Dear Alumni and Friends,

At Penn GSE we are very proud of our legacy of leading innovation in education for more than two decades. Innovation, the theme of this issue, is part of Penn GSE’s DNA and is visible across our programs, our practical work on the ground, and our research.

Our groundbreaking initiatives include an array of executive-format programs to prepare working educators for new and growing fields, as well as the first education business plan competition held by an education school, the first master’s degree program in education entrepreneurship, and the first global certificate in education innovation. Our features on pages 6 and 12 highlight how Penn GSE is effecting change and the first global certificate in education innovation. Our features present by NEXT Shulman Rogers.

I am always inspired by our community, and this fall has been particularly special in that regard. Alongside Professor Sigal Ben-Porath, I have been co-teaching the doctoral seminar for first-year, full-time doctoral students across Penn GSE’s programs. Returning to the classroom has given me a wonderful opportunity to work more closely with our community of new education researchers. Whether they are studying education policy or educational linguistics, higher education or human development, their talent and potential for shaping the field are remarkable. Working with students from across our programs in one classroom has also given me an exciting preview of the stimulating interdisciplinary environment we will create in our planned building expansion project, highlighted on page 21.

At Penn GSE, we are dedicated to finding sustainable and scalable solutions to some of the biggest challenges facing society. I hope that you, our alumni and friends, will be as inspired as I am as you read of our work and impact.

Pam Grossman
Dean, Penn Graduate School of Education
George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education

Faculty Awards & Honors

Manuel S. González Canché (2) has been named to the editorial board of The Review of Educational Research. Aloha Gayle (2) received the Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award from the National Council of Teachers of English. Matthew Hartley (3) has received a national award in Kazakhstan “for contributions to the development of research (science) for the Republic of Kazakhstan,” for which he was nominated by Nazarbayev University. Michael C. Johank (4) was invited by the Catholic University of Cordoba in Argentina to give a keynote address in September at “Education, Democracy, and Social Change,” an event that represents the third Latin American Congress of Educational Research and thirtieth Meeting of the State of the Republic of Peru.

Laura W. Perna (5) has been appointed to the Commission on the Value of Postsecondary Education, a new national research group convened by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with the Institute for Higher Education Policy. Amy Stor-naiulo (6) and her colleagues have received the 2019 Emerald Literati Award from Emerald Publishing for the paper “Building Spaces for Literacy in School: Mapping the Emergence of a Literacy Makerspace.” Susan Yoon (6) has received an inaugural 2019 Fellow of the International Society of the Learning Sciences, an honor that recognizes highly accomplished scholars who have made major contributions to the field of the learning sciences. Jonathan Zimmerman (8) received the 2019 Open Inquiry Leadership Award from the Heterodox Academy for championing open inquiry, viewpoint diversity, and constructive disagreement.

The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games

by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas

Published May 2019 by NYU Press

Drawing upon her experiences as a young adult novelist, fan fiction writer, and scholar of education, Dr. Thomas considers four black female protagonists from some of the most popular stories of the early twenty-first century: from popular youth and young adult speculative fiction. The book identifies a diversity crisis in children’s and young adult media, as well as new possibilities for the future.

Rise Up! Activism as Education

Edited by Amalia Dache, Stephen John Quaye, Chris Linder, and Keen M. McGuire

Published September 2019 by Michigan State University Press


by Sharon M. Ravitch and Nicole Mittelfelder Carl

Published September 2019 by Harvard Education Press

Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research

Edited by Michael J. Nakkula and Andrew J. Schneider-Muñoz

Published November 2018 by Praeger

See page 22 to learn more about Dr. Nakkula’s work.

Names in bold are members of the Penn GSE faculty.

Letter from the Dean

Throughout this issue, you will see examples of how members of the Penn GSE community are leading the conversation about how to teach twenty-first-century skills, partnering with educators to provide professional development in cutting-edge topics, developing new businesses and nonprofits, founding new schools, and researching the effectiveness of educational programs and approaches. The range of problems they are addressing is impressive, and their solutions are inspiring.

The same is true of the finalists and winners of the Milken-Penn GSE Education Business Plan Competition, which recently celebrated its tenth year. At the finals round in October, the Milken Family Foundation grand prize was awarded to Social Cipher, a Los Angeles-based video game studio that creates opportunities for young people with autism to understand and apply social skills. eCLOSE, a Philadelphia company that engages teachers and students in professional cancer research, won both the second place American Public University System prize and the audience choice prize presented by NEXT Shulman Rogers.

At its core, innovation means making positive change in the world by constantly identifying new challenges and meeting them with learning sciences and technologies.

Nancy Ishiyama, Ph.D.

Vice Provost for Global Initiatives

Faculty Bookshelf

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas

The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games

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Names in bold are members of the Penn GSE faculty.
Amalia Z. Dache (J) is an assistant professor in higher education. Previously she was assistant professor at the University of Missouri, where she was awarded the university’s 2018 Faculty Achievement in Diversity Award. Dr. Dache’s research addresses postcolonial geographic contexts of higher education, Afro-Latinx student experiences, academic and student resistance, and the college-access experiences of African diasporic students and communities.

Sarah Schneider Kavanagh (4) was appointed assistant professor in teaching, learning, and leadership. Previously research assistant professor at Penn GSE, she studies practice-based pedagogical approaches to preparing teachers to engage in inquiry-based instruction. Dr. Kavanagh is leading two large research teams in multiyear investigations of innovative designs for teacher learning.

In addition, Penn GSE Assistant Professor Abigail Dym (1) received the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship, which supports individual and local STEM workforce development. At Penn GSE, Dym researches technology-based support for science and mathematics learning, and she was previously a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow.

Four Penn GSE Students Receive Prestigious Fellowships

Penn GSE doctoral students each received a National Academy of Education (NAEd)Spencer Dissertation Fellowship, which supports individuals whose dissertations show potential for bringing fresh and constructive perspectives to education. The recipients are Adam Kirk Edgerton, a doctoral candidate in teaching, learning, and literacy; Samantha Rahman, a doctoral candidate in education, culture, and society; and Aldo Antonio Tapia, a doctoral candidate in educational linguistics.

In addition, Penn GSE Assistant Professor Ryan Baker (8) was selected for the 2019 Pennsylvania Science and Research Educator (PaSIRE) Program. The PaSIRE Program is a multiyear professional development program for science and technology educators in Pennsylvania. Through the program, Baker will develop and implement an innovative professional development model that focuses on providing science and technology educators with the skills and resources needed to support student learning.

Penn GSE Welcomes New Faculty

Penn GSE welcomed the following new faculty in the summer and fall of 2019:

- A. Brookes Boden (4) is an assistant professor in education policy. She also serves as director of researching for the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education at Teacher College, Columbia University. Dr. Boden specializes in program evaluation and economic analysis, focusing on applications and the methodology of the ingredients method to conduct cost-effectiveness analyses.

- Amalia Z. Dache (J) is an assistant professor in higher education. Previously she was assistant professor at the University of Missouri, where she was awarded the university’s 2018 Faculty Achievement in Diversity Award. Dr. Dache’s research addresses postcolonial geographic contexts of higher education, Afro-Latinx student experiences, academic and student resistance, and the college-access experiences of African diasporic students and communities.

- Sarah Schneider Kavanagh (4) was appointed assistant professor in teaching, learning, and leadership. Previously research assistant professor at Penn GSE, she studies practice-based pedagogical approaches to preparing teachers to engage in inquiry-based instruction. Dr. Kavanagh is leading two large research teams in multiyear investigations of innovative designs for teacher learning.

- Amrita Thapa (8) is an assistant professor at Penn GSE, where she studies educational linguistics and the development of linguistic competencies such as word processing, vocabulary building, and reading comprehension. At Penn GSE, Thapa teaches courses on language development and conducts research on the role of language in cognitive development.

In addition, Dr. Baker and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of New York at Stony Brook have received a grant award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop a new game that teaches science and math skills to elementary school children.

Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award

Penn GSE Dean Laura W. Perna has retired as the director of the School Leadership Program. His twenty-seven-year tenure as the director of the School Leadership Program has been marked by substantial increases in enrollment, diversity, physical space, and endowment. Johnson has overseen the implementation of the Social, Emotional, and Ethical Development (SEED) curriculum, an integrated learning experience that draws from practices in positive education, academic and social-emotional learning, and emotional intelligence.

Center for School Study Councils Celebrates 75th Anniversary

This spring, the Center for School Study Councils celebrated its 75th anniversary. CSSC has been recognized as one of the most competitive and influential education leaders, and it is a place where education leaders can gather to exchange wisdom and solve problems. Membership includes districts in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. The Center for School Study Councils is celebrating its 75th anniversary this spring, and the event will include a reception, keynote address, and panel discussion on the impact of school study councils on student achievement and school improvement.

School Leadership Program Welcomes New Director

Eleven years at Penn GSE—and a career as one of the most respected voices on education leadership—Dr. Earl Ball (H) has retired as the director of the School Leadership Program. Dr. Ball came to Penn GSE in 2007 to help develop the program, which launched the following year. Students and alumni have credited Ball with helping them find their voices as school leaders and serving as a source of wisdom long after graduation. Previously Ball served as Head of the William Penn Charter School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and he has served as the director of the School Leadership Program.

In addition, Dr. Baker and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of New York at Stony Brook have received a grant award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop a new game that teaches science and math skills to elementary school children.

Professor of Practice Michael J. Nakkula (8) received a $45,000 grant from The Future Project to lead a study of an innovative national project on developmental life coaching to promote “possibility thinking” in urban high schools. The initiative helps fill the gap in counseling and related life-planning supports in urban schools across the country. The study focuses on initiatives in Detroit, Newark, New Haven, and Washington, DC. See page 22 to learn more about Dr. Nakkula’s work.

Professor Betsy R. Byrnes (2) and the Educational Linguistics division have received an inaugural Penn GSE Global Engagement Award to create a new elective course, Approaches to Teaching Chinese, in collaboration with the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Penn Arts and Sciences. The proposed course will address the needs of current students as well as a need for Chinese immersion teachers in the United States.

Congratulations to the Recipients of...

Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award

Amy Thapa (8) has been selected as the winner of the Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award for 2019. Thapa was selected for her commitment to excellence in teaching and for her ongoing contributions to the field of educational linguistics. Thapa is a member of the Educational Linguistics division, and she has received several grants to support her research on the role of language in cognitive development.

Lois MacNamara Award for Outstanding Service to Students

Krista Featherstone (8) has been selected as the winner of the Lois MacNamara Award for Outstanding Service to Students. featherstone is a master’s student in educational linguistics, and she has been involved with the Penn GSE School Study Councils. She has also served as a mentor for the Pennsylvania Science and Research Educator (PaSIRE) Program.

Penn GSE Award for Excellence in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Jax Lastinger, master’s student

Laurie Wigram Award for Visual and Performing Arts in Education

Yarel Portillo, GED’19

Penn GSE Annual Awards

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2019 Penn GSE Annual Awards:

- Penn Prize for Excellence in Teaching by Graduate Students: Abigail Dym, GED’18, doctoral student

- Penn Prize for Excellence in Teaching by Faculty Members: David Johnson, Professor of Practice in Education Policy

- Penn GSE Award for Excellence in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion: Jax Lastinger, master’s student

- Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award: Amy Thapa, Associate Professor in Educational Linguistics

- Lois MacNamara Award for Outstanding Service to Students: Krista Featherstone, GED’19

In addition, Dr. Baker and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of New York at Stony Brook have received a grant award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop a new game that teaches science and math skills to elementary school children.

Visit www.gse.upenn.edu/news/in-the-media or follow @PennGSE on Twitter to stay up to date on Penn GSE in the media.
A pioneer of innovation in education, Penn GSE boasts a twenty-year legacy of re-envisioning teaching and learning, solving problems on the ground in classrooms and schools, fostering new businesses and ventures, and translating research to practice. "Penn GSE constantly strives to reimagine learning and anticipate the leading edge of education," says Dean Pam Grossman. "Our innovative approach yields programs and initiatives that are built for agility, so that we can ensure our students, education leaders, entrepreneurs, and workforce developers gathered to identify twenty-first-century skills and envision how to impart them to learners of all ages."

"We need to create classrooms that prepare students to gain the capacity to be nimble and flexible, to learn how to learn, and develop new skills," says Dean Grossman. Twenty-first-century skills such as collaboration, communication, problem solving, relationship building, project management, entrepreneurship, and design thinking quickly became the focus of conversation at the event. Teams brainstormed active learning opportunities for students in K–12, adult, postsecondary, and higher education. "It was a chance to make sure we keep pushing around innovation, so we don’t miss the opportunity for the people we serve," says participant Patrick Clancy, president and CEO of Bobbi Kurshan.

"Our work is all geared to coalescing forces to improve the educational system," says Dr. Golden. Through a new series of problem-solving initiatives, or inquiries, in schools, Catalyst is creating a two-way exchange with educators. "We start by going out into the field and working with them to identify their biggest problems," says Golden.

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Catalyzing Change

How can education prepare students for a future in which the pace of change is faster than anything humans have experienced? What skills will be most in demand once breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, and other technologies have transformed multiple industries? Participants sought to answer questions like these at "Exploring the Future of Work and Learning," an event convened in June by Catalyst.

"We identified key visionaries and innovators to discuss how education can transform to meet the needs of the future," says Dr. Golden. "Given the rapid pace of change in the workplace and our world, we expect huge disruption in how, where, and why we educate young people." At the event, multicolored sticky notes dotted the walls and tablecloths at Penn’s Perry World House as high school students, education leaders, entrepreneurs, and workforce developers gathered to identify twenty-first-century skills and envision how to impart them to learners of all ages.

"'We need to create classrooms that prepare students to gain the capacity to be nimble and flexible, to learn how to learn, and develop new skills,’” says Dean Grossman. Twenty-first-century skills such as collaboration, communication, problem solving, relationship building, project management, entrepreneurship, and design thinking quickly became the focus of conversation at the event. Teams brainstormed active learning opportunities for students in K–12, adult, postsecondary, and higher education. “It was a chance to make sure we keep pushing around innovation, so we don’t miss the opportunity for the people we serve,” says participant Patrick Clancy, president and CEO of Bobbi Kurshan.

“Given the rapid pace of change in the workplace and our world, we expect huge disruption in how, where, and why we educate young people.”}

—Catalyst Executive Director Michael Golden, GRD’07

Penn GSE Transforms Education for a Changing World

by Juliana Rosati

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Photos by Jay Gorodetzer Photography

Key visionaries and educators, including high school students, education leaders, entrepreneurs, and workforce developers, gather at Penn’s Perry World House to explore the future of work and learning.
“We need to create classrooms that prepare students to gain the capacity to be nimble and flexible, to learn how to learn, and develop new skills.”

—Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman
As students graduate, they enter a burgeoning community of alumni poised to sustain their work through partnerships and networking. “Our students and alumni are helping teachers prepare students for active citizenship and STEM careers.”

“Bioinformatics is really about the use of computers in biology,” says Yoon. “You can detect patterns in thousands or millions of data points to inform medical therapies and solutions.”

With funding from the National Science Foundation, Yoon and partners at Penn Medicine and the Institute for Biomedical Informatics are preparing a group of teachers from the School District of Philadelphia to create curricula in bioinformatics. Students will learn to study air quality and how it can be improved, focusing on the locally relevant issue of pollution’s role in asthma. “Students will construct solutions that will make a difference in our community,” says Yoon. “We’re teaching about the latest and greatest applications of technology in big data and data literacy.”

She envisions eventually rolling out the bioinformatics program on a larger scale, much as one of her earlier projects, BioGraph, recently became a MOOC available to educators internationally. As a partner in BioGraph, Yoon collaborates with MIT’s Scheller Teacher Education Program to help teachers integrate coding and visual simulations into biology lessons. BioGraph has been shown to produce a threefold increase in students’ understanding of complex scientific systems like ecosystems and human respiration.

By engaging educational environments and partnering with teachers to create professional development, Yoon and her colleagues in the Learning Sciences and Technologies program increase access to cutting-edge opportunities that schools often lack the resources to implement. “Teachers are yearning to teach with progressive pedagogies and tools but without an advocate like us and high-quality professional development, education is hard-pressed to improve,” she says.

Looking Ahead
As Penn GSE continues partnering with practitioners and producing graduates who are equipped to shape education in powerful new ways, the future is as bright as the School’s legacy of innovation.

“We are convening people and ideas for disruptive change,” says Golden. Catalyst is developing new resources, pathways, and conversations to solve problems and anticipate the future of education. The Education Entrepreneurship program is expanding its global reach through a three-to-five-day on-site certificate in education innovation, first offered in San Francisco and Tel Aviv, and scheduled to launch in Dubai, Mumbai, and China in the spring. The Learning Sciences and Technologies program is exploring potential new offerings. And faculty, staff, and students across the School remain tireless in their efforts to improve education.

“Innovation is a part of everything we do at Penn GSE,” says Grossman. “It’s a mindset that we cultivate across Penn GSE—asking what will be the next frontier in education and how we can leverage our expertise to prepare for it.”

“Penn GSE constantly strives to reimagine learning and anticipate the leading edge of education. Our innovative approach yields programs and initiatives that are built for agility, so that we can ensure our relevance to practitioners and the communities they serve.” —Penn GSE Dean Pam Grossman
How can an educator take an idea for a groundbreaking curriculum and make it a reality that enhances hundreds or even thousands of classrooms? How can a global business leader create an online platform that helps educational institutions teach more effectively? Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program, the first of its kind in the world, was launched in 2014 to address some of education’s greatest challenges. During the thirteen-month, executive-format program, students continue their lives as working professionals while earning an M.S.Ed., completing a thesis by building an impactful, sustainable, and scalable education venture.

“To date, the program’s alumni have created nearly 150 education enterprises, launched new schools and programs, worked on ed tech startups, built next-gen learning curricula, and provided leadership on entrepreneurial activities in schools, businesses, governments, and communities,” says Dr. Jenny Zapf, the program’s director and a senior fellow at Penn GSE. Since its inception the program has doubled in size and produced almost 150 alumni working in twenty-five countries. Here, four graduates share how it provided them with the knowledge and tools to innovate at all levels of education, both within and beyond the classroom, in the United States and abroad.

Improving College Access in Vietnam

For Hieu Dinh Le, GED’18, a dream was born when he asked himself why he had managed to live the kind of professional life that remained out of reach for most of his high school classmates in Vietnam.

“The key turning point is the education I received in the United States. That completely changed my life,” says Le, who studied economics at the University of California, Los Angeles on a Vietnam government scholarship. He went on to become a consultant at Deloitte and ING, as well as an education entrepreneur with two successful startups.

Now, as founding team member of Vietnam’s first world-class university, he wants to bring quality higher education to more Vietnamese through VinUniversity (VinUni), a nonprofit, private college in Hanoi expected to welcome its first class in 2020.

Vin大学 graduates about one million high schoolers each year, Le says, but most cannot afford a university education—particularly those from rural areas, where more than 60 percent of the country’s population lives.

“Going to college is still a privilege,” he says, noting that even those who get there struggle to find good jobs because of the poor educational quality.

Enter VinUni, the 2016 philanthropic brainchild of the Vietnamese conglomerate Vingroup, which is partnering with Cornell University to establish business and engineering colleges and with Penn to create medical and nursing colleges. The rigorous, English-language college aims to bring an Ivy League standard to Vietnamese higher education, Le says, and will offer scholarships to most students, eliminating cost constraints.

“We want to create someone who actually can bring about change, lead the workforce, create jobs,” says Le, who was named to Forbes Vietnam’s 30 Under 30 list in 2016 and has been director of VinUni’s marketing, public relations, and admissions since January.

Earlier in his career, Le founded and then sold Everest Education, a tech-based tutoring service, and used the proceeds to start G.A.P. Institute, a career development hub meant to raise the global competitiveness of Vietnamese college students. Le says he put his knowledge from Penn GSE’s Education Entrepreneurship program into practice at the institute, which grew so rapidly that the Vingroup considered acquiring it. Instead, he was invited to join VinUni’s leadership team while continuing as CEO at G.A.P.

“At Penn, I learned so much about education, so much about running my company and doing entrepreneurship the right way,” he says. Now, Le uses his skills from Penn GSE to pitch VinUni and its holistic admissions approach to attract potential applicants, to seek professors in the mold of Penn GSE faculty, and to help design a campus.

“I strongly believe in the potential of Vietnamese students,” he says, “because I was one of them.”

“I learned so much about education, so much about running my company and doing entrepreneurship the right way.”
During eight years of homeschooling a son who has autism, Andrea Pollack, GED’17, figured out which strategies work and which do not—and most importantly, what might help other parents who face similar challenges.

“There are so many different therapies for kids,” says Pollack, who left a nineteen-year law career to focus on her son’s education. “At their core, there are common elements that are really related to good parenting. I wanted to help parents learn those skills without having to read a thousand books and figure it out for themselves.”

Building Skills for Parenting Children with Autism

Pollack sought to establish a nonprofit—but first needed expertise in launching a new venture in the education space. She determined that the Education Entrepreneurship program at Penn GSE “could spare me a lot of mistakes,” she says. In 2018, Autism Parents Connect got underway.

Based in New York City, the emerging outfit offers a series of three workshops on strategies to address challenging behavior in children with autism, such as meltdowns and inattentiveness. Combining a focus on developing parenting skills with ongoing support makes Autism Parents Connect distinctive in its category, according to Pollack. She is president of the company and also chairs the board of trustees of the Cooke Center for Learning & Development in New York, where her son, now twenty, went to school.

Pollack learned the hard way that parenting tips gleaned from lectures often failed when attempted at home. “I had nowhere to go to get further guidance on how I could implement the ideas that were shared,” she recalls. “They would deliver information, and then you were on your own.”

In the workshops, Pollack teaches strategies such as modeling self-regulation. She also examines causes of difficult behavior, setting your child up for success, and getting your child’s buy-in, aiming to help participants become more confident in their parenting skills. An online forum provides additional help and a supportive community.

“There are programs that support parents,” she says, “but this is new and different. I’m focusing on building skills rather than sharing information.”

In addition to leading the workshops, Pollack continues to pitch the concept to community organizations, looking to expand her program’s reach through partnerships. She credits practice pitches and valuable coursework at Penn GSE with refining her ideas through feedback from both professors and fellow students.

“The program and the interaction with my cohort were enlightening and invaluable for me,” Pollack says. “The experience has been incredibly helpful in enabling me to do work I wanted to do and am passionate about.”

Both ventures benefit from the knowledge he gained in the Education Entrepreneurship program at Penn GSE.

“While I had a strong entrepreneurial base, I was lacking the education theory and practice that I knew were of critical importance,” he says. “The program was lens-changing.”

After selling startups in the real estate industries, in 2012 Greenberg joined Springside Chestnut Hill Academy, a school in Philadelphia that his children attended. He was hired as executive director of the school’s new Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership and helped implement what he describes as “the first known fully integrated K–12 entrepreneurship program” to foster the mindset, skills, and competencies associated with entrepreneurship, he says. Students’ initiatives ranged from a climate change nonprofit to an art supply box made for travel.
Supporting the Extraordinary Impact Campaign

Penn GSE develops groundbreaking research and practice to shape and lead education in the twenty-first century. As the Extraordinary Impact Campaign continues, Penn GSE is grateful to generous donors who are investing in the School’s strengths and vision. Here are four stories of support for the mission of Penn GSE.

Faces of Philanthropy

by Karen Doss Bowman

Advancing Innovation in Education

Andrew Harris Jacobson, WC'93, and Marina Kunis Jacobson, WC'93, believe in the potential of innovation and technology to transform education. As online platforms broaden the reach of educational content and digital tools offer new approaches to learning, and in the classroom, the Jacobsons hope the result will be an expansion of quality learning opportunities for children regardless of background.

“Technology can be a powerful resource when applied effectively and creatively to education,” says Andrew, founder, president, and CEO of Axiom Investors LLC.

“With technology, you’re not limited by your physical location in accessing teachers, and that’s a powerful educational opportunity,” adds Marina, managing partner at Amicle Management LLC.

In keeping with their interests, the Jacobsons have named the Andrew and Marina Jacobson Innovation Studio, part of Penn GSE’s planned building expansion (see page 21 to learn more about the project). The Innovation Studio will provide future educators with a state-of-the-art space in which to design groundbreaking ventures that may shape the future of learning.

“We want to support Penn GSE’s mission of remaining at the forefront of education, both nationally and internationally,” says Andrew, a member since 2019 of Penn GSE’s Board of Overseers.

Andrew and Marina—who also established the Jacobson Global Venture Awards at The Wharton School’s Joseph H. Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies—both feel fortunate that their parents emigrated to the United States, in part for better educational opportunities. Administrators in Penn were instrumental in helping Andrew’s parents move to the States from England so that his father could study and teach at the University. Marina’s family left Ukraine when she was seven years old, establishing their new home in Los Angeles.

“The teachers who gave me the push and the resources I needed to succeed made a real difference, because my parents were immigrants and weren’t aware of all the opportunities available to me,” Marina says. “The influential role of teachers in people’s lives cannot be overstated.”

Preparing Future Teachers

Deborah Ancona, C’76, GED’77, a professor at MIT Sloan School of Management, conducted groundbreaking research into how successful teams operate. Her work led directly to the concept of X-teams—a structure that helps individuals and organizations adapt to changing external circumstances to accomplish their goals. The dynamic approach is conducive to creativity and innovation. As a member of the Penn GSE Board of Overseers, Ancona is pleased with the School’s approach to developing future leaders in education.

“Preparing teachers with the latest ideas, examining what makes school districts effective, and training a cadre of future teachers and superintendents—these things can make a positive difference,” says Ancona, author of X-Teams: How to Build Teams That Lead, Innovate, and Succeed (Harvard Business Review Press, 2007) and founder of the MIT Leadership Center. “Penn GSE is doing great things to train future educators to improve schools around the country and the world.”

Ancona, who is Soley Distinguished Professor of Management at MIT Sloan, says her experience studying counseling as a Penn GSE student was “foundational.” Though she started with plans for a career in clinical counseling, taking a business course at The Wharton School shifted her interest to applying psychology to organizations. At MIT, she teaches executive MBA students and business executives about leadership, teams, and organizational development.

In honor of her father, the late dermatologist and professor Dr. Arthur G. Gladstein—the inventor of a device to treat cancer of the eyelid—Ancona has established The AG Scholarship Fund at Penn GSE. The fund supports students training to be teachers and leaders. “Through my daughter’s impact as public school teachers, I’ve seen the difference that a great teacher and a great school system can make,” Ancona says. “In my own small way, I wanted to be part of creating positive change for teachers.”

Strengthening Partnerships to Serve Children

Steven Wagshal, W’94, started looking for other ways to serve Penn. He was impressed with the mission of Penn GSE—in particular, the work of the Office of School and Community Engagement (OSCE). The office supports partnerships between Penn GSE, The School District of Philadelphia, and community organizations to improve the academic and life outcomes of Philadelphia children and youth who face challenges including high rates of poverty and underfunded schools.

When Steven met with OSCE director Dr. Caroline Watts, as well as some of the Penn GSE alumni who participate in OSCE activities, he found their passion contagious. He and his wife, Emily Loft-Wagshal, created the Wagshal OSCE Gift Fund at Penn GSE to support the OSCE’s work.

Each year, initiatives facilitated by the OSCE engage Penn GSE students, faculty, staff, and alumni in more than four hundred activities at 250 Philadelphia schools, as well as over eighty activities in the community. Highlights include a partnership to improve mathematics instruction in thirteen elementary schools; programs in science, coding, filmmaking, journalism, and college preparation for District students; and community offerings in counseling and English language learning. The Wagshals hope their support can help maintain and expand this outreach.

“We’re happy to provide this support so that Penn GSE students can gain hands-on experience that prepares them to be educators for the rest of their lives,” says Steven, COO of Samlyn Capital LLC and a member of the Penn GSE Board of Overseers, noting that his mother and Emily’s mother were both schoolteachers.

“The OSCE activities provide a safe place for Philadelphia children,” adds Emily, a licensed master of social work and a community volunteer. “They socialize and gain exposure to learning opportunities they would not otherwise have. That makes a difference for many children.”

Supporting Strong Advocates for Learners

As a young student, Jennifer Saul Rich, C’92, struggled with a learning difference at a time when such issues were not well understood or diagnosed. Hard work and perseverance allowed her to master her studies and continue a family tradition by entering Penn as an undergradu- ate. Majoring in elementary edu- cation, she committed herself to teaching all children, especially those facing learning challenges similar to her own.

Saul Rich’s passion for teaching has led her to support the Penn GSE Term Scholarship Fund and establish the Rich Family Endowed Scholarship at Penn GSE, aiming to help others pursuing a career in education by making their studies more affordable. A former member of the Penn GSE Board of Overseers, she views the School as playing an important role in producing the next generation of forward-thinking educators. “Penn GSE has the expertise and experience to prepare future educators to be kind, compassionate, and strong advocates for children,” she says. “I’m excited about the School’s vision.”

Saul Rich earned master’s degrees in reading and special education from Bank Street College of Education and completed a year of Ph.D. studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. While no longer a classroom teacher, she remains active in education as a member of the board of the Dwight Englewood School in New Jersey and previously served on the boards of the Town School and the Stephen Gaynor School in New York. “I will always be a proponent of and advocate for education,” she says. “It is the greatest gift we can give to America’s children.”

To learn more about the Extraordinary Impact Campaign, see the building expansion update on page 21, visit www.gse.upenn.edu/support/extraordinary-impact, or contact us at 215.573.6623 or alumni@gse.upenn.edu.
When Jenna Brower heard her middle school students at Christina Seix Academy grumbling that the campus playground catered only to younger students, she saw a timely learning opportunity. Having recently introduced an innovation laboratory at the independent school, which enrolls underserved three-year-olds through eighth graders in Trenton, New Jersey, she challenged her students to take action and use the innovation lab to design a playground that would appeal to adolescents.

“I wanted them to use their imaginations to solve a problem that was relevant to their lives. They were amazingly intentional with their plans and thought about everything: cost, safety, accessibility for people with disabilities,” says Brower, who helped the group draft a formal proposal to submit to the head of school. “A big point of the lab is to make students feel heard and to show them that they can be agents for change, whether it’s in their school, in their community, or around the world.”

Now enrolled in the Urban Teaching Residency master’s program at Penn GSE, Brower continues to teach at the academy and recently partnered with colleague and classmate Adrinne St. Fleur to overhaul the burgeoning innovation lab. The effort served as their final project for Maker Studio, a course developed by Yasmin Kafai, the Lori and Michael Milken President’s Distinguished Professor at Penn GSE.

Dr. Kafai launched Maker Studio four years ago to foster technical skills and creativity among Penn GSE students. The course is a nod to the maker movement, a cultural phenomenon that promotes discovery through active brainstorming and building as opposed to passive consumption of information. Educational “makerspaces” such as the innovation lab at Christina Seix have been cropping up in academic institutions worldwide, giving learners communal spaces where they can carry out do-it-yourself experimentation with resources like craft and hardware supplies, computers and tablets, robotics, fabrication equipment, and multimedia tools.

To increase Penn GSE students’ exposure to these learning environments, a makerspace is included in the School’s planned building expansion.

“There is an important difference between reading or listening and having a hands-on learning experience. This movement is about returning to experiential learning, bringing back a DIY component that many people feel has gone out the door with all of the emphasis on test scores today,” explains Kafai, who designed the course with technology top of mind. By the end of the semester, her students have constructed electronic circuits using copper tape, LED lights, and batteries; designed and fabricated small objects using a 3D printer; and coded their own video games using basic programming language.

Assignments like these prepared Brower and St. Fleur for their mission to enhance the makerspace at Christina Seix. Although Brower conceptualized the innovation lab more than two years ago, she was teaching full time and didn’t have the capacity to manage it singlehandedly or to orient other teachers to the facility—and since she primarily worked with older children, she struggled to identify ways to engage the school’s youngest students.

That’s where St. Fleur, lead educator for the school’s three-year-old preschoolers and Brower’s classmate in the Urban Teaching Residency master’s program, came in.

“Before Maker Studio, I had never heard of a makerspace. And before Jenna asked me to help make the innovation lab more accessible to kids of all ages, I didn’t even know it existed,” St. Fleur recalls. After completing the physical task of organizing and labeling materials into cohesive stations that ranged from simple (general art supplies) to complex (3D modeling and printing devices), they switched their focus to devising curricula that incorporated toddlers to teenagers.

They wanted to establish pre-K activities that could be extended all the way through middle school.
“I do something called graphics practice, where the three-year-olds draw on dry-erase boards, and it seemed like a good place to start,” says St. Fleur.

She brought the graphics practice activity into the innovation lab by incorporating a robotics element. Her students drew mazes that were then navigated by pocket-sized robots called OzoBots, which are programmed to read lines as pathways they should follow. Brower then built on the activity with her older students, who used Dash Robots—larger robots that respond to a drop-and-drag command system—to solve oversized versions of the preschoolers’ mazes. “The younger kids were watching the robots go through their mazes and getting a visual idea of what coding can do. The older kids were actually doing the coding, telling the robot where to go and how to solve a bigger maze that was similar to what the younger kids drew,” Brower says. “This allowed the students to learn through play and to bring their creations to life while developing some simple coding skills.”

Today, collaboration, communication, computer literacy, and independent thinking are considered twenty-first-century skills essential to success in high school, college, and beyond. Honing such skills in a traditional classroom can be challenging, while makerspaces—where students tinker alongside their peers without explicit instructions—provide an invaluable sense of purpose and allow them to shine in ways that are not possible while seated at a desk.

Makerspaces give students an invaluable sense of purpose and allow them to shine in ways that are not possible while seated at a desk. Makerspaces give students an invaluable sense of purpose and allow them to shine in ways that are not possible while seated at a desk. Makerspaces give students an invaluable sense of purpose and allow them to shine in ways that are not possible while seated at a desk.
helping adolescents learn and thrive

interview by Juliana Rosati

Penn GSE Professor Michael J. Nakkula on Supporting Young People

Young people face a variety of challenges—whether due to emotional, socioeconomic, societal, or other factors—that may interfere with their ability to learn and thrive. Penn GSE Professor of Practice Michael J. Nakkula, chair of the School’s Human Development and Quantitative Methods division, has spent decades investigating what approaches can change students’ life trajectories for the better. We sat down with him to discuss his work and what he enjoys most about teaching Penn GSE students.

Your work focuses on possibility development for young people. What does that mean, and how does it differ from other ways of looking at adolescent psychology?

I define possibility development as the capacity to conceive of possibilities in one’s life and then actualize them with support. This work started in the mid-nineties when I helped start a program at Harvard Graduate School of Education. We were looking at interventions meant to prevent problems, such as disengagement and substance abuse, that contribute to high school dropout rates. But it became clear to me that the need was less about preventing problems than creating opportunity structures that allowed young people to thrive or pursue their interests. The students we worked with almost always held aspirations for a better future, and it wasn’t only the “troubled” kids, but rather the vast majority of students who needed support to access better opportunities. So we shifted our focus to helping young people envision and pursue the lives they wanted, and it was amazing to see the impact on students.

This issue of The Penn GSE Magazine focuses on the theme of innovation. In your work you’ve described innovation as a key part of possibility development. How can innovation help young people?

In many ways, young people need to be entrepreneurs to invent the futures they want. Like someone developing a new business, adolescents can exercise creativity and innovation to envision what they would like to happen in their lives, and then create a plan to pursue their goal. Of course, access to resources and support is an important part of the process. In my current work with two middle schools in Philadelphia, we are doing what I call possibility mentoring. Groups of Penn GSE master’s students work with seventh graders to help them envision possibilities in their lives—for example, becoming a scientist—and create strategies for pursuing them, such as taking certain classes in high school and learning about college programs and who can help them along the way. We want them to get into the habit of setting goals related to their interests and pursuing them with support.

Why is support so important?

Many students are resistant to it. They don’t really believe it can help them, and unfortunately there often continues to be a stigma around the idea of seeking counseling. By calling our work mentoring rather than counseling, we’re trying to broaden students’ understanding of what it means to seek support. Similarly, one of the programs I’m studying in my current research, The Future Project, based in New York City, provides students across the country with highly skilled mentors called “dream directors.” We’re still determining our findings, but what we know so far is that having a key person in the school who students can go to on a regular basis for social and emotional support, without concern for being stigmatized, seems to help. Students stay in school and become more engaged in the learning process.

Are there other support structures, beyond mentoring or counseling, that can help students pursue possibilities in their lives? Over time, I’ve explored various approaches. Support can mean mentoring or counseling, but it can also mean involvement in a community group. For example, one of my projects has spent ten years studying two early college high schools, which are designed to help urban high school students work toward an associate’s degree while earning their high school diploma. We found that the schools did a good job of preparing the students for the academic realities of college, but not for larger challenges. Most first-generation and lower-income students who dropped out of college left due to a convergence of pressures that made it difficult to prioritize school—for instance, they might have needed to work to support a family member. And it was the students who got connected to a support network early in college—whether it was a religious community, mentoring community, or an arts or athletic community—who were more likely to stay.

Support can also mean having the opportunity throughout the day to bring your personal experiences into the classroom and form deep connections with your classmates and teachers. In this vein, one of my other projects studied the Facing History High School in New York City. It uses a model across the curriculum called “Facing History and Ourselves,” which asks students to engage in self-reflection and discussion to make sense of what they are learning in light of their own lives, experiences, or social and emotional support, without concern for being stigmatized. It can also mean involvement in a community group. For example, one of my projects has spent ten years studying two early college high schools, which are designed to help urban high school students work toward an associate’s degree while earning their high school diploma. We found that the schools did a good job of preparing the students for the academic realities of college, but not for larger challenges. Most first-generation and lower-income students who dropped out of college left due to a convergence of pressures that made it difficult to prioritize school—for instance, they might have needed to work to support a family member. And it was the students who got connected to a support network early in college—whether it was a religious community, mentoring community, or an arts or athletic community—who were more likely to stay.

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Overall, what can schools do to better serve students? There needs to be a cultural shift, and even an educational shift, towards self-understanding and understanding other people. We spend remarkably little time in many schools helping students understand themselves. But when we do, some of the everyday challenges in students’ lives become more transparent and speakable as opposed to remaining hidden. In one of my current projects, The Project for Mental Health and Optimal Development, which was cofounded with Ed.D. student and educational consultant Andy Danischek, we’re entering our first year of bringing together a consortium of school districts in the Philadelphia area for monthly meetings at Penn GSE and training to help school personnel promote better mental health. Overall in my work, we’re providing a qualitative analysis of various models as a way of bringing practical wisdom forward. If students and teachers perceive an educational model as effective, we want that information to be available so other schools can consider adapting the model for their own contexts. What is next for your work in possibility development? I recently coedited a three-volume series, Adolescent Psychology in Today’s World: Global Perspectives on Risk, Relationships, and Development (Prager, 2018). It features chapters by a variety of authors around the world, including twelve Penn GSE students and alumni. The books are meant to be the first step in building a global possibility network. The authors and I want to share our practices and look at how they might be adapted to contexts in other parts of the world. For example, the possibility mentoring we’re doing in the United States will be adapted for a project I’m involved with in China, where we are trying to help youth from rural families who lack familiarity with higher education. I’m also working with Penn GSE Professor of Practice Sharon Ravitch and some of her colleagues in Nicaragua and India to do similar work in those countries.

“Our students bring tremendous passion for issues around learning, development, educational access, and diversity. When I go into class, I have to be prepared for tough questions.”

You are chair of the Human Development and Quantitative Methods division at Penn GSE. Could you say a little bit about the vision of the division? One of the things that we believe we’ve done innovatively is to bring a serious mental health overlay into school counseling. To this day, the field of school counseling is resistant to embrace too much mental health counseling work out of concern that it falls beyond the scope of what counselors are prepared for and have time to do. Our argument is that school counselors are sometimes the only service providers a student will see. Our integrated approach has made us attractive to educators who have worked with students who need something more than academic and school-related guidance. In addition, the recent merger of the Human Development and Counseling division with the Quantitative Methods division has benefited our research. We are now working more closely with colleagues who can help us to refine our research questions, data collection methods, and analytic approaches. Overall, I see our division as a unique integration of basic and applied developmental research, with an overarching mission of better understanding processes that enhance the well-being of children, youth, and families in Philadelphia and around the world.

You received the 2016 Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award. What do you enjoy most about teaching Penn GSE students? Our students bring tremendous passion for issues around learning, development, educational access, and diversity. When I go into class, I have to be prepared for tough questions. It could be related to language use around race or gender, for example. Our students want to know if we are really attuned to the issues that matter to them, and to students and schools. I don’t find that to be a burden; I find it exhilarating, actually. In addition to the classes I teach, I have research teams that are organized every year, and the students who join them gain hands-on experience that allows them to put into practice what they’re learning in class. One of the gifts of working with students like ours is that you see talent that transcends your own, and you know they’re going to go out and do good work. I want to be a part of the puzzle by playing an important role in their development and the missions they have for educating and helping others.

From left: Senior Fellow Alan Ruby, Senior Lecturer Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher, Dean Pam Grossman, Assistant Professor Kristal Strong, and Professor Matthew Hartley discussed global research and practice. Photo by Ginger Sue Photography

Celebrating Educators Alumni and friends celebrated the extraordinary impact of the Penn GSE community at the School’s annual Celebration of Educators on May 18, 2019, during Penn’s Alumni Weekend. A panel discussion at the event highlighted the global research and practice of four Penn GSE faculty: Senior Lecturer Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher, co-director of the International Education Development Program; Professor Matthew Hartley, associate dean for academic affairs; Senior Fellow Alan Ruby, senior scholar for Penn AHEAD; and Assistant Professor Kristal Strong. Dean Pam Grossman moderated the conversation, entitled “Voices in Education: Reimagining Our Future.” The celebration concluded with a reception honoring the recipients of the 2019 Education Alumni Awards. Given annually to Penn GSE alumni and other education professionals, the awards mark outstanding contributions to the School and the field of education.

From left: Marsha Comagno, GED’98, GRD’04, and Dean Pam Grossman congratulated honorees Serafín M. Coronel-Molina, GR’07, Aubrey H. Wang, GED’94, GR’01; Penn undergraduate Rihan Valrani (accepting the award on behalf of his father, Navin M. Valrani, W’93, GED’18); Jamie Lynn Hunter, GED’12; and Shelley B. Wepner, GED’73, GR’80. Not pictured: Kimberly Truong, GR’10
Alumni Notes

Penn Affiliations

1960s

Bill Baker, GED’65, is proud to be a member of the Adirondack 46ers mountain club, having hiked the forty-six highest peaks in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. A retired sixth grade teacher, he has addressed environmental concerns in Ambler, PA, as a member of Citizens for a Better Ambler.

Katie Barney, GED’69, has published her newest cookbook, The Enchanting World of Food, which includes international recipes contributed by ambassadors, their chefs, and friends of the author. A consultant on international business and protocol, she has always been involved in the diplomatic community.

Paul Humber, C’64, GED/65, is editor of The Lasting Bible (CR Ministries, 2019), which addresses how translations of the Hebrew word aleph and the Greek word alpha affect understandings of punishment and its cessation in the Bible.

Michael Wallace, GED’69, is coauthor of “The NOCCA Integrated World History Curriculum: A New Paradigm for Teaching History in High School” (World History Connected, 2016, Volume 13, Number 1), which describes a comprehensive design model for creating a secondary history curriculum.

1970s

Conrad Snyder, GR’70, is working on a European Union contract to develop the national ten-year education sector plan for Malawi. He recently finished a year in Ethiopia and is moving next year to Gainesville, FL.

1980s

James Day, GR’87, was recently elected professor emeritus at Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium in anticipation of his retirement in 2020. He has served as academic dean and chair of the doctoral, ethics, and undergraduate commissions; founded an interreligious dialogue project, and received the university’s highest teaching awards.

Margaret Mulqueen, GED’87, GR’84, has maintained a psychotherapy practice in Brookline, MA, for over thirty years. She has published a number of essays, most recently in Psychotherapy.net, Psychotherapy Networker, and The Boston Globe.

Mona Weissman, GR’86, was keynote speaker at the 2019 Rock Valley College David H. Caskey Memorial Lecture, where she discussed the research that inspired her book The Science of Divinity, to be published by Oxford University Press.

1990s

Mark Fabrizi, GED’95, has been awarded tenure at Eastern Connecticut State University, where he is an associate professor of English education. He received an award for teaching excellence from the Connecticut State Board of Regents.

Gail Foster-Lewis, GED’92, GR’95, is president and CEO of GIO Forward Education Foundation Inc., which hosts its White Tai-Gal and Fundraiser in November to support scholarships for K-12 students at low-performing schools who desire to attend a private Christian school.

Anastasia Germain, GR’98, recently sold her childcare business, KidShelt Learning Center, after twenty successful years of business ownership. Proud that the school system she created continues to thrive and grow, she looks forward to exploring new educational ventures.

Angelo Giardino, GED’86, M’87, GR’99, is in Tall Lake City, UT, at the University of Utah School of Medicine and Intermountain Health Care. He is a faculty member and chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the School of Medicine.

Jill Kanski-Bruno, D’94, GED’94, is proud to launch the Butterfly Effect: Children’s Orthodontics to raise awareness of and support for Lifting the Limits for PKU. Hope for the Annabel. Ava Potter Philippines Foundation, Race for Every Child, and The Willie Strong Foundation.

Gloria McNeal, GND’75, GR’98, was promoted to associate professor for community affairs in health at National University after six years as dean of the School of Health and Human Services. She looks forward to providing leadership, vision, and global outreach strategies.

Robert Vaughn, GR’98, lead pastor of the Community of Faith United Methodist Church in Herndon, VA, was elected to the denomination’s 2020 General Conference and is also an adjunct faculty member in sexuality and faith at Wesley Theological Seminary.

2000s

John Brewster, OT’03, GED’03, has retired after teaching Latin and English at Strath Haven High School in Wallingford, PA. He looks forward to traveling and spending much more time with family and friends.

Servet Celic, GED’02, is an associate professor and the head of the Department of Foreign Language Education at Trabzon University in Turkey.

Soojin Cho, GED’04, is working at an international school in China, writing a book, and filming online courses. She has published seven books, and one of her online courses has been adopted as mandatory by a number of colleges. She is thankful for her Penn GSE experience.

Ted Cross, GED’09, WED’09, has been named associate dean of graduate programs in the College of Business at Western Governors University.

Laura Freid, GED’05, is entering her third year as assistant professor at Maine College of Art. She is grateful for the awesome consulting work of Penn GSE classmates, Jackie Nielson, GR’98, and Sarah Steinberg, GRD’05.

Stefani Hito, GED’95, GRD’05, is a global consultant on process improvement and change initiatives for organizations. She is scheduled to present this fall at Dr. Jenny Donohoo’s Collective Efficacy Institute, which helps participants to foster a sense of efficacy in schools and classrooms.

Romilla Karnati, GEDG’00, GRD’04, is an advisor for early childhood care and development at Save the Children. She is responsible for the design, capacity building, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs in low- and middle-income countries.

James Kingham, GED’09, received his Ed.D. from New York University, where his research focused on the experiences of international graduate students.

Vvette Mayhan, OT’80, GR’00, manages “Talk With Me Baby Grady,” an initiative of the Grady Health System in Atlanta, GA. It is the first prenatal-to-birth, hospital-based program to systematically help parents develop habits of responsive interactions with their babies to promote development that can lead to better reading preparation.

Kieran McLaughlin, GED’05, has completed thirteen years as a high school social studies teacher. When his proposal to introduce AP Human Geog¬raphy to Morris Hills Regional District in New Jersey was approved in 2016, he wrote the curriculum and began teaching the course.

Alexis S. Montevirgen, GED’03, was appointed president of Los Angeles Pierce College, effective July 1. He was previously vice chancellor for student affairs and enrollment management at Indiana University Northwest.

Natasha Murray, GRD’05, is on the board of directors of PH Delta Kappa International. She has extensive experience as a practitioner, administrator, researcher, consultant, teacher educator, and adjunct professor within K-12 and graduate settings.

Bernex Richardson, GED’09, participated in a 545-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles in June as part of AIDS LifeCycle to support treatment and prevention of new HIV/AIDS infections. He worked relentlessly to train for this experience while raising more than $4,000 for the cause.

Manami Suzuki, GED’01, is professor in the College of Education at Indiana University Northwest. She received her doctorate in educational administration from the Open University in England and has been an award-winning faculty member in international graduate studies.

Angelo Giardino, GED’86, is coauthor of “The NOCCA Integrated World History Curriculum: A New Paradigm for Teaching History in High School,” which includes a comprehensive design model for creating a secondary history curriculum.
2010s

Katherine Barlow, GED'17, has developed an app to allow people in Philadelphia to help English language learners use a basic banking website, making access to affordable banking tools more equitable for local immigrant communities.

Melanie Betchem, GED'15, graduated from the Cooper Medical School at Rowan University in May and began training at Cooper University Hospital as an internal medicine resident. She hopes to continue integrating mental health and medicine.

Debroa Broderick, GRD'15, is creating a teacher academy program at Central Montco Technical High School in Plymouth Meeting, PA, for high school seniors interested in education careers. Students will earn up to nine college credits and complete over ninety-five hours in the field.

Stephanie (Conisoc) Cruz, GED'12, married Maurice Cruz on February 23 in Philadelphia, PA. The couple still lives in New York, NY, and Stephanie is starting her third year as principal at Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School, a Phila-Stonian, husband, father, educator, historian, and athlete dedicated to changing the world through his scholars.

Stephanie Fazio, GED'11, has published two new books in the Biscet fantasy series, which features Hemera, a girl who is feared for her shared characteristics with monstrous creatures. When people start disappearing, Hemera is the only one who can save them.

Kimberly Field-Marvin, GRD'16, head of Louis S. McGehee School in New Orleans, LA, presented in June at the National Coalition of Girls’ Schools Conference with Wanda Holland-Greene, head of Hamlin School in San Francisco, CA. They encouraged women to answer the call to educational leadership in independent schools.

Christine Gibil, GED'13, has been named director of the Ion Smart Cities Accelerator, part of Station Houston's Ion Midtown. She previously directed an entrepreneurship diploma program at a preK–12 school.

Esther Glasgow, GED'13, is a program coordinator at READ 718, a Brooklyn-based literacy nonprofit serving students from low-income families, for which she will manage a new location beginning this fall. She is grateful for Penn GSE’s role in her career.

Kimberly Guyer, GED’05, GRD’13, is the new vice president for student affairs at Alfred University, where she oversees departments and centers for advising athletics, career development, academic success, student involvement and conduct, and other aspects of campus life.

Khalilah Harris, GED'18, has written a new children’s book that has nearly 100,000 copies in print. A Place-Based Justice Network, which will allow him to merge lifelong work with place-based community engagement efforts.

Lynn Nakazawa, GED'16, was selected by the U.S. Department of State for a ten-month fellowship project training teachers and teaching English in Malaysia at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. She is one of two hundred U.S. citizens selected for the 2019-2020 English Language Fellow Program, an opportunity for experienced English language instructors to support the quality of English language instruction abroad.

Ebbie Parsons, GRD'11, managing partner of Yardstick Management, was named CEO of the Pahara-Aspen Education Fellowship program, which seeks to strengthen and sustain diverse, high-potential leaders who are remapping public education.

Jennifer Lynn Shuffler, GED’18, was named superintendent and supervisor of curriculum for the Tewksbury School District in Califon, NJ, effective July 1. She was previously assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at Somerset Hills School District in Bernardsville, NJ.

Monirath Sis, GED'16, founder and chief executive officer of Teach For Cambodia, was named to the 2019 Forbes “30 Under 30” Asia list for social entrepreneurs.

Changers LLC, providing leadership consulting for innovative market-responsive programming and services in public and private higher education.

Robert LeBlanc, GR’16, oversees the Center for American Progress, where he has coauthored the report “A Qualitative Evaluation for Every Child: A New Agenda for Education Policy,” a comprehensive set of strategy recommendations for presidential candidates.

Calypso Higgins, GED’14, is entering her fourth year of full-time teaching as a specialist in her second year as a learning specialist, at York Preparatory School in New York, NY.

Qianjun Lin, GED’18, is an academic progress manager who helps students prioritize their dream colleges. She says, “Isn’t it the spirit of a GSE-er, to let the world know that passion is the key to the dream.”

Linda Luciano, GRD’13, an entrepreneur and career coach, has been elected to another term as vice chair of the board of trustees of Caldwell University. On the board since 2004, she has served on each of its standing committees and as secretary.

Douglas Magee, GED’13, graduated from Vanderbilt University’s Ed.D. program in educational leadership and policy. His teaching interests are centered around the impact of Tennessee’s alternative teacher evaluation models on teacher growth and student performance.

Amy Medina, GED’17, was awarded a Place-Based Justice Network Next Generation Fellowship. The fellowship supports emerging leaders of color who work with place-based community engagement efforts.

Christian Miskell, GED’17, and colleagues created WarHood, a ninth-grade program geared toward celebrating and supporting Black Excellence, which they presented at the College Board’s 2018 Dream Deferred conference in Los Angeles, CA.

Lynn Nakazawa, GED’16, was selected by the U.S. Department of State for a ten-month fellowship project training teachers and teaching English in Malaysia at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. She is one of two hundred U.S. citizens selected for the 2019-2020 English Language Fellow Program, an opportunity for experienced English language instructors to support the quality of English language instruction abroad.

Allayna Ratliff, GED’17, accepted a position as academic superintendent (network leader) for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Her school is one of two hundred U.S. citizens selected for the 2019-2020 English Language Fellow Program, an opportunity for experienced English language instructors to support the quality of English language instruction abroad.

Lior Schenk, GED’18, accepted a position as thinking lab teacher at the Pittsburgh’s Environmental Charter School, which will allow him to merge Hesi’s passions in science and the arts. He is driven to grow the next generation of citizens through the exploration of real-world interdisciplinary problems.
CONTINUING A LEGACY OF DEDICATION

“Penn GSE has been a very special place to me from the start, thanks to the dedication of the faculty and the opportunity to pursue research as a master’s student. Because of the Castetter Fellowship, I can continue my research and prepare for a career determining which programs are truly helping youth. I want to help young people, particularly those at risk, receive a quality education and obtain the skills needed for success.”

— Michael Frisone, GED’15, Ph.D. student in quantitative methods
Recipient of the William B. and Roberta B. Castetter Fellowship

A vital part of Penn GSE, Dr. William B. Castetter, GR’48, taught at the School for nearly forty years and served twice as acting dean. His dedication to education continues today, supporting students like Michael through a bequest made years ago. The William B. Castetter Circle, named in his honor, recognizes individuals who have remembered the School in their estate plans.

To learn more about how you can leave a legacy in education, please contact:
Robert Vosburgh, JD, Director of Gift Planning | 215.898.6171 | vosburgh@upenn.edu

www.gse.upenn.edu/support/ways-to-give/planned-giving
Penn GSE held its 105th Commencement Ceremony on May 18 at the Palestra. Dr. Na’ilah Suad Nasir, president of the Spencer Foundation, delivered the keynote address. Penn GSE conferred 724 degrees during 2018-2019.

Catalyst’s Entrepreneur in Residence Office Hours with John Gamba are open to all students, faculty, alumni, and entrepreneurs within Penn’s education ecosystem on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact catalyst@gse.upenn.edu to learn more.

Think about your school.
How does your idea align to the “pain points” of your institution or potential end-user? If you brought this product into your classroom, would the benefit to you and your students be worth whatever disruption comes with introducing it? How would you measure outcomes and prove the efficacy of your products or services? Be honest with yourself. If the idea wouldn’t work in your school community—the place you know best—it would need even more revisions before it could work elsewhere.

Ask around.
Confident that you’ve defined a problem and a solution? Now see if other educators agree. Do teachers in your building think your idea would work? What about educators in a district with different demographics who are facing different challenges than yours? Listen critically to what these people have to say. Push them to elaborate on potential weaknesses. Think about how you might modify your idea to meet these concerns. Don’t be afraid to pivot—it’s part of the process.

Create a business plan.
Don’t know what a business plan looks like? Consider using a simple template like Lean Canvas (https://leanstack.com/leancanvas). Writing a plan helps you to think about your customers—who they are and how to reach them—as well as your costs and pricing. It also spurs you to consider who you need on your team. For example, if you have an idea for an app, you might need to partner with a coder who specializes in mobile app development. A business plan is a blueprint. It will drive the next stage of development—from research, to prototyping, to product trials, to sustainable growth.

Want more advice for educators?
These tips are adapted from The Educator’s Playbook, a monthly Penn GSE newsletter that distills faculty research into useful advice for K–12 educators.

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