care go on to earn a college degree, according to the journal *AERA Open*. While this is an increase from a previously reported statistic of 3 percent, there's a long way to go to minimize the discrepancy between foster youth and those who did not experience such care, Danielson says. "Raising a teen is hard—even when they have really great foster parents—and it gets more complicated when the teen isn't your biological child."

Foster Progress is part of a growing group of programs offering wraparound support to help foster youth succeed in college. According to Amy Dworsky, senior researcher at Chapin Hall at the

University of Chicago, these students have experienced family separation and often child abuse or neglect, unstable living arrangements, multiple caregivers, and frequent school changes—all barriers that compound the difficulty of completing a degree.

Once they get to college, many find themselves unprepared academically or socially. Schools often assume that students have homes to return to over academic breaks or family to help them move into dorms. Once they turn 21, students can lose financial





support, depending on state policy. Many foster youth also come from families without college degrees.

Despite growing financial aid opportunities (expanded federal aid flexibility, state-level tuition waivers and scholarships, and a simplified FAFSA process), “there’s not a lot of the personal support,” Danielson says. The lack of support hits hardest for youth aging out of foster care, which can occur between ages 18 and 21, depending on the state. But research shows that strong relationships and material assistance can improve how they do in school.

Danielson, a mother of four children, including two adopted through foster care, began thinking about the college process during her own family’s journey. She saw how easily foster families become stretched too thin to plan for a child’s academic success. After mentoring a young woman living in foster care who was eager to attend college, she began developing the foundation for Foster Progress.

The program has since grown from one-on-one mentoring into a robust, multipronged support system that begins when high school juniors are paired with college-educated mentors who help them make a strong finish in high school



Facing page: Harley. Left: Danielson.
Above: Harley and Danielson with fellow staff members at the 2024 Foster Progress graduation celebration.

and navigate college and financial aid applications. After each mentoring session, students earn \$100 in scholarship money for postsecondary education. Social events, including visiting museums and attending lectures, strengthen mentor-mentee bonds, build cultural awareness, and encourage curiosity and critical thinking—skills that are important in college.

**“College is such a privilege.
But it’s a privilege we need
to open up to more people.”**

—Kate Danielson

Consistency is key, Danielson says, because it’s often lacking in the lives of foster youth. Each June the program’s high school and college graduates are celebrated at a dinner. Once on a college campus, students can join the Youth in Care-College Advocate Program (Y-CAP), a partnership between Foster Progress and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services that provides peer-led support groups at six Illinois colleges.

“Kate has done an amazing job of getting this program off the ground,” says

Dworsky, who helped design what eventually became Y-CAP. “It could potentially be expanded to other public colleges and universities in Illinois and beyond.”

Foster Progress is also focused on advocacy work. In 2019 it helped pass legislation allowing foster children to attend public Illinois universities tuition-free, and it’s now working on a system to identify and promote foster-friendly colleges across the state.

“It benefits all of us to have an educated population who can not only provide for themselves but think for themselves,” Danielson says.

Harley, one of the first to join Foster Progress in 2017, moved into foster care with her aunt when she was 14. When she was a high school junior, an acquaintance referred her to the group. Foster Progress connected her with a mentor and financial support to apply to schools, study abroad in high school, and visit historically Black colleges and universities. Years later, her mentors flew to Maine to celebrate her graduation from Bowdoin, where she studied education, government, and legal studies.

Later, as a program assistant at Foster Progress, Harley connected with current participants and served as a relatable role model. Many students don’t know anyone else in foster care beyond their siblings, which can feel deeply isolating.

“The young people trusted me a little bit more,” she says. “Some are too shy or embarrassed to ask others even the smallest questions.” What most people don’t realize is that foster youth aren’t asking to go it alone. “Even if we seem strong or self-sufficient,” she explains, “we still need people who show up—consistently, patiently, and without judgment. That kind of support can change everything.”

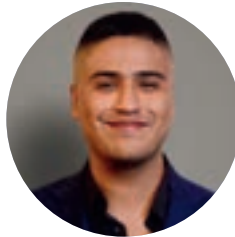
For the teens she mentored, she wasn’t just a program assistant; she was living proof that their dreams are possible. “I didn’t get here by myself,” she says. “And they don’t have to, either.”



Richard E. Wiley



Amanda Laufer



Christian Reyes



Robert F. Read II



Caroline Kaker



Bree Groff



Christina Gutierrez



Nala Bishop



Deanna (Ding) Alba



Emmalee Windle



Sasha Benson



Erin Clifford



Kay Ramey



Mike Okun-Perlin



Yasmeen
Mohammed Rafee

50s

Richard E. Wiley (BS55), considered the “father of high-definition television,” was honored with a lifetime achievement award from the Media Institute. As chairman of the Federal Communications Commission from 1970 to 1977, Wiley fostered increased competition and lessened regulations. He is the only person to serve as chairman, commissioner, and general counsel of the FCC and was called “the most influential media and telecommunications lawyer in the United States.”

70s

Ruth Ravid (MA76, PhD79), professor emerita at National Louis University, published the seventh edition of her college textbook *Practical Statistics for Educators*.

80s

Anita Thomas (BS89) was appointed provost of Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina.

90s

Jeanne M. VanBriesen (BS90, McCormick PhD98) was appointed dean of the College of Engineering and Information Technology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Daniel J. Montgomery (MS93) was named executive director of the American Library Association.

Nora Hernandez (BS94) is a department clearance officer for the US Department of Labor and was previously a program analyst for the Employee Benefits Security Administration. She earned her law degree from the University of Iowa.

Caroline Kaker (BS94), director of program strategy for Sodexo and Captis, won the 2025 Rising Star Women Leaders in Healthcare award from Women We Admire.

Deanna (Ding) Alba (MA97) was named acting vice chancellor for marketing, communications, and community relations at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

Amy Van Gelder (BS99) was named to the *Crain's Chicago Business* 2025 notable litigators and trial attorneys list.

00s

Demetrius Sajous-Brady (MS00), an educator for three decades, teaches at Lincoln Elementary School in Chicago and provides enrichment as a private academic tutor.

Chala Holland (BS01), superintendent of Township High School District 113 in Highland Park, Illinois, was appointed to the Illinois State Police Merit Board by Governor JB Pritzker.

Matt MacDonald (BS01), president and global head of managed vision care for EyeMed, was named chair-elect of the Prevent Blindness board of directors.

Erin Clifford (BS02, MA23) is the author of *Wellness Reimagined: A Holistic Approach to Health, Happiness, and Harmony*, which made *USA Today's* bestseller list.

Stefanie DeLuca (PhD02), a sociologist at Johns Hopkins University and one of the nation's leading experts on housing mobility, vouchers, and policy, is the inaugural visiting scholar at Northwestern's Institute for Policy Research.

Rebekah Stathakis (BS02), director of teacher preparation programs in SESP's Teaching, Learning, and Education program, received the program's first staff-of-the-year award. She grew up in Spain, Costa Rica, and Venezuela and came to the US for the first time to attend Northwestern, where she earned her degree in secondary teaching.

Amanda Laufer (BS07) joined Stinson LLP's new Los Angeles office in the labor and employment division. For 12 years she was an attorney with the National Labor Relations Board.

10s

Bree Groff (MS14), a senior adviser to the global consultancy SYPartners, published her first book, *Today Was Fun: A Book About Work (Seriously)*.

Milvia Rodriguez (MS15) is executive program director of the Civic Leadership Academy and the Harris School public policy undergraduate program at the University of Chicago.

Emmalee Windle (BS16), a trauma therapist in Cincinnati, published her first book of poems. *Edge* is a story of embracing the resilience and strength that come from reclaiming one's voice following experiences of sexual violence.

Kay Ramey (PhD17), assistant professor of learning sciences and educational psychology at the University of Iowa, received a 2025 James N. Murray Faculty Award.

Amanda (Morsch) Sparhawk (WCAS09, MS17) is a high school science curriculum designer for Chicago Public Schools.

Sumaia Masoom (BS18) is a senior manager at Visa and an MBA candidate at the University of California, Berkeley.

Ellen Furgis (BS19) is an investment manager at Gresham House in London.

Nicholas Leonardi (MS19), a PhD student in curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, was one of 30 participants in the 2025 Sandra K. Abell Institute for Doctoral Students hosted by SESP.

Christian Reyes (BS19) is a senior associate at Golub Capital.

20s

Christina Gutierrez (BS20) is associate director of admissions, recruitment, and outreach at Chicago State University.

Frances Hartnett (BS20) is a senior associate at Flatiron Search Partners.

Briana Jarnagin (MS21), operations manager for the consulting firm EduDream, was appointed to the Park Ridge (Illinois) Public Library's board of trustees.

Marcela Callapina (MS22) is an academic adviser at Oakton College in Illinois, where she oversees transition programs such as orientation, welcome week, and first-year experience.

Mike Okun-Perlin (MS22), senior student program coordinator in the biomedical engineering department at the McCormick School of Engineering, gave a poster presentation on increasing doctoral students' sense of belonging at the National Academic Advising Association Region Five conference in Chicago.

Robert F. Read II (BS22) graduated summa cum laude from the Case Western Reserve University School of Law and recently passed the Ohio bar exam. While in law school, he was editor in chief of the *Case Western Reserve Law Review*.

Addie Shrodes (PhD22) is messaging research manager for the Movement Advancement Project.

Nala Bishop (BS23) is program and outreach coordinator for the All-Stars Project of Chicago, which works in neighborhoods on the South and West Sides of the city that have been affected by poverty and

violence. She says the organization is always looking to partner with businesses for development workshops and internships for young people.

Suyash Mohan (MS23) is an investor for Plug and Play Tech Center, an early-stage venture capital firm.

Sasha Benson (BS24) is a healthcare policy associate at Capital Street.

Caleb Mistir (BS24) is a compensation associate on the shared services team at PNC.

Yasmeen Mohammed Rafee (BS24) is a clinical case manager at Impact Behavioral Health Partners.

Claire Snyder (BS24) was selected by the Deloitte Foundation for the 2024 Student Athlete Leadership Experience, a development program helping female student athletes transition from athletic excellence to postathletics career success.

Lauren Walcott (BS24) is an intern with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation working in the office of Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth.

Anna Alava (BS25), a legal assistant for immigration law firm Ferreira Law, was named to the Tayo Fellows Summer 2025 cohort by the Filipino Young Leaders. She worked on projects related to online misinformation and public health.

Bryana Barry (MS25) is people and operations manager for Hive.

Brett Farmer (MS25) is student transition manager at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.



Please send all news updates and address changes to sespalums@northwestern.edu.

Or share your update and tag us with #SESPLove on Facebook (SESPNU), Instagram (@sesp_nu), or X (@sesp_nu). For more class notes, visit sesp.northwestern.edu.

From Empathy to Acceptance

Alumna charts her own path studying emotions, relationships, and lifelong development

By Alina Dizik

Whenever professor **Claudia Haase** saw **Lillian Fu**'s name on her calendar, she knew it would be a good day.

"Talking with her always felt like an opening of possibilities," says Haase, a developmental psychologist and Fu's mentor and research adviser. "Lillian is wise beyond her years. She has this deep curiosity and a genuine desire to understand emotions and relationships."

Fu graduated in June with bachelor's degrees in psychology and learning and organizational change, and she's quick to credit Haase with shaping her path to research. It was the professor's course on adult development and aging that sparked Fu's interest in the world of emotions.

"She wanted us to propose our own project and learn in a hands-on way," says Fu, who spent nearly four years working in Haase's Life-Span Development Lab; SESP's Center for Culture, Brain, Biology, and Learning; and the Chicago Consortium on Longevity. At all three, Fu learned how to capture and study the emotional and relationship dynamics that had long intrigued her.

Growing up in China and Australia, Fu developed a sensitivity to how cultural and developmental contexts shape interpersonal relationships. Relationship systems are complex, she says, involving interactions among multiple people's unique experiences. "As I navigated different cultural environments, what helped me find a sense of belonging was the friendships that I built. I always make an effort to stay in touch with close friends from different chapters of life, even if we're now spread out around the world."

That global outlook also shapes how Fu views her academic work. Says Haase, "She's super connected at the individual, personal level."

Fu received three grants from the Office of Undergraduate Research to study emotions in close relationships and won the 2022 Fletcher Prize for Rising Undergraduate



Fu with her parents during the 2025 Commencement weekend.

"Lillian is wise beyond her years. She has this deep curiosity and a genuine desire to understand emotions and relationships."

—Claudia Haase

Research Star. (Haase also won a Fletcher Prize for Excellence in Research Mentorship.) Fu presented her research for three consecutive years at the Society for Affective Science conference—an uncommon feat for an undergraduate—and three times at the Northwestern Undergraduate Research Expo, twice winning best presentation in her panel.

In 2023 Fu launched her first independent project: studying how sadness and anger during relationship conflicts affect empathy. After months of tracking pairs of friends and romantic partners, she found that emotions influence how well individuals could empathize.

"When people felt angry or sad, they tended to be less able to show empathy

toward their partner," she says. "At the same time, those who experienced greater compassion were better able to read their partner's emotions."

More recently, she's studied emotional acceptance—the idea that embracing emotions is more effective than judging them. In a larger lab project, participants wore body sensors while practicing emotion regulation strategies. Tracking physiological signals like heart rate and respiration, Fu found that those with more accept-

ing attitudes showed patterns of relaxation. "Studying the physiological underpinnings of emotional acceptance could help uncover the physical health benefits of practicing acceptance," she says.

Fu has also applied these ideas personally, when she's anxious about the future or questioning whether she's on the right path: "The idea of acceptance has been helpful—it's a reminder that this is a stage of life when it's normal to be figuring things out."

For her senior thesis in psychology, Fu examined how words used in conversations—such as "yes," "okay," "no," or "never"—reflect emotional tone. She'll present her findings at a Gerontological Society of America symposium organized by Haase. This fall Fu began pursuing a doctorate in health psychology at the University of California, Irvine, where she's studying emotions and healthy aging with professor Susan Charles.

"Lillian is not only a brilliant, creative young scholar, but she has been excellently trained," Charles says. "The combination of talent, drive, and a strong foundation is a gift to our lab."



Amanda Litman

The activist and author calls on young people to lead even when it's unpopular.

Amanda Litman is on a mission to help young people run for political office. For the brave souls who do, she offers a warning: prepare to be unpopular.

"Being a leader means taking a stance, and people are not going to like you for that," she told the Women and American Political Leadership class. "And that's OK. If the criticism starts to affect you, you will crumble. People will critique you for the things you say, the way you say them, the type of lipstick you wear while you say them. So much of it is not real—it's criticism that comes because you are challenging the status quo."

In 2017 Litman, a 2012 Northwestern graduate, founded Run for Something, a political action committee that recruits and supports young progressives. She is author of *When We're In Charge: The Next Generation's Guide to Leadership* and was one of more than a dozen guest speakers in instructor Nancy Rotering's course—along with Izzy Dobbels (BS20), deputy chief of staff for the Illinois House speaker, and Kaylyn Ahn (BS25), who helped pass

legislation inspired by her own experience with sexual assault. Here are excerpts from Litman's talk.

"I skipped a day of high school as a junior to hear [Barack] Obama speak. I was hooked. I didn't know politics could be or feel like that."

"I started Run for Something because there was a problem I wanted to solve and I thought I had the skills to do it. Being an entrepreneur or startup founder requires a certain amount of craziness. You have to take the leap and be willing to fall. That's fun for me."

"Even the most popular person—with a 65 to 70 percent approval rating—has haters. Think of the skills and tools you need to cultivate a thick skin."

"Leadership, writ large, is not about me—it's about you. The ones who get stuck are the ones who think, 'Why do I want to win?' rather than 'Why do other people think I should win?' How will you make schools better, improve soccer fields?"

"Writing is thinking. To do a job well, you need to be able to communicate clearly in writing, make an argument, back it up—and it needs to sound like you. This is one of the foolish things about using AI to write emails and memos. Being charming in these spaces really makes a difference. As things get increasingly automated and robotic, good human writing will be even more important."

"Anyone 70 or older should not run for reelection. We need to bring our best possible fighters, and, generally speaking, those fighters have come from the folks who have risen to power in the last 10 years—not in the 20 years before that."

"This is an incredible moment of opportunity. If you've ever thought about running, this is the time. It's going to be good."

Northwestern

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AND SOCIAL POLICY

Walter Annenberg Hall
2120 Campus Drive
Evanston, IL 60208-2610

NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Fox Co.



WE'RE TURNING 100!

And celebrating a century of learning, leading, and making a difference. Founded in 1926 as the School of Education, SESP will celebrate its 100th birthday next year. Look out for the spring issue to see how you can be part of our next chapter. In the undated photo above, school faculty gather in front of the John Evans Center on Sheridan Road.