On Tinkering: From Idea to Practice
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The magazine is a publication of the Office of Institutional Advancement and the Office of Marketing and Communications.
Design by Kelly Cade, Cade+Co. Graphic Design.

We welcome your feedback! Please send your suggestions, corrections, and responses to editors@simons-rock.edu.

Cover, The Mods, and yoga photos: Dan Karp.
Inside front cover photo courtesy of BCI Construction, Inc.
Dear Friends,

“The things that stand in the way of civilization . . . can be met in but one way,” W. E. B. Du Bois writes in The Souls of Black Folk, “by the breadth and broadening of human reason.” The close of our 50th year at Simon’s Rock as the nation’s first early college coincides with the approaching 150th anniversary of Du Bois’s birth in Great Barrington on February 23, 1868. These legacies share more than a birthplace. They intertwine in a conviction that the liberal arts are essential for an inclusive democracy.

Simon’s Rock Admission Counselor Alan Dupont notes in this magazine’s feature essay that we have been asking the same question of younger scholars for the College’s entire history: Why wait? Occasionally the question prompts this rejoinder: What’s the hurry? Life is not a race, education should be lifelong, and indeed our purpose at Simon’s Rock is not to turn up the pressure in the already pressurized environment of American education; rather it is to provide the right level of challenge at the right time. Yet we must not ignore that many of our students are, explicitly, in a hurry, and for good reason. In 2016 at the 20th annual W. E. B. Du Bois lecture in the McConnell Theater, Bernard Lafayette Jr. recalled that his friend and colleague Martin Luther King Jr. sought admission to Morehouse College at age 15 because he understood the dramatic scope of the work ahead of him and saw no reason to delay. And at the 21st Du Bois lecture last spring, NAACP President Cornell William Brooks described the early college movement as an important step forward in the fulfillment of Du Bois’s call for educational opportunity as the fulcrum of social change.

As practiced and interpreted within Bard’s network of public early colleges, the Simon’s Rock idea—that age doesn’t define intellect—now animates one of the most promising and fastest-growing means of access to the liberal arts for underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation college-goers. Beginning college early, across educational sectors but especially in the liberal arts, dramatically increases the odds of college completion, and liberal arts graduates are the least likely in the 21st-century economy to be unemployed or underemployed.

In the past year we welcomed the launch of two new early college programs, in Cleveland and Hudson, and we celebrated the first graduates of Bard High School Early College Baltimore. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts increased its commitment to the educational model that originated here in Great Barrington in a sweeping statewide Early College Initiative. And Simon’s Rock, continuing to expand the reach of our mission with the fruition of Bard Academy, steady growth of the BA program, and a talented and numerous first-year college cohort, achieved record enrollment this fall.

You will read in the pages that follow about the work of our Career Development and Academic Transitions office to help students discern and define what their contribution to the world may be. They are empowered to contribute more, and more meaningfully, for having been taken seriously at a younger age, as illuminated in another piece describing Professor Anne O’Dwyer’s project with undergraduate researchers to study the capacity and potential rather than the limitations of adolescence. An example of our graduates’ will and ability to make an impact is class of ’06 Andrea Barrica’s new “pleasure-focused, shame-free, and inclusive” sex education start-up, called O.school, profiled here by Simon’s Rock senior and O.school intern Kalie McGuirl.

To echo Baird Whitlock, the second president of Simon’s Rock, when we hold students back, we are not only failing them, but also, irrationally, depriving society of their creativity, their profound desire to be of service, and their expansive empathy and compassion. Our mission at Simon’s Rock and the Bard Early Colleges is urgent in validating and supporting our students’ sense of urgency and of readiness—to meet what “stand[s] in the way of civilization,” to know their world, and, in knowing it, to improve it.

Thank you for your place in the breadth and your role in the broadening of this mission.

Sincerely,

Ian Bickford ’95
Provost and Vice President
On Tinkering: From Idea to Practice

by Alan Dupont

For all the pains taken and patience involved in explaining Simon’s Rock to the uninitiated, our animating idea is remarkably simple: learn at the level you’re ready for—now. The message is not just for early college students anymore; with Bard Academy at Simon’s Rock in its third year, it is also for eighth graders already pensive about what the next four years will entail. Why wait? It’s so intuitive, I often wonder why a song and dance is required in the admission office to deconstruct questions and address insecurities, only to get our visitors to listen to the inner voice that brought them through our doors in the first place. Our grand finale is the realization that a high school diploma isn’t necessary in the way one thought.
“Students here own it, that ‘it’ being not only our individual quirks but also our opinions, our interests, our knowledge, and our beliefs. It is this assurance that makes campus life so interesting.”

— Madison Weber ’14

Though my metaphor is theatrical, I feel our work is about getting to authenticity, honesty, and clarity. In more conventional contexts, students are asked to spend years performing for the benefit of college admission committees, whether they like it or not. It’s striking that when I read applications, the “Why Here, Why Now?” seldom feels contrived; this is an entirely appropriate gesture with which to begin a Simon’s Rock education.

The questioning of all things continues in Orientation Week and the Writing and Thinking Workshop, though it no longer needs to be prompted or facilitated by an admission counselor. In a class I took (a perk of being on the staff), I remember well the emotional arc brought on by a Writing and Thinking exercise: the fun of a free write, followed by the anxiety of realizing we’d be sharing our words verbatim, and then relief that our half-formed thoughts were respected though they were unpolished. The lesson here is that the answers are not dictated by one’s professor and a belief needn’t be sturdy to be expressed. “Students here own it, that ‘it’ being not only our individual quirks but also our opinions, our interests, our knowledge, and our beliefs,” says Madison Weber, a senior. “It is this assurance that makes campus life so interesting—even each student is capable of and even eager to engage with opposing viewpoints, not infrequently in the form of six-hour-long discussions that continue well past midnight.”

The same testing of beliefs goes on outside the classroom each time an unsturdy premise manifests as dubious action. I’m not speaking only or necessarily of rule-breaking, but of fashion choices too, political statements, all-nighters, and the many personal dramas characteristic of years 14 to 20. With the recent integration of the community-building framework known as Restorative Practices on campus, space has been made to discuss mistakes. Brady McCartney, dean of Campus Life, joined us this year from Bard High School Early College Baltimore—where, with his colleagues, he successfully implemented a judicial program based on restoring relationships and repairing harm, rather than exercising summary, punitive discipline. Brady brings that experience and knowledge to Simon’s Rock, where students are asked to engage in facilitated dialogue with each other and with staff and faculty when their actions have consequences within the community. These aptly named “restorative circles” mirror the classroom model of roundtable discussion. “Not unlike a seminar-style class, where the physical layout promotes the seeing and understanding of another person’s perspective,” Brady says, “a restorative meeting or circle is structured so that all parties involved account for their role in the conflict and collaboratively work toward repairing the harm that has been done to the individuals involved and the community.”
It is one of a number of efforts that have been made to further integrate residential and academic life, an integration made literal by the return of the Campus Life office to the Hall College Center, which it shares with Academic Affairs. Residence directors took part in the Writing and Thinking Workshop this fall, attending workshop sessions and collaborating with faculty to encourage a culture of inquiry and respect within the first-year cohort. Meanwhile, those faculty members who make their homes on campus are taking a greater hand in campus programming: Justin Jackson, faculty in social studies, curates the “Films That Made History” series; Eric Hayden, faculty in mathematics, hosts math-themed bonfires; both hold extended office hours at home (though Eric acknowledges that for some, his cat is the most enticing reason to attend).

The reopening of The Mods has similarly made campus more homey. The Mods seem to evoke a sense of agency and ownership that is uncharacteristic of most college residential buildings. As Provost Ian Bickford shares, “We know the students are making good use of the kitchens, if only from the number of smoke alarms they’ve set off.” Mo Constantine, a senior, now lives in the same mod that Ian used to, and was inspired by Ian’s story of entertaining faculty in the space. So along with a friend returning from abroad and one visiting from where she had transferred, Mo hosted a small gathering for retired film faculty member Larry Burke. In Mo’s words: “Old friends gathered in a brand-new space to celebrate the beginning of our last year by having brunch with the professor who brought us all together in the first place.”

—Mo Constantine ’14

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Rockers, I’ve learned, are not just here to learn in a classroom, they’re here to tinker—to burn dinner. Tinkering is the real stuff of education: living in the blur between the academic, the political, and the personal, which has so complicated public discourse in recent decades, yet has long been familiar to students on small liberal arts campuses, and which perhaps is the reason the liberal arts show greater gains among graduates—both in lifetime earnings and career satisfaction—than any other educational sector. Liberal arts students learn to navigate complexity and ambiguity; they know how to think across contexts and communicate across perspectives. An idea from class becomes the basis for an argument of how things ought to be in Community Council, on which, during my brief stint as a staff representative, I managed to get in a heated debate with a group of students about what intersectional feminist Sara Ahmed would think of our health and wellness requirement. It was a proud moment in some ways—and not in most others. But to tinker is to change something from idea to practice—to take not only the knowledge gleaned from readings, but the skills of critical self-reflection, listening, synthesizing, and ultimately creating, too, and utilizing them to solve problems we face. Whether it’s repairing a 3-D printer in the residence halls (Zoe Offermann ’15) or genetically modifying pears so they ripen at the grocery store (Skylar Lynch ’16), our students make things happen.

Joan Didion, in The White Album, writes of the experience of feeling that everyone has a script that she wasn’t given. She attributes the sensation to the state of America in 1968. I wonder what she’d say about 2017. Speaking as a recent college graduate myself, it’s a feeling that exists today too and perhaps always has and will, changing only in its forms of expression. Everyone else seems to have figured out how to exist blissfully—from one high-contrast organic meal shared on Instagram to the next—as you uniquely suffer, having an emotional breakdown alone in your parents’ basement while googling “how to get a job.” wikiHow is of no use. But I’d hope that at this point the script has been so interrogated that it has lost its appeal, that we may perceive it as bland, vaguely oppressive, and lacking heart. Our graduates know how to tinker, how to invent a path where one wasn’t before. The scriptless existence is one Rockers are well prepared for, already having challenged conventional wisdom with a bold step in their teenage years and from having spent two, four, or now six years tinkering on a campus designed to accommodate any student’s unique approach to life.
Adolescence can be a time of great upheaval, but also a time of great potential. Bard College at Simon’s Rock is founded on the belief that in adolescence there is great potential, and we support our students by exploring new ways to promote resiliency on our campus.

Resiliency is the ability to manage challenging situations and adjust to—or bounce back from—life stresses. Resiliency is associated with positive well-being and mental health. There is a growing perception that students are increasingly unable to cope with the normal challenges of education, which has psychologists and educators highly interested in ways of promoting resiliency in students.

A research team assisting Psychology Professor Anne O’Dwyer in a new pilot program to promote resiliency includes Residence Director (and Simon’s Rock alum) Sabrina Campbell ’12, along with students Rebecca Bhik-Ghanie ’14, Mira Tesla ’14, and Wynona Meyer ’15. All three students worked closely with Anne and Sabrina over the summer to develop this program.

Anne explained: “When it comes to resiliency, there is not one size that fits all. Our assumption in developing this program is that different students have different core capacities and needs, and may benefit from different types of workshops.” Thus, the team has developed three workshop-style classes for students in both the College and the Academy:

1. **Yoga Practice: Resiliency and Mindfulness** to guide students in the practice of yoga as a means for self-exploration and meditation toward the goal of promoting resiliency and coping.
2. **Capacity Building: Promoting Supports—Internal and External** to help students develop their own internal capacity for resiliency, as well as develop a more robust social support network, and to find an appropriate balance between the two.
3. **Providing Information: Resiliency and Resources** for students who are the first in their families to attend college in the United States. The goal is to provide these students with information and support to navigate the higher education system.

Anne acknowledges that “students have always been coping, but they are faced now with more and more challenges, and thus need to recognize the tools for coping.” She believes that seeking help and support is an important part of coping for students, and observes, “Admitting you need support is, of course, the first step, but the skill for knowing when and how to seek and receive help is something that needs to be nurtured and developed.”

Sabrina, a first-generation student herself, is developing the informational workshop. “It’s better for all students to have a more robust support system,” she remarks.

The team will continue this project into next semester and in the years to come, collecting data on the impact of such workshops on students’ resiliency. The eventual results of such a study could lead to broadened expectations and assumptions of capacity among more diverse student populations.

Rockers for Intervention, Support, and Education (RISE), another program in development, draws from a long-standing, successful program at Bard College and is being tailored to accommodate the needs of the Simon’s Rock community. This peer-to-peer response team for students in distress or crisis promises to become a valuable part of promoting resiliency on campus.

Both these programs are in their developmental stages, but have the potential to promote changes in educational practices that are offered to adolescents in early colleges as well as traditional high school and postsecondary settings. Anne is pursuing additional funding to advance this investigation and to contribute to the long-term sustainability of these programs.
Our Job Is to Make Students Really Dig

Before arriving at Simon’s Rock in 2014, Laël Ngangmeni was better prepared than most for the changes that greet first-year college students. A native of Cameroon, Laël grew up speaking French before she and her parents immigrated to suburban Maryland when she was nine. She adapted, learning English and plunging into the academic and social life of her middle school and high school.

Yet Simon’s Rock jolted Laël. “The education here is very intense,” she said. “To counter it was the kindness of everyone here. It’s a nurturing environment that has helped me grow.”

Kindness, she said, extended to the Simon’s Rock staff charged with helping students find their way. Laël knew she wanted to pursue pre-med and psychology, but she had no idea what that entailed beyond studying hard—notably, discovering the sequence and requirements of the course load, writing a résumé, finding and applying to internships, and preparing for the MCAT exam.

Enter Manat Wooten, director of Academic Transitions and Career Development, and Sara Mugridge, academic transitions advisor.

“Our job is to make students really dig,” Sara said. She characterizes her overall mission at Simon’s Rock as “the six-year arc,” meaning that the institution’s aim is to help students—from Bard Academy to the College—form and pursue their aims as their studies lead to practical plans. “We are looking very carefully at specialized and personalized support that’s designed to meet the student where they are in their Simon’s Rock experience,” she added.

Simon’s Rock’s career development has always had a purpose beyond a typical college career development office. Manat and Sara lead a distinct approach that helps students clarify their intellectual passions and then take practical measures to pursue them. They look not only at jobs or graduate school after the BA, but at transfer and moderation, helping students consider the best path after they complete the AA.

With the addition of Bard Academy came yet another point at which students needed guidance and support. “Academy students don’t have to go through the race of taking the SATs four times and then choosing their best score; they matriculate directly from the Academy into the College,” Sara said. “But the rigor of academic life at Simon’s Rock means students face myriad demands, whatever their year.”
She added: “This is a demanding place, in and outside the classroom. It comes from the high expectations peers have for each other and what the instructors expect.”

A member of the entering class of ’97, Sara brings an insider’s perspective to her work. “What I liked the most as a student,” she recalled, “was being taken seriously and the freedom that came with that.”

“This is a demanding place, in and outside the classroom. It comes from the high expectations peers have for each other and what the instructors expect.”

—SARA MUGRIDGE ’97

Recent changes in the Simon’s Rock advisory approach mean that by sophomore year, students now receive greater attention. Through moderation, students choose one or more concentrations in consultation with professors and advisors. Manat applies her skills to complement this step. She meets students after they have chosen their concentrations to help them direct their curiosity in identifying and pursuing internships and fields of graduate work.

“If a student has an interest in health, our aim is to form an individualized plan and transform it into purposeful work,” Manat said. “This doesn’t happen overnight. There’s no file folder that says, ‘Here’s the right experience for this student.’ We have to build trust through meaningful conversations.”

Sara and Manat look for ways to help students enrich their time at Simon’s Rock while preparing them for the rigors of life afterward—whether they transfer to another college or stay through senior year. “We’re constantly refining things to meet students’ needs,” Manat said. “As an alumna, Sara has invaluable experience in this area.”

Laël, a senior, had an internship in Cuzco, Peru, where she studied Spanish and shadowed doctors in the local hospital. She has taken the MCAT and will study biochemistry next semester to complete her pre-med requirements. She also tutors Academy and College students. She misses classmates who transferred to other colleges, but, she added, “I have a support system here.”

For Safi Alsebai, the digging that Sara described yielded the choice of a combined major of pre-med and political studies; at Simon’s Rock he found himself drawn to the interplay between “politics and the body.” “Here you can create your own academic circle,” said Safi, a junior. “You can turn to people you know for planning the rest of your time here.” Fellow junior Coco Raymond pursues concentrations in ceramics and archival and museum study. The combination of interests didn’t immediately come to her mind. But discussions with her advisor and Manat led her to contact the Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon, where the staff gave her an internship.

“From there it kind of blossomed,” Coco said, adding that museum staff had her handling original documents by Shaker women from the mid-19th century. Her work extended to involvement in a recent exhibition on gender equality and women’s suffrage among Shaker women, “a fantastic project,” as well as updating the museum catalog of stoneware.

During the fall 2017 semester, Sara and Manat partnered with Director of Alumni and Parent Engagement Cathy Ingram to attract alumni for a discussion about their post–Simon’s Rock careers. The first evening involved eight alumni (three in person, with five participating remotely) discussing careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Almost one-quarter of the Simon’s Rock 438-strong student body attended the forum.

“It was amazing,” Manat said of the STEM meeting. “The alumni gave great advice, and not just about STEM as a career; the event allowed people to speak the same language.”

An evening devoted to advice in the arts soon followed, involving alumni that included Lakita Edwards ’97, arts education specialist at the National Endowment for the Arts, and Ben Pender-Cudlip ’01, creator of Dawnland, a documentary about the first truth and reconciliation commission for Native Americans.

Safi credits Simon’s Rock with giving him the chance to examine how politics and medicine can be intertwined. But he is ready for a brief break from Great Barrington, and soon he will learn the fate of his applications for a semester of study at Charles University in Prague or King’s College in London.

Junior Coco Raymond’s concentrations in ceramics and archival and museum study helped her land an internship with Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon.

Besides commuting every Friday to work in the Shaker archives in Old Chatham, New York, Coco has interned at the Du Bois Center in Great Barrington, which will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the scholar and civil rights activist’s birth with an exhibition of publications and artifacts at the Mason Library in Great Barrington. After she graduates, she plans to study for a master’s degree in library science.
Simon’s Rock celebrated its 48th Commencement on May 20, 2017. A total of 96 associate of arts and 54 bachelor of arts degrees were awarded to the graduates.

Lauren Duca, an award-winning writer, editor, and columnist at *Teen Vogue*, delivered the commencement address. In welcoming Ms. Duca to Simon’s Rock, Provost Ian Bickford stated that Ms. Duca’s work highlights “the importance of acknowledging young people, especially women, as serious thinkers with agency and political conviction. She is a voice for the values upon which Simon’s Rock was founded.”

“You have never required permission,” said Ms. Duca to the graduates, encouraging them to be both confident and curious about the communities they feel called to create and serve. “External signifiers of success have never determined who you are.”

Remarks by Bard College President Leon Botstein connected the liberal arts to the foundations of civics and democracy. “You’re not one thing,” said President Botstein, “you are multiplicities,” adding that such an understanding invites connections between different citizens of the same locale. “Unless we merge a sense of identity with a sense of community, we will never restore the political fabric of this country.”

Bagpiper and alumnus Blake Hopewell ’08 led the commencement procession, filling in for his father, alumnus Brian Hopewell ’73, who customarily handles these duties.
On the surface, Moamer Alsaedi ’16 can seem like any other student at Simon’s Rock. Yet as colleagues, classmates, and acquaintances come to discover, Moamer’s unfailing positivity sets the first-year student apart.

Known on campus as “Momo,” the New Yorker heard about Simon’s Rock as a junior in high school, researched the College, and applied as a January admit. “My story of coming here is the typical Simon’s Rock story,” says Momo. “I was ready for college, high school was boring and not challenging, and I wanted more.”

Momo has, in fact, been doing more. Motivated by a desire to bring the campus together and to show support for the LGBTQ+ community, the second-semester first-year student has been working tirelessly since summer to provide Simon’s Rock with the Pride Week it deserves.

“Many of our students come from communities where they might have felt like they were the only queer person in their school, in their neighborhood, and in their homes,” explains Momo. “The objective of the week is to show that our community is an accepting and loving one, one that won’t discriminate against you for how you identify.”

Momo enlisted the help of Maryellen Serratos ’16, faculty member and Pride Week advisor Amanda Landi, and Director of Activities Valerie Fanarjian. Within only a few months, they planned and coordinated a week of activities, including a concert to benefit New York City’s Ali Forney Center, the largest agency dedicated to LGBTQ+ youth in the nation. Named after Ali Forney, a gender nonconforming teen who became homeless at 15, the center works to help at-risk and homeless LGBTQ+ teens through a variety of shelters and online services.

Student involvement was central to the success of Pride Week. Weeks before Pride Week was on the radar for most students, a call went out asking student performers to audition for the concert. “It was a challenge communicating with all the parties involved and making sure everyone was updated and on the same page,” Momo adds. “Having Amanda Landi as Pride Week advisor made everything easier because she was a great help! The best part was reminding myself that even in the midst of all the chaos, this was all for a great cause.”

Pride Week raised over $1,500 for the center. In addition to that impressive achievement, Momo said the most “successful thing about Pride Week was seeing everyone get together and read poems to each other, watch movies and commentaries, and then use them as a platform to discuss LGBTQ+ topics.” The week started with a poetry slam, followed by several talks, presentations, and a documentary screening, and ended with the benefit concert and raffle. There were alumni appearances and discussions. Each event was designed to welcome and educate.

Momo specifically wanted to help people the same age as many Rockers who might not be as privileged. The Simon’s Rock campus is open, accepting, and consistently working toward inclusivity. Momo wanted the campus to “become actively conscious of this privilege and to come together to use our privilege to give back to the LGBTQ+ community.”

It does not stop there. Pride Week isn’t just about celebrating queerness; it is about celebrating differences. Momo hopes that the tradition continues after Momo graduates, but for now has not planned that far ahead. Still, if Pride Week continues to be this successful, it will likely become a natural part of Simon’s Rock.

Momo is currently studying neuroscience and psychology, and says, “I am absolutely obsessed with the brain, as I think everyone that knows me knows.” A native of Yemen who immigrated to the States at age six, Momo plans to use that knowledge and fluency in Arabic to help traumatized children from Middle Eastern war zones. They will be lucky to have Momo.
Sixth Annual Rock the Community: A Day of Service in Honor of Emily Fisher
On September 29, more than 100 students, faculty, and staff volunteered nearly 300 hours of service in and around Great Barrington for the sixth annual Rock the Community. “The enthusiasm for Rock the Community has increased over the years, both by the participating organizations and our students, staff, and faculty,” said Director of Activities Valerie Fanarjian, who has been an integral part of Rock the Community from the beginning. “Simon’s Rock is forming relationships with the community and giving back through service.”

2017 Book One
Award-winning author and alumna Veronica Chambers ’87 returned to campus August 20 to read from and discuss her book *The Meaning of Michelle: 16 Writers on the Iconic First Lady and How Her Journey Inspires Our Own*, this year’s Book One selection for the Writing and Thinking Workshop. Her critically acclaimed memoir, *Mama’s Girl*, has been course-adopted by hundreds of high schools and colleges throughout the country.

First Bard Academy at Simon’s Rock Class Matriculates
The first class of Bard Academy at Simon’s Rock matriculated into the College. A ceremony marking the milestone was held May 17, fully establishing a six-year arc in which students can progress through high school and college in six rather than eight years. Sue Lyon, dean of students, said the bright students, committed faculty, and caring staff “worked diligently together to create an academy that holds true to the Simon’s Rock mission of inspiring the curiosity of motivated young scholars with a challenging, empowering, and inclusive education in the liberal arts and sciences.” Academy students have played an important role in shaping the Academy curriculum and campus life experience.

New Discoveries during January Trip to Montserrat
Simon’s Rock faculty and students picked up new records of the snail that carries schistosomiasis (“snail fever”) during their trip to Montserrat in January. Since August, Tom Coote, visiting faculty in environmental science, has been collaborating with a team from Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on a project demonstrating the eradication of schistosomiasis in the Caribbean. Part of the World Health Organization, PAHO reached out to Tom after seeing a poster by alumnus—and Tom’s thesis advisee—Nathan Shoobs ‘12 at the Malacology 2014: The Meeting of the Americas conference in Mexico City.

Assistant Professor of Biology Sarah Snyder’s paper, “Gymnophthalmus Underwoodi Grant, 1958 (Reptilia: Gymnophthalmidae), a New Record for the Island of Montserrat,” which records her discovery, is appearing in the peer-reviewed journal *Checklist*.

The Mods Reopen
Vacant since 2012, The Mods reopened for the fall semester after extensive renovations. The modular, townhouse-style apartments were open from 1975 to 2011 and housed sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The renovated Mods include updated kitchens and bathrooms, with all-new appliances, furniture, and air-conditioning.

Livingston Hall Chair in Music Larry Wallach Enters Semiretirement
After 45 years of full-time teaching at Simon’s Rock and managing the South Berkshire Concert Series, Livingston Hall Chair in Music Larry Wallach is moving to a part-time schedule to make more time for his own compositional activities. In 2015, his composition *Winter Music* for six percussionists and 21 instruments was performed at New England Conservatory, and this past spring, his 20-minute work for full orchestra, *Berkshire Rhapsody*, was performed by a professional orchestra in Milford, Massachusetts. “I hope to remain involved teaching core subjects in the music program, particularly theory and composition,” Larry said, “with classes in the history and literature of music added in where possible and as needed.” Through his work on the South Berkshire Concerts, Larry will continue bringing renowned classical artists to campus.

12-Year-Old Sophomore Adrian Romoff Debuts at Lincoln Center
At age 12, Simon’s Rock sophomore Adrian Romoff made his Lincoln Center debut September 16. A piano prodigy, he performed Felix Mendelssohn’s *Piano Concerto No. 1* in G minor on fortepiano. Adrian has performed on television, including auditioning for *America’s Got
Talent, where he made it to the quarterfinals, and Lifetime Network’s Child Genius, which he won. He also appeared in the film Anchorman 2 with Will Ferrell. Adrian has performed at distinguished venues, such as Carnegie Hall (three times) and Radio City Music Hall. He is concentrating in pre-engineering and computer science.

Professor Aaron Williams Sets Up Retro Video Game Lab
As a component of his History of Video Games class, computer science professor Aaron Williams has turned the basement of Hall College Center into a retro video game lab. The lab contains approximately 30 televisions and monitors, around 50 different game consoles and computers, and several thousand games for the various systems. The space is divided into different rooms: Japan-only games, 1980s personal computer games, Atari and its competitors, and Nintendo versus Sega. The most popular items in the lab are the Vectrex and Nintendo Virtual Boy. This is the second year the class has been offered, transitioning from a mod course last fall to a full course this fall. Student tutors include Max Hassen ’14, Joey Kim ’15, and Daryn Rust ’15.

Simon’s Rock Will Help Celebrate 150th Anniversary of W. E. B. Du Bois
Simon’s Rock will join the Du Bois Center at Great Barrington and Multicultural BRIDGE in hosting events that celebrate, educate, and honor the legacy of civil rights activist and author W. E. B. Du Bois. Great Barrington’s native son, Francisca Oyogoa, assistant professor of sociology and African American studies, will speak at an event hosted by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Berkshire Community College. Justin Jackson, assistant professor of history, will speak on “Memory’s Veil: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Politics of Remembering Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.” Celebratory events will take place in February leading up to Du Bois’s birthdate, February 23. Eric Foner, American historian and Dewitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, who as a young boy met Du Bois, will provide the keynote address in April as part of the W. E. B. Du Bois Speaker Series.

Professor John Myers Creates Original Music Inspired by Rockwell Paintings
John Myers, professor of music, electronic arts, and cultural studies, collaborated with the Norman Rockwell Museum and Crescendo Chorus to create a performance of his original music. Paintings in Song: Visions of Norman Rockwell, a nine-movement suite for 70 singers and an instrumental ensemble, with each movement based on a single iconic Norman Rockwell painting spanning the 1920s through the 1960s, was performed in April in the new performance space at Saint James Place.

A Sampling of New Classes

Introduction to Cognitive Neuropsychology
How does the human brain work? Students learn its basic structure and function, particularly as it relates to cognition, learning, consciousness, and emotion. Students study the basic functioning of neurons, as well as the organization of the brain, with a focus on the areas involved in all aspects of cognition, including language, memory, social behavior, affect, spatial behavior, and attention. Students are later introduced to the neurological bases of psychological disorders (especially those of thought and emotion), as well as an understanding of the brain’s plasticity and its ability to be repaired and to repair itself.

Apiculture: The Principles and Practices of Beekeeping
In this course, students study the biology of honeybees, their cultural importance, and management of their colonies for the production of honey, beeswax, and other products, as well as the agro-ecological role honeybees play, by examining the pollination services provided to the Simon’s Rock farm. A substantial portion of class time is spent in the apiary working with the bees, including checking that the queen is present and laying eggs, screening for and treating diseases, and checking the stocks of pollen and honey. Honey is extracted from the hives.

No Place Like Home: Utopia and Dystopia in Literature
Etymologically, utopia means “no place,” and for centuries, writers have responded to social problems by using utopian vision to imagine hypothetical, idealized societies. Dystopia, or “bad place,” features the opposite approach, depicting societies broken by authoritarian regimes, environmental catastrophe, and/or economic, racial, and gender oppression. This course explores the dystopian threats—and utopian possibilities—of a range of political and cultural moments.

Introduction to Astronomy
This course offers an exciting opportunity for students to learn how science is done. Many current discoveries in astronomy—the discovery of extrasolar planets, for example—are readily accessible to beginning students. Topics include astronomical objects and apparent motions, the heliocentric theory, a historical development of Kepler’s laws of planetary motion and universal gravitation, the structure of the solar system, and brief surveys of stars and galaxies, extrasolar planets, and the origin of the universe.
Black Aesthetics
This course focuses on the history and practice of black aesthetics as they have evolved within fiction, poetry, drama, and the visual arts—from the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s to the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s—and how these artistic expressions have been part of an ongoing conversation into the 21st century regarding the representations of black American life.

The Modeling Process from Problem Formulation to Application in the Social and Natural Sciences
Through interdivisional research, students develop the modeling process for problems in economics and population biology, and more generally the social studies and the natural sciences. Focus is on models as descriptions of systems, stressing intuition, use of visualization, and analogy between systems, starting with simple models to see if and how they fail, and then attempting to formulate hypotheses relative to their failures. Students then build upon these models to develop purpose-built and more realistic models and study their dynamics, range of applicability, and validity.

Introduction to Historical Thought and Practice
What is time, and how do we explain change, and maybe continuity, in human (and perhaps nonhuman) existence over time? What can we really know about an ultimately irretrievable past, how do we know it, and why? What is the relationship between the past, as we scrutinize and reconstruct it from the perspective of the present, and life today, as well as, perhaps, life in the future? Students explore these and other questions by reading, discussing, and writing about history, historical thought, and historical methods.

SIMON'S ROCK BOOK SHELF

Tyler Bickford '97, Schooling New Media (Oxford University Press, 2017)
Jennifer Browdy '78, Faculty in Languages and Literature, Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin America and the Caribbean, Kindle ed. (Beacon Press, 2017) and Writing Fire: An Anthology Celebrating the Power of Women’s Words, 2nd ed. (Green Fire Press, 2017)
Wesley Brown, Visiting Faculty in African American Studies and the Arts, Dance of the Infidels (Concord ePress, 2017)
Brendan Mathews, Faculty in Languages and Literature: The World of Tomorrow (Little, Brown and Company, 2017)
Ada Palmer ’97, Seven Surrenders: Book 2 of Terra Ignota (Tor Books, 2017)
Claire Rosen ’01, Imaginarium: The Process Behind the Pictures (Rocky Nook, 2017)

Did we miss your latest publication? Please be sure to share your news with us at editors@simons-rock.edu.
New Employees

Mark Hopkins ‘98, Adjunct Faculty

Justin Jackson, Faculty in Social Studies

Brady McCartney, Dean of Campus Life

Lee McHenry, Collections Librarian

Philip Morrison, Director of Finance and Administration

Sandra Prytherch, Grants Writer and Researcher

Timothy Susse, Faculty in Natural Sciences and Computing

AbiDemi Williams, Associate Director of Individual Giving

Long Dien Vo, Faculty in the Arts

Brady McCartney, dean of Campus Life (second from left), with new Resident Directors Sherri Brown, Alexander Savill, Melinda Dow, Julia Kirst, and William Syltor-Severino.

New Staff Not Pictured

Karrie Allen, Writer/Editor; Marina Barsky, Faculty in Natural Sciences and Computing; Eunice Bueno Munoz, Custodian; Christian Carson, Security Officer; Jeffrey Hamelin, Security Officer; Liusha Hua, Business Manager; John Kelleher, Maintenance Staff; Jeannie Kohut, Security Officer; Debra Laramée, Payroll and Financial Assistant; Bonghee Lis, Service Desk Manager; Jason Maronde, Maintenance Staff; Elizabeth Paolucci, Marketing and Communications Associate; Annette Selva, Custodian; Susan White, Advancement Services Coordinator.
Why did you come to Simon's Rock, and why did you stay?
I’ve wanted to live on a college campus my whole life. I have two BAs and I’ve never lived in a dorm, and I’ve always wanted to. In January 2007, I sent an email to the head of Campus Life and asked if I could take him out to dinner, and he agreed to an interview. I razzle-dazzled him and told him to cancel the rest of his interviews and hire me. He laughed and told me he couldn’t do that, but on my way home he called me and told me I was hired.

I stay because of the students. I feel like I’ve been so blessed to hang out with these smart, compassionate human beings. It’s the best job in the whole world, and I’ve had a lot of jobs.

What is something that most people don’t know about you?
I ran a sawmill for 15 years, and I worked in New York City in finance.

What is the weirdest thing on your bucket list?
(Laughs.) I’m remarkably satisfied with my life. I even think the concept of a bucket list is weird. I feel like every day is an opportunity to do something weird. I can do something weird every day because I have no shame. I guess I want to go to Japan, and Northern Europe, and Iceland, and Scotland.

Based on your past experiences, what is the most essential trait for successful students and teachers?
A desire to learn, a fervent desire to learn.

If you could study one other subject, what would it be?
It’s hard to choose one. (Long pause.) Typography. I’m obsessed with writing and fonts and letters.

Who do you want to become?
Michelle Obama, so that Barack would be in love with me, and because she’s so cool. I actually thought it would be fun to be the woman who Jay-Z and Barack fought over. Jay-Z would write songs about me and send me cool gifts, and Barack would nuzzle my neck.

What’s a story that you tend to tell over and over again in your life—something that always seems to come up?
Wow, there are so many. When I was in sixth grade, the popular kid in school told everyone not to speak to me. The whole class didn’t speak to me. Basically, that’s how unpopular I was. I was very annoying because I had ADD and I was constantly interrupting people. I was thrown out of class and punished because I couldn’t stop moving around and talking. I was never diagnosed, but I’m pretty sure I had learning disabilities. I just think, now I’m so “popular.” It’s just amazing how much things can change in a lifetime! So when people say these are the most isolating years, I just try to tell them: believe me, it changes. I’ve had some great lives in my past 60 years.

Where do you think you’re most yourself, that you’re at your most comfortable? What are you doing, and where are you doing it?
Anywhere that I have my art supplies. As long as I have a glue stick, scissors, and thread. I like my apartment. As long as people are visiting me, I could be here all day and all night. Simon’s Rock. This is a perfect life—I can be alone or with students. I’m very happy in the Simon’s Rock bubble. It’s an intentional community where people do look after each other, on the whole.

Where did you grow up? What thing from your childhood shaped the way you are now?
Every exit of New Jersey. Being the daughter of a single-parent immigrant. We’re Armenian; my mother was born in Beirut. I was very, very close to my maternal grandmother. I learned about independence from both my mom and my grandmother. My grandmother came here in 1963, didn’t speak any English, and died at 105—after having been through two genocides. Never complained. My mom and my grandmother were strong influences. They were strong, independent women.
Jan Staller ’70 returned to campus for the Uncommon Journeys series. He visited classes and gave a slide lecture that spanned his extraordinary career in photography.

The Simon’s Rock Theater Program produced Almost, Maine, written by John Cariani. The play, staged by award-winning theater director James Warwick, featured an all-student cast.

In April 2017, President and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Cornell William Brooks delivered the 21st annual W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture.


Manon Hutton-DeWys ’01 performed a piano concert with guest cellist Paul Wolfram in April.


John McWhorter ’81 returned to campus for the Uncommon Journeys series and a freestyle conversation with professor Brendan Mathews about McWhorter’s life, career, and long-standing association with Simon’s Rock.
President Leon Botstein Issues Statement in Support of DACA

In September, President Leon Botstein stated that Bard College does not agree with President Donald Trump’s end to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and called upon Congress to restore DACA. Bard enrolls DACA students across its network. “Through our educational programs, advocacy, and the Bard Sanctuary Fund, created last year to support undocumented students and refugees, the College will continue to support Dreamers and others in our communities of learning who may not enjoy the protection of legal status but whose right to an education must be defended.”

Bard College Helps Launch National Early College and Dual Enrollment Policy Coalition

In March, Bard College, as one of five steering committee members, helped launch the College in High School Alliance to advocate for policies that increase high school students’ access to high-quality college programs, including dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and early college high schools. The Alliance will advocate for greater federal and state support for early college and dual enrollment models to significantly improve the secondary and postsecondary outcomes of students, particularly those from low-income and middle-class backgrounds.

Two Bard Early Colleges Open: Cleveland East and Hudson

On September 15, Bard High School Early College Cleveland’s east campus opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. BHSEC Cleveland’s west campus opened in 2014. Nearly 60 ninth-grade students were welcomed to the new campus.

After completing a successful pilot year, Bard Early College in Hudson, New York, entered its first full academic year, welcoming a new cohort of students from Hudson and the surrounding school districts. Having just moved to a new location on Hudson’s main street, BEC Hudson is expanding the early college model into Bard College’s own backyard. In addition to Simon’s Rock, the Bard Early College network now comprises 10 programs from Massachusetts to New Orleans.

Bard Graduate Center Pilots Lab for Teen Thinkers

In July, the Bard Graduate Center in Manhattan piloted the BGC Lab for Teen Thinkers, a research fellowship program designed to be a hands-on introduction to museum life and the study of objects. Ten students from Bard High School Early College Manhattan and Queens participated in the two-part paid fellowship, gaining experience in a research institute and a working gallery alongside professionals.

Bard Center for Early College Launches Early College Fellows Program

The Bard Center for Early College selected the inaugural cohort of Early College Fellows, made possible by generous support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The fellows were chosen from the faculty across all seven Bard Early College campuses, based on their records of strong teaching, expertise in early college practices, and ongoing commitment to bridging high school and college. The fellows are developing a diverse collection of projects modeling highly effective early college teaching practices for dissemination beyond Bard’s network.
fiscal year 2017, which began on July 1, 2016, acknowledges donors who made a gift during
In the following report, Simon’s Rock gratefully reshape assumptions about who goes to
college and when, and amplify real learning,
and creativity of motivated younger scholars,
Each in our own way, we affirm the curiosity
of writing, thinking, and challenging conventions
During our yearlong 50th anniversary celebration
$3.2 million to support Simon’s Rock and the
community that, from July 2016 to June 2017, donated
A third of us have been giving to Simon’s Rock
for at least three years in a row. Also, 172 donors
made their first-ever gift to Simon’s Rock this year.
You helped revive The Mods, a long-important feature of campus life, reclaiming needed space as enrollment increased. You celebrated the 80th birthday of Jim Monsonis, creating a fund that will assist students in a moment of extraordinary unforeseen need—as Jim and Lenore have done throughout the years. You also helped remember Nancy Yanoshak, donating in her memory to support Simon’s Rock students in gender studies.
Each in our own way, we affirm the curiosity and creativity of motivated younger scholars, reshape assumptions about who goes to college and when, and amplify real learning, real curiosity, and real ambition.
Thank you for being part of Simon’s Rock.
In the following report, Simon’s Rock gratefully acknowledges donors who made a gift during fiscal year 2017, which began on July 1, 2016, and ended on June 30, 2017.

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Jan Staller '70
James Teeple '74
Gareth '83 and
Lisa '87 Amaya Price
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Charlotte Anderholdt '01 and
Matthew Schmidt
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Ellen and Scott Anderson P'06
Kristen Anderson '88 and
Shane Belden
Noah Appelbaum '06
Armand Aquino '96
MollyRose Ap-Sandel '98
Ishmael Ansate '12
Kathleen and Joseph Avins P'16
Dilip Babu '95
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Ruth Ballenzweig '99
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Fred Baumgarten and
Jennifer Hansell P'16
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Lindsey Breaux '03
In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
Tom '96 and Alana Joly '96
Molly Rose Ap-Sandel '98
Rebecca Abbott '07
Jacques Ben-Avie '15
Margaret Bergamini '78
In honor of Jim Monsonis,
Lenore '78, Sara '91, and Eric '82
Gil Beinmalek and
Don Berrier
In memory of Jane Rodgers
Lucas '92 and
Kelly Berrini '92
Carolyn J. Bettencourt '82
Carrie Carpenter P'16
Christian Carson
Mary Carswell
In honor of Sarah Williams '78
David and Anna Carvalho P'05
Marie M. Chelinsky '99
In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
Jun Chen and James Shi P'15 & '17
Irina '98 and Alexey Chernyayov
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Bessie Cherry '96
In honor of Ian Bickford '95,
Pat Sharpe, and Mod 5
Sheila L. Chesney
In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
Ashley Christensen '00
Kathy and Chris Clarendon P'15
In honor of Emmett Clarendon '15
Wendy Clary '80
In memory of Scott Heckendorf '80
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Lucy Clippinger '04
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Alison Colby '76
In memory of John Rosenberg '76
and Mark Burkholder '76
Darren Coleman P'15
Cathy Ann Coley '85
In honor of Jim Monsonis
David Collins '99
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Valerie Collura '84
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Andrea Doukas ’68
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Meghan and Aubos Dubois
In memory of Ed Szarlan and
Michael Mahoney
Amanda Dubrowski
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Margaret Dunlap ’95
In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
Jeremy Dunn ’81
Robert Dunton ’00
Curray Dwyer ’06
In honor of all of my teachers
at the Rock, especially Nancy
Yanoshak, whose historiography
class I’m still learning from and
still tell people about today.
Thank you for everything, Nance
Lillian Dypolt ’08
Lakita Edwards ’97
In honor of Virginia Potter
Jan Eisenman ’68
In honor of Vanda Sendzimir
Erik Elieh ’10
In honor of the amazing faculty!
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In memory of Wendy Shifrin.
You taught some to dance, others to
fly. Thank you.
Allen Gabor and Lisa Papernik P’16
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P’16
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soul, Jamshid Zafar ’09
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finishing his neurosurgery
residency
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Janice Gildave and
Thomas B. Wiggins Jr.
In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
Beri Giftis P’88
Dragan Gill ’02
In memory of a vibrant, loving
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Peter and Ann Geismar P’07
In memory of Zach Wright ’04 for
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Jane Gibbons ’75
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Richard Kittredge and
Tanya Korelayk P’00
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Don Heller and Anne Simon P’14
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Cassandra Hill ’06
In memory of Jim Monsonis
De Aaron Hoggins Miller ’75
Richard Kittredge and
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In honor of Emery and Celeste
de Andre, children of alumnus
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John ’70 and Ann Jacobs
Virginia Jeffries ’00
In memory of Jamshid Zafar ’09
Christina Jens ’95
Cody Jones ’07
In memory of Nancy Yanoshak,
the first person I met on my
prospective students day and
she was my first advisor. She
was kind to me and will be
missed.
Chandra Joos deKoven
In honor of Tucker Carlson
Paula Jurn ’02
Karen Juster Hecht P’10
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Audrey Kalmam ’77
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Bandit
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Bridget Kennedy ’02
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Jill Mandell ’83
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2000
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Dylan Neely ’06
Thomas Neely P’06
In honor of Dylan Neely ’06
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Daniel Neilson ’97
John S. Nelson ’02
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In honor of Blodgett House staff
Anne O’Dwyer
Elizabeth and Bill Oliver P’02
Deborah Olesh ’79
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Timothy Ryan Olson ’93
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Shana O’Mara ’93
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Elyssa Osborne ’06
In memory of Ian Revere ’07,
who would have worn this scarf
proudly around his neck
Kate Owen ’87
In honor of Mod 3
Ranga and Suku Palaniswamy P’96
Gill Panchy
In memory of Wendy Shifrin and
Galen Gibson ’90—Wendy
for her beautiful and generous
spirit and Galen…in memory of a
beautiful boy.
Sam Paris ’11
Heidi Parsons ’80
In honor of Adams Douglas ’72
Dr. Sujata Patel ’95
Keith Pelczarski ’87
Benjamin Pender-Cudlip ’01
Nessa and Robert Peters P’98
Richard Pettys
In memory of the friendliest
scientist I’ve ever known,
Victor Hurst
Jacqueline Pierce
Diane Piraino
Kelly Pits ’93 and Michale Pang
In honor of Jim Monsonis
Perri Pivora ’86
Becky and James Parrott P’16
Doria Polinger P’11
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In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
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Gretchen Pulver ’75
Fran and Spence Putnam P’97
Nicole Quinn
Sandra Rae ’83 and
Stephen Cohen P’16
In honor of Jim Monsonis, with
love and gratitude
Lauren Randall-Myers ’05
In memory of Wendy Shifrin
John and Lynn Rathgeber P’09
June Raymond and
Fritz Lauenstein P’15
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and Wendy Shifrin
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Joshua Rockwell ’74
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In memory of Nancy Yanoshak
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Lee Rogers
Eric Allix Rogers ’01
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Alicia Rossie
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Catherine Rowen ’86

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Thanks to all who joined in the 50th Anniversary celebrations around the country!
As Andrea describes it, her Simon’s Rock education and humanities background actually enabled her to take risks and stand out in the business world. Though both she and Jessica had just left school, inDinero quickly became a successful enterprise. She jumped in headfirst, learning accounting, sales, technology, software engineering, and other business skills from scratch. To her surprise, Andrea found that the tech and start-up world was something she was deeply passionate about. As she puts it, “I was shocked by how much impact I could really have.”

Andrea eventually got tapped to be entrepreneur-in-residence and venture partner at 500 Startups, a global seed fund that makes investments all over the world. She coached start-up founders on what to invest in, helped select and invest in other companies, and spoke internationally. It gave her a lot of scope: she learned about capital in general and all types of businesses and start-ups.

“I started to think about ‘What good can start-ups do in the world?’” Andrea notes, “and that’s how I got into O.school.”

Providing pleasure-focused, shame-free, and inclusive live-streaming workshops to anyone with an internet connection or a smartphone, O.school is a radical step forward in a culture that stigmatizes and shames sex—not exactly your typical tech start-up. Nonetheless, Andrea sees O.school as the natural culmination of her career trajectory and everything she’s worked on.

“O.school is my attempt to create an enterprise, a for-profit capitalist enterprise, that can have a really positive impact on the world,” Andrea explains. The impact potential of tech start-ups was what originally drew Andrea to this work, and she feels that the time has come to harness that power.

“The idea that we could scale cultural change through technology that makes money is a pretty wild idea,” says Andrea. “That really motivates me. I feel like O.school is a unique opportunity to build technology that is on the side of humanity.”

Though O.school is a new direction for Andrea, she sees it as a logical extension of the path that started for her in the liberal arts at Simon’s Rock. She’s still asking questions that nobody else is and pushing forward in unexpected directions.
Students stop for a photo outside of the Alumni Library. Photo: Rachelle Anna Sutanto ’16
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