

FALL 2025 / WINTER 2026

BARUCH

ALUMNI MAGAZINE

TASTING SUCCESS

BARUCH ALUMNI CARVE THEIR
NICHE IN FOOD SERVICE





BARUCH ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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FEATURE STORY

TASTING SUCCESS

04

We chatted with four Baruch alumni whose careers have encompassed diverse aspects of the food industry. The common thread: they all thrive on fostering community connections, with food as their vehicle.



NEWS & NOTES

08

- Racking Up Rankings
- Fielding a New Department
- They've Got Game: E-Sports Club Wins Big**
Baruch won the "Battle of the Boroughs" at the inaugural New York City Video Game Festival.
- Scientific and Deep-Sea Discoveries
- A Lasting Legacy
- A New Class of Changemakers
- Fond Farewell to Dean Lang



CLASS NOTES

12

Master of Intelligence

Fred Harrison ('55) saw the world of intelligence open to him on his 1956-57 U.S. Navy tour as an officer on the staff of Commander, Seventh Fleet.

- Transforming Healthcare, One Bill at a Time
- Cultivating Change
- Homegrown Head Coaches
- Baby Bearcats
- In Memoriam



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni and Friends,

This fall marks a truly historic moment for Baruch College—one that quite literally puts us on the map. The 6 Line subway station at 23rd Street and Lexington Avenue now proudly bears the name **23rd Street—Baruch College**. For the millions of New Yorkers and visitors who pass through that stop each year, Baruch now stands alongside the city’s most recognizable institutions—a fitting tribute to Baruch’s growing stature and tremendous impact.

That new visibility mirrors the national recognition Baruch continues to earn. For the third year in a row, *The Wall Street Journal* ranked Baruch as the **#1 Best Value** in the U.S. among all colleges and universities it evaluated. Even more notably, Baruch achieved another first this year—being named the **#1 public college** in the Northeast. These distinctions reaffirm what our community already knows: Baruch delivers an exceptional education that transforms lives, providing access, excellence, and opportunity at a level unmatched in American higher education.

Our momentum is reflected across multiple measures of excellence. From *U.S. News & World Report* to *Forbes* and *The Princeton Review*, Baruch continues to be celebrated for its academic quality, career outcomes, and social mobility. I am especially proud that *The Princeton Review* once again recognized our alumni community—ranking Baruch **#16 nationally** for Best Alumni Networks among public colleges for the fourth consecutive year.

Behind every one of these accolades is a remarkable network of over 180,000 alumni worldwide whose achievements embody Baruch’s mission and values. Your success, mentorship, and generosity inspire our students and strengthen our reputation every day. The Office of Alumni Relations and Volunteer Engagement is here to help you stay involved—whether through regional and industry groups, global events, or volunteer opportunities that give back to the next generation.

This issue of *Baruch Alumni Magazine* captures that spirit of excellence and

connection. You’ll find a flavorful cover story featuring alumni who are reshaping the food industry—as chefs, founders, CEOs, and brand strategists—and meet this year’s Baruch Alumni Changemakers, six graduates making a profound impact in their fields and communities. If you haven’t yet attended our annual Changemakers celebration, I encourage you to do so. It’s an inspiring reminder of what it means to be part of this extraordinary community.

The new subway naming and our national rankings reflect more than visibility—they represent Baruch’s enduring mission: to provide an education that opens doors, lifts families, and changes the world.

Thank you for being an integral part of Baruch’s success and continuing story.

Warm regards,

S. DAVID WU
President, Baruch College

TASTING SUCCESS

BY SALLY FAY



BARUCH ALUMNI CARVE THEIR NICHE IN FOOD SERVICE

It's a physiological fact that humans need nourishment to survive. But for many of us, the acts of food preparation and consumption transcend simple biology; familial, sociocultural, and even geopolitical factors are often deeply intertwined with our food experiences. So it's no surprise that success in the food service sector goes beyond merely delivering physical sustenance.

We chatted with four Baruch alumni whose careers have encompassed diverse aspects of the food industry. The common thread: they all thrive on fostering connections with community, with food as their vehicle.

SERVING UP SOUND STRATEGIES

Back when Hesham Almekkawi (EMBA '03) was earning a BS in mechanical engineering in his native Egypt, a career in food service wasn't on his radar. But all that changed when he emigrated to New York City, where he spent several years working for individual restaurant operators.

"Restaurants became my passion," he explains. "I loved what I was doing—serving and meeting people and putting a smile on their faces."

Almekkawi's passion fueled a more than 30-year stint in the food and beverage industry working for

multinational food and beverage (F&B) and hospitality brands. In a career spanning both US and Middle Eastern markets, he's held C-suite positions at Pizza Hut (regional director of operations), Americana Group (COO), Majid Al Futtaim (VP of Hospitality), and Tim Hortons (CEO), focusing on growth, transformation, and operational excellence.

"I went from being a delivery boy delivering donuts and coffee in the City to a CEO of one of the largest coffee-and-donuts companies," he sums up.

Almekkawi left Tim Hortons in 2024 to focus on his role as CEO of A-TO-KEY

Left: After a successful 15-year career in fundraising, B.B. Huff (EMBA '10) switched careers and followed one of her passions: cooking.

Right: Hesham Almekkawi attends the celebration of the opening of the 300th Tim Hortons restaurant in the Middle East in 2024 (there were 175 when Almekkawi joined the company as CEO in 2021).



entrusted me with developing a service strategy and operations management course,” Almekkawi explains. An adjunct professor from 2003 to 2007, he taught the course at the undergraduate level and was a frequent guest speaker in the Executive MBA program, setting him on a path to become a public speaker, certified coach, and industry thought leader.

He returned to the College this fall as an adjunct professor of finance. “I owe Baruch, and that’s why I’m back to teach and guide future business leaders.”

Almekkawi has received several honors for his professional achievements, including inclusion among Retail ME’s 100 ICONs for the F&B industry and an honorary doctorate from International American University. He also authored *The 9 Traits of Hero Brands*, an analysis of why certain brands excel.

But he’s most proud of playing a part in delivering satisfying dining experiences to consumers. “I’m a big believer that food is the only thing that makes people happy unconditionally. It brings family, friends, and community together.”

A FORK IN THE ROAD

During a successful career in donor development, B.B. Huff (EMBA '10) forged programming partnerships and cultivated funding sources for organizations within the philanthropy space. Her work proved fruitful for entities from DC to New York to Napa—including Baruch, where she spent four years as director of development. But after 15 years focused on fostering generosity, she was ready to give to herself.

So she went to cooking school.

Shared food experiences had always provided comfort and meaning in her life, Huff explains. “When I wasn’t



working, I was cooking. I was in a supper club that met weekly for seven years. I always found community around the table.”

Based in the San Francisco Bay Area at the time, Huff enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America’s Greystone campus. Knowing she didn’t want to work in a traditional restaurant environment, she pursued a curriculum and internships centered around culinary instruction and communication.

After graduating, she returned to her hometown to establish her culinary career and was soon working full time as resident chef at Sur La Table in Scottsdale, Arizona, leading and developing cooking classes. She also launched her own boutique catering company, The Salted Parlor, bringing clients’ stories to life through food. “It wasn’t just about preparing a meal, but about making an experience: creating a play in which the food is a character,” she says.

When Sur La Table’s teaching kitchens moved from in-store to virtual during the Covid pandemic, Huff became one of four corporate chefs tapped to deliver real-time online cooking classes. Within two months she was teaching to 100

Consulting, which he founded in 2021. Targeted to the restaurant sector, the venture is “part of my giving-back approach to the industry,” he explains. “Many restaurateurs have the passion but lack the business tools to achieve their goals. We offer everything from feasibility studies through to restaurant launch, for new ventures and existing operators.”

His consultancy is just one of the ways Almekkawi gives back. After completing his MBA, he approached then management department chair Harry Rosen and asked if there might be a role for him in the Zicklin School curriculum. “Professor Rosen felt that my F&B industry experience in operations management would be valuable for students, and he

screens—a testament to the power of collective food experiences to fill the pandemic-era hunger for connection.

When an opportunity arose with Bon Appétit Management Company, a leading provider of culinary services in campus and specialty settings, Huff returned to the Bay Area in the role of executive chef at the flagship teaching kitchen of a Silicon Valley tech company. “The campus kitchens are one of the perks that enable the company to recruit and retain talent,” she says. “My main role is to help employees connect with food in ways that enrich their lives.”

Enrichment takes many forms, including skills-based food prep classes and culturally based events centered on learning and creating community. Huff’s specialty is delivering a blend of culinary science and anthropology, sharing not only the how-to of food but also why cuisines developed as they have.

Huff continues to embrace new ways to tell stories through food. A member of Bon Appétit’s Filipino employee resource group, she recently got to share her own culinary heritage as one of four corporate chefs chosen for a café residency in celebration of Filipino American History Month.

Her menu, “Tales from a Filipino Pantry in a Southern Kitchen,” embodied her experience of “the two different cultures that I live in, and how their cuisines come together in a way that’s really joyful.”

AN APPETITE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Growing up in Mexico City, Veronica Romero ('12) was intrigued by her father’s job as the owner of a midsize clothing factory. “He’d take me to his meetings and teach me about his work—it was fun,” she recalls. “So building a business just felt like a given for me.”

Romero came to New York City after high school, planning to work for a year and then return home to continue her studies. Those plans changed when she met her now husband while both were employed at a local restaurant. “He had the talent and passion for food, and I had the vision to sell his passion,” she says.

Twenty-five years ago the pair opened Hidden City Café (the name alluded to the restaurant’s below-street-level entrance) across from Baruch, with Romero focusing on the business side and her husband as culinary lead. Today she’s co-founder, vice president, and head of marketing and sales for Hidden City Loft and Catering, the latest incarnation of their business.

As an entrepreneur, Romero strove to grow and broaden her business while maintaining a focus on community.

“Sharing food together is how human beings experience communion, and being able to make that experience more beautiful feeds my soul.”

She expanded Hidden City Café’s offerings to include catering; eventually, she and her husband also operated nearby restaurants Gramercy Star Cafe, Grand Central Star Cafe, and Gramercy Grill. The restaurants were part of meal programs for Baruch and other nearby schools and were part of the neighborhood fabric.

When second-floor commercial space became available in the vicinity almost 10 years ago, Romero leaped at the opportunity to have a dedicated event space for up to 74 guests.

That decision proved key to the company’s survival in the wake of the Covid pandemic. “We faced some



very tough choices about how best to come back,” Romero says. “We chose not to reopen any restaurant locations and to focus solely on event planning and catering.” Specializing in corporate, social, and institutional events, Romero’s company currently employs about a dozen full-time personnel.

Her BBA in marketing management helped equip her to navigate her venture’s new direction. A year ago the company expanded once again, opening a flower shop, Le Rose Atelier, in the same building. “It’s another way to distinguish our business from other caterers and add value to the customer experience.”

Whether catering offsite events like Baruch’s Latinx Heritage Month Party en la Plaza or staging a celebration in the Loft, Romero is always mindful of the impact of food service. “Sharing food together is how human beings experience communion, and being able to make that experience more beautiful feeds my soul,” she says.

“When my mom would cook for the family, it was an expression of her love for us. Those traditionally feminine characteristics of the food—the comfort, that touch of care—it’s always an aspect of catering. And I think that we express it very well.”

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Humanity and inclusivity were foundational values in Jaclinn Tanney’s (MPA ’12) upbringing. “My grandparents arrived in New York City following the liberation of concentration camps at the end of the Holocaust,” she says. “I grew up in a home that believed deeply in community and philanthropy.”

Tanney’s family also placed tremendous value on food as an expression of culture, connection, and sharing. In her current position as president of JD Meals, a City-based meal provider for shelters, emergency sites, and schools, Tanney puts all of her formative principles into action, merging her passions for serving people and sharing cultures through food.

Born out of a need to feed the most vulnerable during the height of Covid-19, JD Meals quickly grew into the City’s largest restaurant-quality active cooking operation during the pandemic, serving 10,000 meals a day to food-insecure individuals.

“Since our founding in 2019, we’ve prepared and distributed millions of fresh, delicious, and culturally relevant meals to feed food-insecure communities, including the City’s growing population of temporarily housed and newly arrived migrant families,” Tanney says. “We know that providing a meal is about more than just food... it’s about offering hope, comfort, and a sense of belonging to those who need it most.”

The company produces and distributes its meals out of a commissary kitchen in Long Island

City. A typical day for Tanney includes convening with the kitchen team to discuss current menus and coordinate distributions, as well as meeting with community stakeholders, including city council members, nonprofit partners, and houses of worship, to identify unmet needs of food-insecure populations across the city.

Tanney’s role at JD Meals is the latest expression of her philanthropic bent. After graduating from Syracuse University, where she studied nonprofit management and business, she built a career in the nonprofit sector, leading national and international education and health-based organizations.

A lifelong learner, she enrolled in Baruch’s MPA program to broaden her understanding of the public sector. “The program’s combination of classroom knowledge and real-life experience had a tremendous impact on my career path,” she says.

In recent years she’s shared her own career experience with Baruch students, teaching a graduate course on social entrepreneurship as an adjunct professor. “I found it incredibly rewarding to guide students as they explored models that balance financial sustainability

with meaningful social impact. At the same time, I gained so much from their diverse perspectives and lived experiences.”

Tanney has been recognized as a *Crain’s New York Business* “40 Under 40” honoree and recipient of a Baruch Alumni Changemakers Award. But her greatest honor, she says, is the opportunity to help build a more equitable, inclusive, innovative, and caring society, one meal at a time.

“I think back to our holiday meals and my mom’s quiet and dignified insistence that everyone was welcome,” says Tanney. “Those gatherings taught me that food is a gesture of care. And there is always room for one more chair.”



**DONATE TO
THE BEARCAT
FOOD PANTRY**



Left: Veronica Romero prepares catering spread for an event.

Below: Jaclinn Tanney (teal shirt) working to deliver nourishing meals and groceries to food-insecure neighbors across the city.





RACKING UP RANKINGS

BY ERIN DAVIS (MA '23)

Baruch College has once again been recognized as a top performer by *The Princeton Review*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and more. Year after year, the College climbs the rankings—

cementing Baruch as a leader among both public and private institutions.

Baruch ranked as the #1 most innovative school in New York and tied for #1 as a top performer in

social mobility among all public and private institutions in the region, per *U.S. News & World Report*. Meanwhile, *The Wall Street Journal* named Baruch the best public institution in the Northeast and #1 nationwide for value.

Additionally, *The Princeton Review* ranked the College #16 in the Top 20 Best Alumni Networks nationwide among public colleges, and *Forbes* named Baruch among the nation's 25 colleges with the “highest payoff.”

President S. David Wu is proud that Baruch College is making such a widely recognized impact.

“It reflects Baruch’s unwavering commitment to expand opportunity, champion bold ideas, deliver academic excellence, and empower graduates from all backgrounds to thrive in successful careers amid a dynamic, evolving world.”

FIELDING A NEW DEPARTMENT

Baruch College celebrated the new Lawrence N. Field Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at a special ceremony that honored its namesake, the late **Lawrence N. Field** ('52), one of the College's most generous and successful alumni. His daughters, Lisa (left) and Robyn (second from left) continue to support the College and honor their father's legacy. The two Fields posed outside the newly named department alongside its chair, Dr. Scott Newbert (second from right), and President Wu.



THEY'VE GOT GAME: E-SPORTS CLUB WINS BIG

BY ERIN DAVIS (MA '23)

Baruch College students brought home an impressive win at the inaugural New York City Video Game Festival, hosted by the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment and ECAC Esports. Baruch won the "Battle of the Boroughs," beating Hunter College, Brooklyn College, the College of Staten Island, the City College of New York, Hostos Community College, and Queens College.

The team competed in the VALORANT contest, in which they played a fast-paced action game with only 100 seconds to plan and execute a strategy. The win shows that Baruch College students are prepared to think strategically and take careful action without hesitation.

Baruch's E-Sports Association is among the 130+ student clubs and organizations at Baruch. Representing Baruch were club members Patrick Lin ('25), Huxley Preefer ('27), Dylan Trinh ('26); Brandon Cheung ('28), Jonathan Mahadeo ('26), and Injun Park ('26), who served as team coach.

"Bringing home a win for our college is an incredible feeling of accomplishment and pride," says Mahadeo. "We're all proud of what we've accomplished together and the team that we have become. We're hopeful that there will be many more victories in the future."

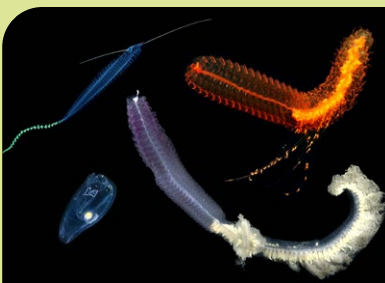
The club's win isn't nearly its first. In 2025, student Edward Sanchez won the ECAC Esports Collegiate iRacing



League in The Bucky's Bristol Bash 200; its Varsity VALORANT team ranked first in the CUNY Esports League; and the club's League of

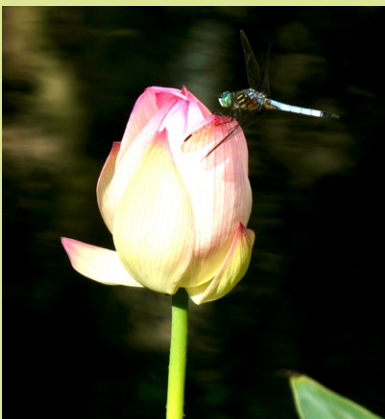
Legends team won the CUNY Esports League—proving again and again that Baruch's E-Sports club members are unstoppable.

SCIENTIFIC AND DEEP-SEA DISCOVERIES



Professors at Baruch's Weissman School of Arts and Sciences have been leading the charge in a variety of new academic research and discoveries.

Dr. David Gruber, CUNY Distinguished Professor of Biology at Baruch College, joined a multidisciplinary team of ocean engineers, roboticists, and biologists to demonstrate new technologies to identify rare marine life. Using new advances in underwater imaging, robotics, and genomic sequencing, he helped to obtain preserved tissues and high-resolution images of some of the most fragile animals in the deep ocean (top and middle photos).



Additionally, Dr. Manpreet Kohli, Professor of Natural Sciences at Weissman, was featured in *The New York Times* for her research on how dragonflies adapt to changing habitats. Dr. Baofu Qiao, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, contributed important research in atomistic simulation, which could move the needle towards finding a potential cure for allergic reactions.

A LASTING LEGACY

Dr. Mindy Engle-Friedman, professor of Psychology at Baruch, tragically passed away in April after an extended battle with cancer—though her legacy at the College will live on for years to come.

A faculty member for nearly four decades, she raised awareness of climate change and implemented initiatives across campus through leading the Baruch Climate Scholars Program, the Campus Sustainability Council, and the Faculty Research Seminar on Climate Change.

Marx School Professor of Public Affairs Ronald Spalter, MBA, who met Engle-Friedman when CUNY began to embed sustainability and energy conservation into its cross-college goals and values, reflects on how she transformed lives across campus.

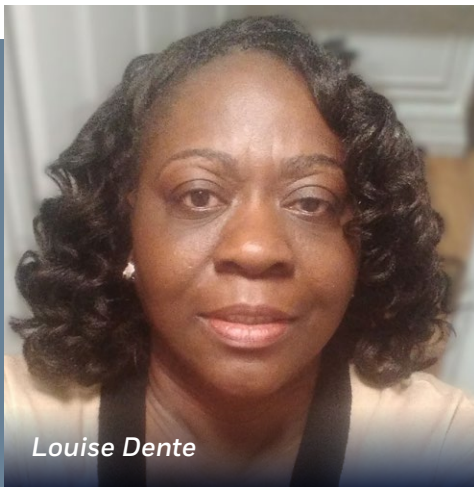
“Mindy was a believer and an advocate,” Professor Spalter says. “Both for sustainability and climate

change and for the notion that all of us can take actions and use opportunities that help advance our institutions’ and organizations’ desires to craft visions and missions that benefit scholarship, student learning, and our individual and collective impacts on society.”

In recognition of her legacy, Bloomberg Philanthropies hosted the 2025 CUNY Climate Scholars at their corporate headquarters in October and brought together a cross-section

of professionals across the company to showcase all of the opportunities that exist in sustainability within their firm.

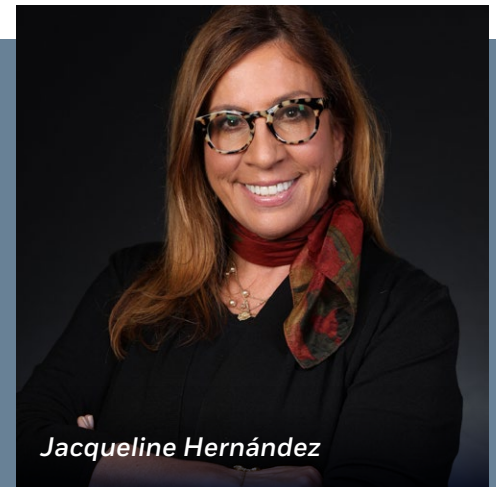
Engle-Friedman received numerous awards, including the 2000 Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching, the 2011 Presidential Excellence Award for Distinguished Service, the 2022 17 Lexington Society Award, and the 2022 WSAS Excellence Award in Service and Institutional Leadership.



Louise Dente



Ben Guttman



Jacqueline Hernández

A NEW CLASS OF CHANGEMAKERS

On September 25, 2025, Baruch College’s Office of Alumni Relations and Volunteer Engagement hosted its fourth annual Alumni Changemakers Awards, celebrating Baruch graduates who have made a positive impact on their communities and industries.

FOND FAREWELL TO DEAN LANG

BY DANIEL JACOBSON

In June, Jessica Lang concluded her tenure as dean of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, bringing an end to an extraordinary 20-year career at Baruch as teacher, mentor, and leader. She now serves as the inaugural dean of arts and sciences at Fordham University.

Since her appointment at Weissman in 2020—first as interim dean and then dean in 2022—Lang foregrounded Weissman’s role as Baruch’s indispensable liberal arts core. She presided over the development of new majors and graduate programs, broadened experiential learning, and launched collaborations between the Weissman, Zicklin, and Marxe Schools—all while shepherding Weissman through a worldwide pandemic.

Lang joined Baruch in 2004 as an assistant professor of English. She taught and mentored students for 15+ years before moving into

senior leadership, and later chaired the English Department. She served as the founding William Newman Director of the Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center, and built state, nationwide, and international partnerships.

Lang launched the Jewish Studies Minor, majors in Black and Latino Studies and Computer Science, and a pathway for Zicklin students to double major in Weissman. She also secured transformative philanthropic support, including Weissman’s largest gift: a nearly \$2 million grant from the Edmond J. Safra Foundation.

Professor of Psychology Jennifer Mengels, PhD, is now serving as Weissman’s interim dean.

“One of my greatest responsibilities to the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences is to foster a positive environment of creative inquiry



for faculty, students, and staff,” says Mengels.

Baruch’s community celebrates Dean Lang’s contributions and carries forward the momentum that she fostered.



Ivy Teng Lei

LOUISE DENTE (’88)

Founder & Director
Cultural Caravan Productions Inc.

IVY TENG LEI (’14)

Chief Digital Strategy Officer
State of California



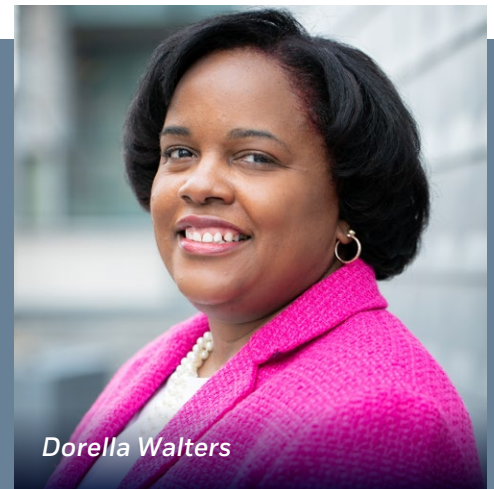
Mary Olushoga

BEN GUTTMANN (’11)

Executive Director, Queens Economic
Development Corporation

MARY OLUSHOGA (MSED ’10)

Founder & President
African Women Power Network



Dorella Walters

JACQUELINE HERNÁNDEZ (MBA ’98)

Founder & CEO
New Majority Ready LLC

DORELLA WALTERS (EMPA ’08)

Chief Program Development Officer
God’s Love We Deliver

WE WELCOME YOUR SUBMISSIONS! Please email us at alumni@baruch.cuny.edu

'60s **Edward Mendlowitz** ('63) published his 600th and final column for accountingtoday.com on June 2, 2025. *Long Island Business News* selected **Alan E. Weiner** ('63) as a 2025 Icon Honors recipient. **Rafael (Ralph) Rivera-Viruet** ('64) was featured on NY1 for his book, *Hollywood... Se Habla Español*, which highlights the Hispanic influence on Hollywood in the 20th century. **Michael Strauss** ('67) was appointed interim dean of the Sy Syms School of Business at Yeshiva University. **Max Berger** ('68) received the Lifetime Achievement Award from *The National Law Journal*.

'70s **Henry Horowitz** ('73) was appointed to the United Way of Greenville County's board of directors. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi hosted **Sam Pollard** ('73) for a screening and Q&A of his documentary, *Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power*, on March 19, 2025. **Matthew Benjamin** ('74) dedicated classroom 9-135 in Baruch's Newman Vertical Campus, as part of the Class Act program. Benjamin, a retired partner at Deloitte, was joined at the dedication ceremony by Lara Abrash (MBA '94), chair of Deloitte US. The Graphic Communications Scholarship Foundation (GCSF) honored **Paul V. Reilly** ('74, MBA '76) with its 2025 Champion of Education Award at their annual scholarship awards ceremony in New York City on June 30, 2025. **Stuart Koenig** (MBA '79) delivered an address and received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Binghamton University during the Harpur College of Arts and Sciences ceremony on May 17, 2025. **Patricia Scipio** ('79) coauthored *Unstoppable* with Lisa Nichols, an Amazon bestseller. **Bruce Singer** ('79) was appointed interim assistant

superintendent for business in the Center Moriches School District.

'80s **Helene Banks** ('85) was recommended as a leader in corporate governance in the Lexology Index: M&A and Governance 2025 Report. Webull appointed **Walter Bishop** ('85) to its board of directors. The Public Company Accounting Oversight Board appointed **Steven Lipiner** (MBA '87) to its investor and standards and emerging issues advisory groups. Marquis *Who's Who* honored **Andriana Vamvakas** ('87) for expertise in investigative and regulatory compliance. **Steven Ogus** (MBA '89) joined First Business Bank as senior vice president of asset-based learning. **David Thomas** (MBA '89) is president of the Ohio market at CareSource.

'90s Eagle Football Holdings Limited appointed **Dave Horin** ('90) to its board of directors. *Crain's New York Business* named **Michael Royce** ('90) one of its notable leaders in philanthropy for 2025. **Liren Wei** ('91) was profiled about her career for Forbes.com. **Earl Cox** ('92) was profiled alongside his wife in *The New York Times* about their careers in personal finance education. Sinclair named **Billy Robbins** ('92) vice president of station sales operations. **George Silfen** (MBA '94) is partner at Alston & Bird LLP. *Crain's New York Business* named **Mauro Viskovic** ('94) one of its notable M&A dealmakers for 2025. **Harry Valetk** ('95) is a data privacy shareholder at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney. **Jonathan La** ('96) is chief financial officer at MiddleGround Capital. **Vanecia Kerr** (MPA '97) is the CEO of United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona. **Sandra Callahan Merrick** (MPA '97) works at the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities as an

assistant general counsel. Manhattan University named **Hany Guirguis** (MBA '98) dean of its O'Malley School of Business. *Crain's New York Business* named **Mercedes Rendon** ('99) a notable leader in finance. **Ibolya Zagraj** ('99) is working as a civil servant for Europol in The Hague, The Netherlands.

'00s Iron Road Partners appointed **Jennifer Conwell** ('00) as director. **Ann Yu Wei Huang** ('00) had her poetry collection, *Saffron Splash*, published in *The Raw Art Review*. **Ed Jimenez** (MBA '00) is president and CEO of Main Line Health. Marquis *Who's Who* honored **Rosa Moreno** ('00) for distinguished leadership in financial management, government service, and community empowerment. **Stephanie Hui** ('01) was promoted to senior director, senior business analyst at Penguin Random House in September 2025. **Zakhar Suleymanov** ('01) was appointed chief financial officer at Dinosaur Financial Group. **Albina (Tolmach) Hinrichsen** ('02) joined Citi Private Bank's Beverly Hills office as a director and investment counselor. *Crain's New York Business* named **Wendy Stark** (MBA '02) to its "Women of Influence 2025" list. *City & State New York* named **Roger Zhu** ('02) to its inaugural "Asian Trailblazers" list. Marquis *Who's Who* honored **Hesham Almekkawi** (EMBA '03) for expertise in global business leadership. *Crain's New York Business* named **Daniel Diaz** ('03) one of its notable leaders in philanthropy for 2025. Valley National appointed **Eyal Efrat** (EMS '03) as an independent director to its board. **Yexenia Markland** ('03) was appointed the first deputy director of the Mayor's Office of Contract Services in New York City. **Christine M. Valentín** ('03) recently celebrated



MASTER OF INTELLIGENCE

BY NANETTE MAXIM

“There’s an old Irving Berlin song that goes, ‘We joined the Navy to see the world. And what did we see? We saw the sea,’” says U.S. Navy veteran officer, award-winning career intelligence professional, and author **Fred Harrison** (’55), with a laugh. “I saw both.”

From Japan to the Philippines to Hong Kong, Harrison, a born Brooklynite, saw the world of intelligence open to him on his 1956–57 U.S. Navy tour as an officer on the staff of Commander, Seventh Fleet.

Before his military service, he’d aimed to become a journalist. While pursuing a B.B.A. in Business Administration at Baruch, he was both a contributor and editor-in-chief of *The Ticker*. But an opportunity to

become a Navy linguist intrigued him. He committed to continuing his service and was assigned to the National Security Agency (NSA) as a Soviet naval intelligence analyst.

Transitioning to civilian service with the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1960, Harrison partnered with mathematician and computer software pioneer Ruth Davis in expanding computer-assisted intelligence capabilities.

Later, as principal developer of the Naval Ocean Surveillance Information Center, he received the Edward C. Nielsen Memorial Award for his significant contributions to naval intelligence.

Upon graduating from the National War College, Harrison joined the Central Intelligence Agency in 1976, where he ultimately served as deputy director of the intelligence systems secretariat. There, he created groundbreaking information-sharing technology and won a National Intelligence Medal of Achievement. He and his

staff also won the NSA’s Rowlett Trophy for Organizational Excellence. As the Cold War era ended, he focused on counterterrorism and counternarcotics and helped develop the Coast Guard’s intelligence center in West Virginia. His novels feature a cast of intelligence and military brass and a canny CIA operative, Hannah Crossman.

Since retirement, Harrison’s penned screenplays, short stories, and eight novels. His books, available on Amazon, bring the world of contemporary intelligence and counterterrorism to life, set in a wide variety of hot spots including Afghanistan, Somalia, and even the White House and CIA headquarters.

Harrison is the longtime director of the Carl Norton Network, a professional association that connects members of the defense and intelligence communities with career opportunities. As Harrison often notes, the best part of having seen the world—in more ways than he could have imagined when he joined the Seventh Fleet—is sharing it.



TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE, ONE BILL AT A TIME

BY ERIN DAVIS (MA '23)

Allison Sesso (MPA '04) has built her career around confronting systemic inequities. As CEO of Undue Medical Debt, she's helped relieve more than \$22 billion dollars in medical debt nationwide and has advocated for policy change through private fundraising efforts and government partnerships. In recognition of her commitment to raising awareness of—and addressing—a critical struggle, Sesso was named to the TIME100 Most Influential People of 2025 list.

"The non-profit sector is a good place to both do direct work and influence the larger conversation about social problems," says Sesso. "You're close to the ground—you see what's really happening with people and their perspective."

At Undue Medical Debt, she serves as the organization's public voice while empowering employees.

"A lot of my role is about building a strong, vibrant culture—hiring good people, supporting them, letting them thrive, and making sure that teamwork, collaboration,

and transparency are central," she notes. "I also engage outside stakeholders and constantly think about how to prioritize and invest as an organization."

Her favorite part of the job, though, is championing the bigger picture.

"I love that we get to influence the narrative around medical debt—showing how it hurts people, creates struggles, and prevents them from getting care. I want to shake America awake about our subpar healthcare financing system. It's broken and hurting people. I love telling that story authentically and influencing the conversation."

She credits Baruch College's MPA program for broadening her knowledge of public policy.

"I learned how to grapple with ethical decisions, evaluate policy, use statistics meaningfully, and understand limitations," she says. "It made me think critically about how the world operates in reality, mixed with theory and applied skills."

15 years of owning her private mental health practice. As a Latina therapist licensed in New Jersey and New York, Valentín teaches children, parents, and adults caring for a parent with dementia how to reduce their anxiety and manage difficult behaviors. She also facilitates continuing education workshops for mental health professionals.

Francesco Catalano ('04) is a financial consultant with Equitable Advisors and helps clients develop strategies for protecting and growing their wealth. MarketAxess Holdings Inc. appointed **Nitin A. Mirwani** (MBA '04) as its chief accounting officer. **Antoine B. Craigwell** ('05) is president and CEO of the nonprofit Depressed Black Gay Men, Inc. Craigwell was awarded the Caribbean Life Impact Award on March 20, 2025, at Terrace on the Park in Queens for dedicating his career to ending suicide in Guyana through mental health workshops. **Kelvin Medina** ('05) assumed the position of global head of reinsurance and MGA operations at SCOR. **Deepak Sinha** ('05) was promoted to SVP, brand & innovation at Bira 91. **Jorge Cruz** ('06, EMPA '13) was appointed school business administrator for Fair Lawn Schools. **Mayoori Kango** (MBA '07) is chief executive officer at Publicis Global Delivery. **Michael Morris** (MBA '07) joined Cresa to launch a data center capital markets and advisory platform. *City & State New York* recognized **Cristina Contreras** (EMPA '08) on its 2025 "Bronx Power 100" list. **Lori Florack** (MS '08) was named 2025 HR Executive of the Year by the National Human Resources Association. **Iyabo Oyewo-Hall** ('08) was appointed director of Queens College's Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding. AlixPartners, a New York-based management consulting firm, promoted **Meaghan Schmidt** (MS '09) to co-head of its Americas region. **Andy Xu** ('09) is partner at Deloitte.

CULTIVATING CHANGE

BY ERIN DAVIS (MA '23)

Jibreel Jalloh ('17) always thought that he'd become a lawyer—until he found his true calling. The son of immigrants from Sierra Leone, West Africa and a 2024–25 Obama Scholar, Jalloh has dedicated his career to advocating for underrepresented communities after discovering the importance of civic engagement as a Baruch College student.

and founded The Flossy Organization. The non-profit has been a catalyst for local change, securing the city budget to expand the Brooklyn-based Cure Violence campaign in the area, resulting in more than \$1.6 million in violence prevention funding, and by stopping a proposed local pesticide facility.

“Our mission is to close the advocacy gap in marginalized communities through intergenerational civics training, tech, and grassroots mobilization,” Jalloh explains. “We do that with two pillars of our work: issue-based campaigns and training programs. Our Advocacy Academy trains people—from high school students to seniors—on how to create change locally. We teach organizing, advocacy, power mapping, using data, and understanding the interplay of

“Baruch was a big point in the genesis of my career in public service,” says Jalloh. “I was super involved on campus as vice president of the Black Student Union and ran for student body president. I found that I was way more animated and involved outside of the classroom.”

After he recognized a growing advocacy gap in his hometown of Canarsie, Brooklyn, he took charge



city, state, and federal government to advocate effectively.”

Jalloh's commitment to fighting for the public good never wavers.

“Community organizing, in my view, is one of the strongest tools for change. With stronger investments and expanded capacity, I believe that our impact will scale even further.”

'10s **Matthew Archer** (EMBA '10) was honored by Marquis *Who's Who* for expertise in business development strategies. **Jonathan Chung** (MPA '10) and **Amoy Barnes** (MPA '16) were named to *City & State's* 2025 list of “Who's Who in Government Relations.” **Roger L.R. Trimble** (MFE '10) was elected to the Baruch College Fund Board of Trustees. **Aissata M.B. Camara** ('11) was appointed commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs. Mercy University appointed **Lauren (Santiago) de la Cruz** (EMS '11) as its inaugural chief human resources officer. **Vera (Longinova) Hart** ('11) is the chief financial officer at PicnicHealth. The International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina appointed **Shelia McDaniel** (EMPA '11) as chief operating officer. Foodture Inc. has promoted **Olga**

Tretiakova ('11) to SVP of operations and business development. OncoC4, Inc. appointed **Shiniu Wei** ('11) as chief financial officer. Bit Digital named **Justin Zhu** ('11, MS '12) chief accounting officer and principal financial officer. BIA Advisory Services named **Senan Mele** ('12) vice president of forecasting and data analysis. Progressive Railroad named **Aymel Sanchez** ('12) a rising star of 2025. **Zhouli Tang** ('12, MS '14) and **Michael Durant** ('14, MS '16) were elected to the New York State Society of CPAs 2025–2026 board of directors. Marquis *Who's Who* recognized **Fan “Maggie” Hu** ('13) as an emerging leader in real estate and business law. **Sharaf Islam** ('13) is a partner at McGuireWoods LLP specializing in digital infrastructure and renewable-energy deals. **Leqi Dong** ('14) was appointed by the Fly-E Group as an independent director

and chair of their nominating and governance committee. **Elizabeth (Ray) Rohlfs** ('14) was named to Captive International's “FORTY under 40.” **James M. Rizzo** (MS '14) was elected to the Baruch College Fund Board of Trustees. StartEngine Crowdfunding, Inc. appointed **Hunter Strassman** (MS '14) to serve as chief financial officer and principal accounting officer. **Sonja Kostich** ('15, MA '18) is the executive director of Houston Ballet. *Crain's New York Business* named **Nathifa Forde** (MPA '16) to its “Women of Influence 2025” list. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development named **Jason Loughran** (EMPA '16) the New York and New Jersey regional administrator. **Justin C. Starrantino** ('16) was elected to the Baruch College Fund Board of Trustees. Meowtel, in conjunction with the film *25 Cats from Qatar*, awarded **Farrah Goff** ('17) Cat

HOMEGROWN HEAD COACHES

BY JOHN NEVES

Two of Baruch's most accomplished student-athletes have returned to their roots at the ARC Arena on Lexington Avenue.

This summer, **Tammer Farid** ('11) and **Brady Ambro** ('17) were hired as head coaches of their former teams, Men's Basketball and Men's Volleyball, respectively.

Farid, who starred on the hardwood as an undergraduate, has steadily risen through the coaching ranks. He served seven seasons as assistant head coach and four more as associate head coach before earning



the top position this summer. He succeeds fellow alumnus John Alesi ('03), who coached the program for 12 seasons, winning five CUNY Athletic Conference (CUNYAC) Championships and compiling 221 victories since 2012.

On the volleyball side, Ambro returns to lead a team with a proud championship tradition. A standout outside hitter from 2013 to 2016, he helped guide the Bearcats to three

CUNYAC titles and three NCAA Tournament appearances, including a memorable Final Four run in 2013 in Rochester. He now takes over a team that has captured five straight CUNYAC Championships.

Both alumni bring deep ties to the Baruch Athletics program, championship experience, and a strong vision for the future—positioning the Bearcats for continued success on the court.

Rescuer of the Year and a \$2500 grant for 10 Lives Rescue, the nonprofit of which she is also president. The Vistria Group, LP named **Sherry Wang** ('17, MS '21) partner. The Bromley Companies promoted **Kamila Ditta** ('18) to senior portfolio controller. **Jennifer Gallino** ('19) has joined Rockefeller Capital Management as associate vice president.

'20s The YMCA of Montclair appointed **Joshua Jerome** (EMBA '20) to its board of directors. Lighthouse Guild named **Monica Traczik** (MBA '20) as director of Manhattan GuildCare, an adult day health care program. **Dawn S. Walker** (MPA '20) is vice president of communications and marketing at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University. Walker was awarded the Caribbean Life Impact Award on

March 20, 2025 at Terrace on the Park in Queens for expertise and excellence in government, nonprofit, healthcare, and higher education. **Eunice Kepka** ('21) is a business development officer at JPalmer Collective. Marquis *Who's Who* honored **Vanessa Liu** (MBA '21) for expertise in e-commerce. **Stephanie Nuesi** ('21) was named to *Forbes*' 30 Under 30 list for Central America. **Liam Merchant** ('22) was promoted to senior commercial credit underwriter at Bank of Greene County. **Dèja Stewart** (MPA '23) is a communications advisor for the New York City Office of the Deputy Mayor for Communications. The Center for Real Estate Finance awarded **Souleymane Ba** ('24) one of its six annual scholarships. **Grace Guan** ('24) recently opened Graceful Wine & Liquor in Forest Hills. **Pascalyn Omotosho** ('24) is a tax associate at

PwC in New York after completing a U.S. business tax internship in London at Deloitte UK. **Monique Proverbs** ('24) was selected to be a part of the 2025 ADCOLOR Futures class. The program highlights rising stars and leaders in the field of advertising, public relations, and media who are rising up and reaching back. After graduation, **Francesca Santana** ('24) moved to Philadelphia, PA, where she serves as a preschool director.

'25 **Kayla Aaron** ('25) is an assistant director of government affairs at the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. **Dominick Cariati** ('25) is now a municipal credit analyst at BAM Mutual, having formerly interned there in June 2024. **Mia Castillo** ('25) was featured on NBC New York after being drafted to play

professional basketball for Puerto Rico's Las Gigantes de Carolina team. Castillo is the all-time leading scorer in both Baruch College and CUNYAC basketball history. **Carol Chen** ('25) began a junior sales planner role at Fox Television Stations. **Ali Darwish** ('25), a former Provost Scholar Honors student, graduated as salutatorian and is an administrative assistant at the CUNY Writing Center. **Bricen Fisher** ('25) is an analyst at the NYC Mayor's Office of Management and Budget and is a former Obama Scholar and Jeannette K. Watson Fellow who worked for FEMA and AmeriCorps. **Mustafa Gandhi** ('25) is the chief operating officer of the real estate company Crystal Group India. **Daniel Glavan** ('25) is an actuarial assistant at New York Life Insurance Company. **Iffat Jahan** ('25) began working as a paraprofessional educator at RCM Healthcare Services.

Ketevani Jikurashvili ('25) is a consolidation and plan financial analyst at IBM. **Candas Kirnaz** ('25) is working as a financial analyst at Grant, Herrmann, Schwartz & Klinger LLP. **Arash Lahijani** ('25) is an investment banking analyst at Jeffries. **Jack Lehane** ('25) is an investment banking analyst at RBC Capital Markets. **Ryan Lowe** ('25) is an analyst at Goldman Sachs. **Medjine Jean Marie** ('25) is a BUILD fellow at McKinsey & Company. **Rudolph Merlin** ('25) is a distressed credit analyst at BNP Paribas. **Matthew Nuñez** ('25), co-founder and chief marketing officer of Prometheus Investors, is also working as an investment banking analyst at SMBC Group. **Jessica Plepi** ('25) is working at the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison as a business services assistant. **Joel Ramirez** ('25) collaborated with Baruch College on branded apparel through his clothing

company, 49Archive. **Milan Rysa** ('25) is the longtime owner of Milano Supps & Nutrition. After his internship at JPMorganChase, **Marvin Shyti** ('25) returned to the financial institution as a full-time internal audit analyst. **Daniel Stark** ('25), former president of Baruch's Investment Management Group, is working at BMO Capital Markets as an investment banking analyst. **Maria Elisabeth Torrealba** ('25) is a global private banking analyst at HSBC and was elected to the Baruch College Fund board. **Fedir Usmanov** ('25), a former candidate for New York City Council District 47 and founder of the youth mentorship program Next Gen Connect, is pursuing an MS in Business Analytics at Carnegie Mellon University. **Saul Veras** ('25) joined PwC as a nonprofit technology consultant intern. **Reneisha Williams** ('25) is the branch manager of Citi in Brooklyn.

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BABY BEARCATS

Laura Healy (MSEd '21) and her husband, Thomas, added a daughter to their family, Bobbi Antonia McNulty (pictured left), in June 2025. In addition to being a mom, she serves as the director of academic support services at LIM College.

Essence English ('21) and her partner greeted their son, Rulah Ramos (pictured right), in August 2025. English, a CUNY 50 Under 50 alumna and former Baruch College SEEK academic workshop leader, is a client financial services representative at Bloomberg.



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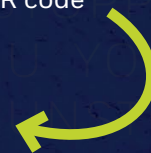
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