

FALL 2023

NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE

MAGAZINE

NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE

Dr. Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr.

16th

PRESIDENTIAL
Inauguration



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Dr. Lesperance and New England College extend a heartfelt "thank you" to those who generously supported our Inauguration festivities and continue to serve as community partners.

Thank You

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Reddy.Induru H'23**

**The Class of 1973:
50th Reunion**

**Julie A. Zahn and
Michael T. Zahn**

The Bohling Family

The Gingery Family

The Kusiak Family

The Marzullo Family

The Pintado Family

The Soule Family



When I Arrived...

When I arrived at NEC in 1999 as an Assistant Professor of Political Science, I never could have imagined that one day I would be president of this institution that I love so much.

I stepped into the role of New England College's 16th president in December of 2022, but I was officially inaugurated on September 30, 2023. What a memorable day! People from across the NEC community gathered on campus for the inauguration ceremony, community celebration dinner, Jimmy Buffett tribute band (one of my favorite moments of the day), and the fireworks finale. Through it all, I felt the deepest sense of pride and gratitude to be part of this community and to share the celebration with so many of you.

I'm also proud to be NEC's first Hispanic president. I was born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, and those formative experiences truly shaped the person I would become.

One of the conditions I set for holding an inauguration is that we would cover the expenses through fundraising and not spend a penny from the College's budget. I knew that was a big ask. I'm very pleased to say that through the incredibly generous gifts from friends like Venkatrama Reddy, Induru H'23, wonderful businesses like Pats Peak and R.C. Brayshaw, many of our trustees, and a host of others, we were able to meet that condition. My family and I thank everyone who contributed to making this celebration such a joyful event for us and our community. We loved spending the day with you, and we look forward to many more years at NEC.

As usual, NEC looks to the future. College Convention, an NEC event near and dear to my heart, will be held January 7-9. The next generation of voters will get an up-close-and-personal experience with New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation presidential primary.

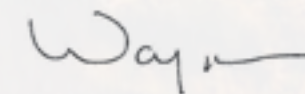
You may have heard that football is returning to NEC. It is not a stretch to say that participation in athletics changes lives, and we are in the business of changing lives. I am very excited that we can once again offer football for our student-athletes.

You can read more about College Convention and the return of football in this issue.

I'm pleased to report that our fall undergraduate residential enrollment numbers exceeded our goal and that we have the largest incoming class since the onset of COVID-19. Students have an overwhelming number of options when looking at colleges, and NEC is honored that so many students choose us as the foundation for the rest of their lives. Similarly, our enrollment in our School of Graduate and Professional Studies has exceeded projections by a significant margin. In short, our "one ship" at NEC is moving forward steadily as it goes.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, let me take this opportunity to wish you and your families a season of happiness and peace and to thank you for being part of the New England College community. Go 'Grims!

Warm regards,



Dr. Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr.
President

Greetings

from
Bridge Street



"the heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the harvest of the future."
- Wendell Phillips -



Rooted IN HERITAGE

by
Dr. Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr.



My life —where I've been, what I've achieved, where I'm headed—is inextricably linked to my heritage.

I was born in Bayamon, a small town in Puerto Rico, where the Pintado family had lived and worked for hundreds of years. My father, an American service member in the U.S. Navy, and mom met through my grandfather, who was also a Navy man stationed in Puerto Rico. My parents met, fell in love, and got married.

I lived in Bayamon until I was six, and my identity is very much tied to those Puerto Rican roots. My first language was Spanish, with English soon to follow. I was very close to my grandparents who lived very long lives. We just lost my grandmother, *abuela*, at the age of 107 this year.

When I think about my roots, I think of the Pintados on their farm. They had this little piece of land in Puerto Rico where they primarily grew sugarcane that went to Bacardi to produce rum.

As a little boy, I walked through those fields with my grandfather, and we would look at all the things growing there. On one walk, he stopped, reached down, and scooped up a little bit of earth. "You know, Wayne, at the end of the day, it all comes back to this. It all comes back to the earth."

Now, I didn't fully understand the point at the time, but I remember the lesson now, and it sticks with me even after all these years. We get so caught up in the proverbial noise around us, distracted by this and worrying about that. But for my grandfather, the important thing in life was the earth, the soil, and what he could grow from it. I really appreciate that for my family in Puerto Rico, their livelihoods were based on what they could grow. That's a very humbling and, no pun intended, grounding perspective. Those are the wholesome values I still cling to. That simplicity is liberating.

Growing up in a place that is very different from what we have here in the States offered me a pivotal formative experience. Those early years in Puerto Rico make me appreciate what we have in the U.S., and I will always be grateful for that experience.

From Puerto Rico, we moved back to the U.S. My father left the service, and we settled in Virginia Beach, a Navy town. There I had a fantastic educational experience. I also got to play football, which became my passion and the sport I love most.

Over time, going from the beaches of Puerto Rico to the beaches of Virginia, I learned a lot about what it means to be an American, especially in a state like Virginia, where so many of our founding fathers called home. My love of history, international relations, and politics really developed over the years, through my experiences in Puerto Rico, Virginia, and in seeing the world.

And seeing the world was something my aunts and uncles and parents really encouraged me to do; they wanted to make sure I had a sense of the globe beyond where I lived. When I was 10 years old, my aunt, uncle, and I traveled all through Mexico and parts of Central America. As I got older, I traveled to Western Europe and to Egypt a couple of times. Those trips to Egypt inspired me to study Arabic in college because I wanted to focus on that part of the world.

That sort of internationalization of my life experience has really informed my views and my commitment to diversity and inclusion. When you see humanity in many different forms in the world, you come to appreciate that just because we look different or speak differently or pray differently, we are not any less human. To me, that's the value: that humanity we all share.

I have the privilege of being the first Hispanic president of New England College, and I think that is an awesome privilege and responsibility. I stand on the shoulders of my family, teachers, friends, and so many others who shaped my life experience. I know they are excited for me, and I take seriously my obligation to honor the time they spent with me in supporting my journey. My mom is particularly excited about my new role. She wants to send a note to the newspapers in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, and say, "This little boy from Puerto Rico has done well." And that's pretty exciting, too. I like to believe that my *abuelo* and *abuela* are smiling down from Heaven, proud of their grandson and the work he is doing and will do. After all, my success is theirs, and I continue to seek to honor our family's heritage.

INSIGHT

&
ACTION

The Challenges of Higher Education and the Future of New England College

by Dr. Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr.

Higher education today faces many challenges, but I think a lot about three specific challenges. The first is changing demographics, something we in higher education have talked about for over 10 years. Fewer and fewer college-aged people are choosing to attend college, which means that all institutions of higher education are competing for a shrinking pool of prospective students. That forces colleges to offer more discounts and to chase after students.

Elite schools—the Harvards, the Princetons, the Yales—do not have a problem attracting students. However, because the overall enrollment numbers have dropped, even those schools now have to admit students that they would not have admitted 30, 40, 50 years ago. As the enrollment efforts of top-tier schools dip down a bit, the students who would have chosen second-tier schools are now choosing elite schools. So the second-tier schools have to dip down a bit to attract students. When you get to a small liberal arts school like New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, our pool of prospective students is being raided from the top, from the more elite schools, and it all stems from the overall lower number of high school students choosing to attend college.

The good news is that higher education saw this coming. Numerous people have written in rather dramatic language about the demographic cliff, the demographic bomb going off, so NEC has had the opportunity to prepare. What NEC did, although a break from tradition, was very smart. We decided to attract students from beyond our own area, from beyond the United States, and even beyond traditional on-campus programs. We decided to broaden our approach to higher education and, therefore, our

appeal to prospective students. NEC has been nimble and innovative in our approach to continue to attract students, and that entrepreneurial spirit simply does not exist at a lot of higher education institutions.

The second challenge higher education faces is the need for diversity of modalities. In my opinion, this is 100 percent related to COVID. The disruption of COVID wrecked higher education in some ways, but maybe that was a good thing. A man named Joseph Schumpeter developed the notion of “creative destruction.” His theory states that sometimes when you have entrenched systems or cultures and get stuck in always doing things the same way, you need a disruptive force to wreck those systems and get you to rethink your way of doing things. That is exactly what COVID did for higher education.

Before COVID, if our faculty and students had been asked about online learning, their response would have been minimal. No one wanted anything to do with online learning. In fact, NEC had completely separated our online programs from our on-campus faculty. COVID forced us to become online educators and learners. As a result, faculty who had been resistant to the online modality saw how online learning could work for other classes they wanted to offer, provide more flexibility for their schedules, and meet our students where they are.

Meeting students where they are is something we pride ourselves on. For example, if a student needs to take five classes a semester while also playing a sport, a mixture of in-person and online classes might be the best fit. We should have the ability to customize the academic experience to fit our students’ needs. Because of COVID, students now expect that capability from an institution.

A lot of institutions have not been able to make that shift; they have struggled to execute online learning in a way that meets student needs. The resistance to online was there, and the resistance remains.

The third challenge for higher education today is the value proposition. Some say we are losing the argument for higher education. When I listen to people in the public sphere talk about college not being worth it, when I read the survey data that trust in higher education is barely

50 percent, it is clear that those of us in higher education have failed to make the argument for the value of higher education.

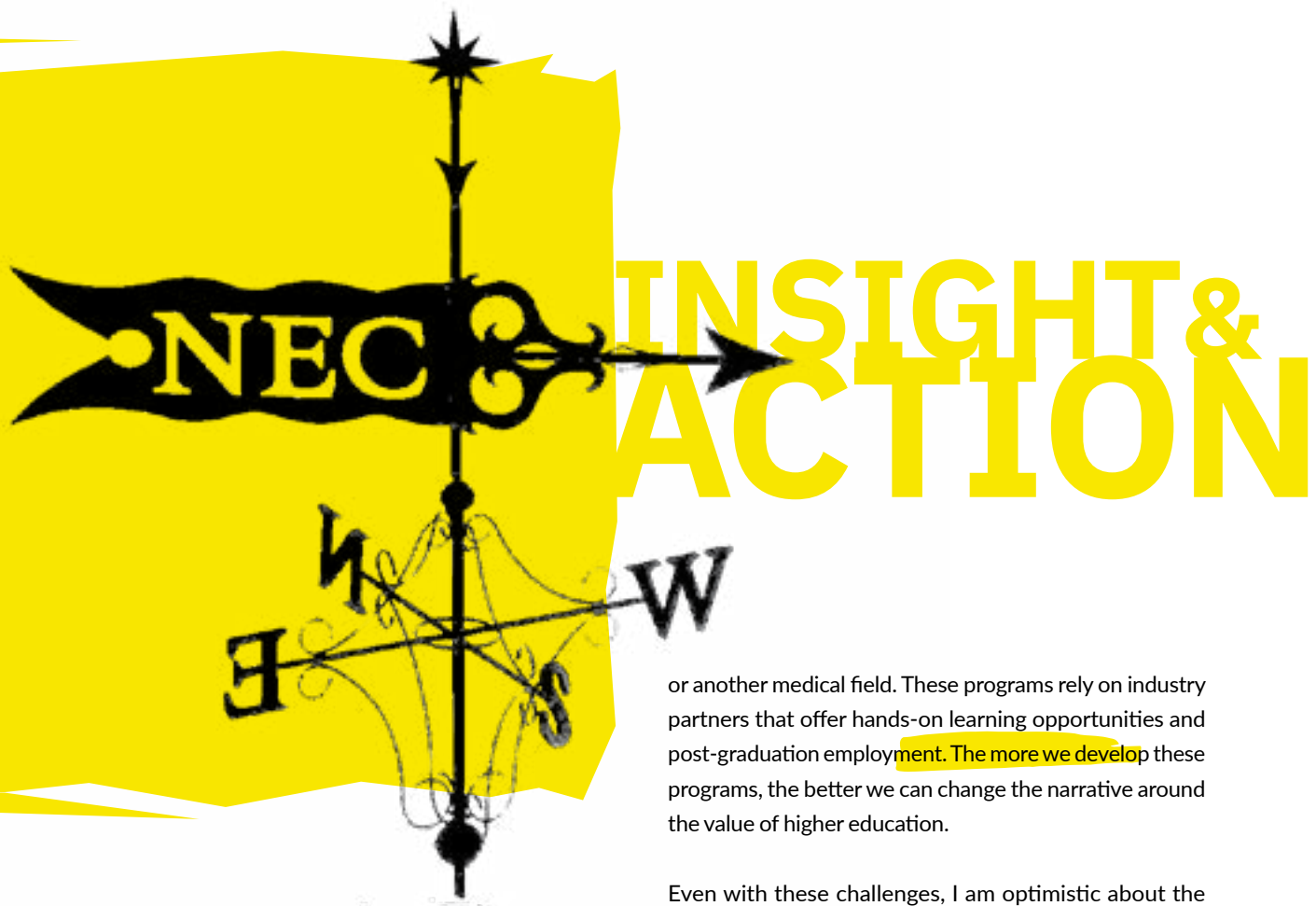
The reason for that is twofold. One, higher education exudes an arrogance that says, “We’re here. We’ve always been here. We belong here. How dare you question us?” Guess what? Questioning authority shapes as much of the American tradition as anything else. Higher education has missed an opportunity to speak to its value and, as a result, deserves some of the thumps it has received.

Two, higher education does not truly know how to answer the value proposition question. The establishment issues something akin to an apology for what higher education does. Instead of apologizing, I argue that the establishment needs to put forth a full-throated defense of higher education. We know that earning a college degree means greater financial success, stronger critical thinking and communication skills, numerical literacy, better-engaged citizens, and lifelong curiosity. The questions that come up in college lay the foundation for the questions that come up in life, and college offers the tools to answer those questions.

Instead of making these arguments consistently, higher education plays defense. “If we freeze tuition this year, students will like us.” No. While cost is part of it, the biggest problem related to value proposition is the inability to demonstrate why getting a college degree still matters. College has been commodified into receiving a piece of paper, but it is so much more than that. It is a lifetime of returns that students get out of their years at NEC.

Demonstrating the value of a college education directly ties into what we do at NEC. To start, we boldly stand behind our approach to educate students through hands-on learning opportunities, and we unashamedly make the case for the liberal arts. Additionally, we start to answer the question of value proposition in a new way by focusing on workforce development.

NEC’s three-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing continues to teach us a lot about offering programs that meet workforce needs. We know that the nursing profession faces critical staffing shortages, not only here in New



Hampshire but also around the world. Student interest in our nursing model that moves skilled nurses into their careers faster is through the roof. I predict that we will eventually have 300–400 nursing students on our campus.

Our nursing program requires the highest GPA of any program at NEC, yet nursing students made up the largest cohort of incoming students this fall. Why does this program appeal to so many students? Students get a degree; they earn while they learn during immersive working experiences; they form relationships with partner hospitals that can lead to jobs after graduation; and in some cases, they may receive loan repayment plans through their employers. This program, this cooperative model, checks all the boxes for parents who want to know that their children will get career-level jobs after graduating from NEC.

What is the next program success story for NEC? We think it is our new cooperative Bachelor of Arts in Community Mental Health or our Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling; both programs address the mental health crisis in this country. It could also be Cybersecurity

or another medical field. These programs rely on industry partners that offer hands-on learning opportunities and post-graduation employment. The more we develop these programs, the better we can change the narrative around the value of higher education.

Even with these challenges, I am optimistic about the future of higher education and NEC. I am someone who loves a good challenge, and I am having a heck of a good time developing solutions for the College.

There are days when I sit at the big, beautiful desk in my office and feel like I am at the helm of a ship, which reminds me of the Navy men in my family. My role at NEC is not as serious as what my father and brothers faced in the military, but my job is to steer the ship that is NEC in a way that positions us for real success. There are troubled waters around us, but I look for the opportunities in front of us, navigate them, and find our way forward.

This community of people who are deeply committed to NEC and its students invigorates me. I wake up every morning excited to go to work, excited to see what is coming and what we get to do. When that feeling goes away is when I will leave this role. ■

Role OF HER OWN

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH



Stephanie
LESPERANCE, EdD

NOT EVERYONE THRIVES IN THE SPOTLIGHT.

SOME PEOPLE THRIVE BEHIND THE SCENES, SUPPORTING THOSE IN THE SPOTLIGHT.

Dr. Stephanie Lesperance—the other Dr. Lesperance at New England College and wife of President Wayne Lesperance, Jr.—does just that. “Some of the most important work is done out of the spotlight,” Wayne explains. “Stephanie is very successful and accomplished in her career, she supports all my endeavors, she’s pivotal in rearing our daughter. She’s doing it all. She’s a rock star.”

Stephanie was born in Iceland and then lived in Italy, both locations where her father was stationed with the U.S. Navy. Her parents lovingly tell the story that after living in Iceland, young Stephanie was afraid of grass when she was introduced to it in Italy. When she was five years old, the family settled in Bristol, New Hampshire, not far from where her grandparents lived in Gilford.

She earned her BS in Political Science from the University of Maine at Farmington with the intent to become a lawyer. “It didn’t work out. As it turns out, I’m not good at arguing,” Stephanie laughs. After college, she served two terms in AmeriCorps and worked with AmeriCorps Hillsborough Reads in Tampa, Florida, before returning to New Hampshire. She then earned her MA in Public Policy from NEC in 2006 and her EdD in Higher Education Administration from NEC in 2022.

Stephanie joined the staff of Campus Compact for New Hampshire (CCNH) in 1999 and has been there ever since. CCNH, an affiliate of a national organization, is a consortium of colleges and universities throughout New Hampshire that share a commitment to the civic purposes of higher education. Originally running CCNH’s AmeriCorps program, Stephanie moved into different roles. She now serves as Chief Strategy Officer under the Executive Director. She handles the day-to-day management of CCNH’s programs and ensures they fulfill the organization’s mission. One of the State’s top fundraisers in her field, Stephanie has raised millions of dollars in federal grant money and manages five federal grants that focus on supporting student success from preschool into adulthood. Her entire career has centered on helping marginalized populations gain access to higher education.

It should be noted that 1999 was also the year Wayne moved to New Hampshire, and it was Stephanie's work with CCNH that put her on the path to meeting him in 2003. "Campus Compact was promoting voting among students, and Dr. Debra Nitschke-Shaw, Senior Professor of Education at NEC, introduced me to Wayne."

For most of their marriage, Wayne was a political science professor, and Stephanie never imagined he would one day be a college president. "I thought he would always teach," she says, "but then he moved into administration, and he really enjoys that side of higher education." Though this path was unexpected, Stephanie is not shying away from her role and is embracing this fun and exciting new chapter.



That chapter includes the Lesperance family's move to Cogswell House, NEC's president's residence in Henniker. Moving into a 200-year-old farmhouse was a bit intimidating, but Stephanie has done her research on the property. Her digging revealed that Leander Cogswell was the last member of the Cogswell family to live in the house, that he made his money in the shoe industry during Manchester's manufacturing heyday, that he gave money to the Town of Henniker and created the Cogswell Benevolent Trust, and that he visited often on the weekends. "You know, there's a rumor that Cogswell House is haunted," she adds. "We have decided to accept his presence and have even named him Harold."

Stephanie and Wayne have welcomed the opportunity to make Cogswell House their own with new furnishings that reflect their family and lifestyle. The formal furniture in the front rooms has been replaced with more practical furniture for a household that includes their daughter, Grace, and dogs Nero, a retired bomb-sniffing Belgian Malinois, and Emmitt, a poorly behaved bulldog.

"I bought a large print of a Highland cow to hang above the fireplace, but Wayne was horrified by it." She describes how they went round and round but ultimately could not agree on the print, so they decided to each claim one of the front rooms in Cogswell House. "Even without the cow print, you would be able to tell which room is Wayne's and which is mine."



As with her own room, Stephanie has her own role in the life of New England College.

"I'm happy to be next to Wayne, but I'm looking forward to creating my own identity as first lady. And I love getting to know students."

In fact, she is thinking about working with Chelsea Hanrahan, director of NEC's library, to form a book club with students. Stephanie and Grace have big plans for making Cogswell the place to be on campus.

Getting to know students means getting to celebrate their success. "One of my favorite things is attending Commencement each year. I get to see students who arrived at NEC being so nervous about the next four years beaming with pride as they walk across the stage. It doesn't get more exciting than that." ■



Dr. Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr.



16th
PRESIDENTIAL

Inauguration

The First New Hampshire Regiment fired three volleys after the Inauguration ceremony.



From left to right:
Trustee Michael Thomas; Trustee Bill Wyman;
Trustee Adam Kapner '02; Trustee Clarke Smith '79;
Trustee Daniel Lynch '85; President Wayne Lesperance, Jr;
Chairman of the Board of Trustees Lex Scourby '75;
Trustee Lori Sherer '83; Trustee Scott Simpson;
Trustee TJ Whitelaw '76; Trustee Thomas Markey '82;
Trustee Eric Simon '83



From left to right: Dr. Wayne Lesperance,
Grace Lesperance, and Dr. Stephanie Lesperance

**Congratulations,
Dr. Lesperance!**
**On Saturday,
September 30,
Dr. Wayne F.
Lesperance, Jr.
officially became
New England
College's 16th
president and first
Hispanic president.**




Manuela Bohling, President Lesperance's mother, enjoys the community dinner after the Inauguration ceremony.

In honor of President Wayne F. Lesperance's Inauguration, today, August 15, 2023, United States flags have been hoisted over the New Hampshire State Capitol in Concord, NH and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

24 years ago, to the day, Dr. Lesperance arrived at New England College as an Assistant Professor of Political Science. Throughout his 24 years, he has dedicated himself to shaping the minds of countless students and guiding our community towards excellence.

Join us in congratulating President Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr. for his remarkable journey and the incredible contributions he has made to New England College.



New England College's Office of Advancement shared this post on social media on August 15 to honor the anniversary of Dr. Lesperance's arrival at NEC and journey over the last 24 years.



Carmen Kusiak, President Lesperance's aunt, and Stephanie Lesperance take in the fireworks finale.



Changes in Latitudes, Jimmy Buffett tribute band

2023 Fall Festival



From left to right:
Louis Pakula '85, Chris Grava '98, Howie Rover '83



Joseph Hennessey '69
speaks with
current students.



From left to right:
Jayme Trolle, Peter Trolle '78,
Mike Gray '78, Nancy Gray

Rilma Fox, wife
of Gene Fox '72

NEC alumni, friends, family, and members
of the community gathered once more this
fall for food, games, and fun.



From left to right:
Wilbur (Bill)
Beaupre '64,
David Tullis '67



Yale Levey '88



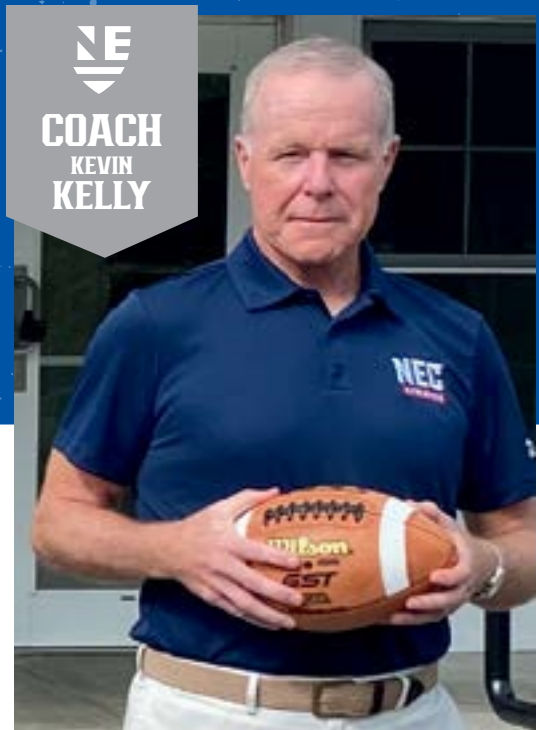
FOOTBALL RETURNS



Fifty years after the last play was called, football will make its return to NEC in the 2024–2025 academic year. Members of NEC’s leadership, staff, and faculty gathered on the Don Melander Turf Field in June for the announcement.

“Football is part of NEC’s storied past,” commented Dave DeCew, Director of Athletics. “We are excited to bring this sport back after a long hiatus and believe it will bring our community together in the same way our other sports do.”

In August, NEC hired Kevin Kelly to be the Pilgrims’ head coach. Kelly brings more than 30 years of experience to the position. His previous coaching roles include defensive coordinator for Marshall University, where he coached future NFL players Randy Moss, Byron Leftwich, and Chad Pennington; head coach for Georgetown University, where he was named Patriot League Coach of the Year for 2011, from 2006–2013; and most recently as defensive backs coach at Salve Regina University in Rhode Island. He also coached at Navy, Dartmouth College, Bryant University, and Ball State University, as well as in the XFL.



“Starting any endeavor from the ground up is an enormous challenge.”

“Working within the visions of President Lesperance and Dave DeCew makes this challenge a very exciting one—as we build a program that NEC, alumni, and the Henniker community will be proud of. I can’t wait to get started!”

The Pilgrims are expected to begin play with a condensed season in the fall of 2024, followed by a full season of play in the fall of 2025.

RUN IT BACK

LEE CLEMENT ICE ARENA REFRESH



Over the summer, the ice arena was refreshed to include new paint, branding posters, and signage that honors NEC’s founding to serve veterans. This refresh was made possible by a gift from Bedford, New Hampshire-based Swim with a Mission (SWAM), which raises funds for veteran support organizations. As a thank-you, NEC’s Zamboni has been wrapped in the SWAM logo. Learn more about this organization at swam.org.

NEC WOMEN’S WRESTLING



The 2023–2024 academic year will see the advent of women’s wrestling at NEC. A few young women have been competing in the sport at the club level, but as the sport’s popularity has grown, Director of Athletics Dave DeCew felt the time was right to make women’s wrestling a varsity sport.

“Around the country, there are approximately 30,000 women wrestlers at the high school level,” DeCew explained, “so we know the interest is there. It’s important for us to continue to find ways to serve our student-athletes, and women’s wrestling is one of those ways.”

The 'Grimms added three women’s wrestlers for this academic year.

NEC is only the second institution in New England to offer women’s wrestling as a varsity sport. Men’s Wrestling Head Coach Ray DeRosa also serves as the women’s coach.

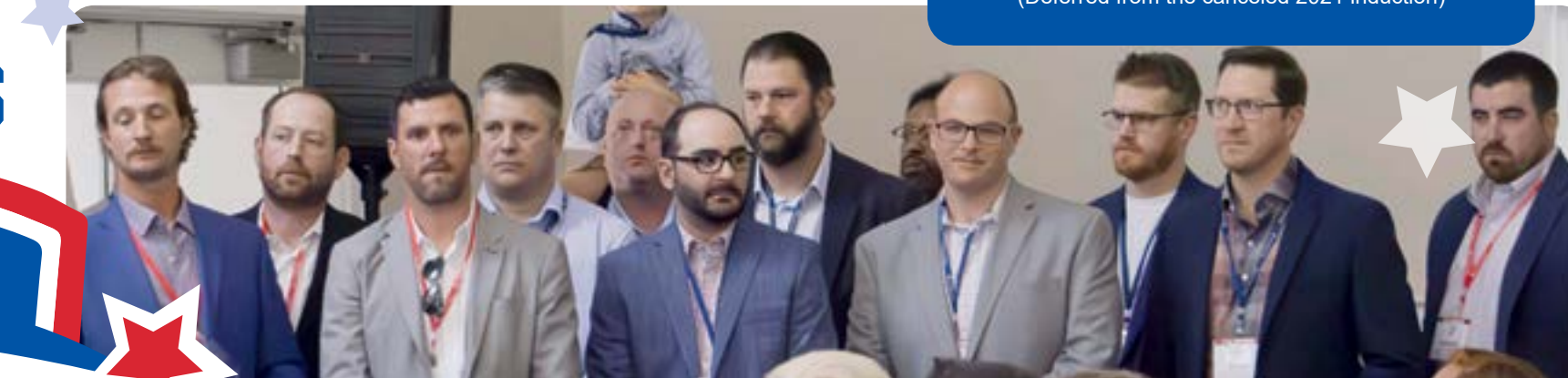
Established in 1992, the New England College Athletics Hall of Fame recognizes the achievements of those student-athletes, coaches, administrators, teams, and friends of the athletics program who have brought distinction to themselves and the College through their achievement, commitment, sportsmanship, and leadership in athletics. Starting in 2019, individuals are inducted bi-annually and are recognized at a ceremony held during Fall Festival weekend.

The Hall of Fame was the brainchild of George R. Hamilton, who joined NEC's faculty in 1964 and created the physical education curriculum. In the years that followed, Hamilton became a professor of physical education; served 21 years as director of physical education; served 12 years as athletic director; and coached, at various times, basketball, baseball, cross country, golf, soccer, and tennis.

NEC ATHLETICS

INDUCTEES HALL OF FAME 2023

The following student-athletes and coach were inducted into the NEC Athletics Hall of Fame.



2004 MEN'S ICE HOCKEY TEAM
(Deferred from the canceled 2021 induction)

**BEN CORRIVEAU | JEREMY KONING | PAUL RUTA
NICK FOUTS | SCOTT GRAY | JOE PORCARO**

**R.A. MOBILE | SAINGBEY WOODTOR | JEFF SIEGEL
MIKE CARNODY | EVAN EROMANN | JOE LOISELLE**



**2017 LACROSSE AND CROSS COUNTRY
ALLISON GRANATA**



**2017 ICE HOCKEY
BRETT KILAR**



MARY ELLEN ALGER

1988–1997 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

1988–1992 SOFTBALL COACH

1991–2000 DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

2000–PRESENT PROFESSOR OF KINESIOLOGY



**2005 FIELD HOCKEY
LINDSEY (INMAN) FOLEY**



**2018 CROSS COUNTRY
ABBY SHAFER**



**2018 LACROSSE
MATTHEW RICHARD**



NEC CRICKET PITCH

NEC's growing international student population means that our campus has more cricket fans than ever. After the first cricket match between international students and student-athletes in September of 2021 was such a success, it was proposed that NEC install a cricket pitch. Athletics staff determined that a spot next to the softball field was the best location, and installation was completed in early August. Rick Mitchell, Program Director of Computer Information Systems, engages with many of NEC's international students. He helped organize the first match two years ago and is sure to be part of many more now that NEC has an official cricket pitch.

Freedom Fighter

NAME:
Pavlo

HOME COUNTRY:
Ukraine

DEGREE:
**MA in
International
Relations '20**

What was life like for you when you were growing up in Ukraine?

I grew up in central Ukraine and was raised by pro-Ukraine parents. I was raised a Ukrainian, and my family was very patriotic. I learned Ukrainian in school, but we also spoke Russian. As a child, I just lived my life. As I grew older, I started to understand that the Russian influence was everywhere.

After I graduated from academy, I served in some military units, and our exercises focused more on the West than Russia. That was understandable because from 1991 to 2014, the first 23 years of Ukraine's independence, we were under the Russian umbrella. We had a Russian president—Viktor Yanukovich who left Ukraine after the 2014 revolution—a pro-Russia minister of defense, Russian advisors in the intelligence community, Russian agents and deputies in parliament. All the political and military institutions were Russian. The Russians had access to all of Ukraine's secrets.

Russia applied its influence in Ukraine and made Ukraine sign a contract to allow Russia to continue to use a major naval base in Sevastopol, Crimea [an arrangement since the end of the Cold War] until almost 2050. If Russia wanted to do something, they would achieve it.

But I never expected a Russian invasion because the two countries formed an economic partnership with imports and exports.

Pavlo's last name and location have been omitted for privacy.

We thank Pavlo for speaking with us and sharing his story.

How did you choose New England College for your master's degree?

My previous study in the United States was at the Marine Corps University (MCU), and I learned about the relationship between the military and civilian institutions and how the civilian institutions support military members. MCU referred me to NEC, and I decided to join the master's program in International Relations.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February of 2022, what went through your mind?

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, I compared the invasion to what happened in Georgia in 1992 and 2008. I tracked the Russian path and what they do, and I understood what they wanted to do. It was understandable to me that political agreements would not lead to peace because Russia's invasions require military power on the battlefield and softer diplomatic power off the battlefield. By 2014, Russia had made Ukraine reduce our armed forces. We were weak, but we stopped the Russians.

The 2014 invasion was like the last step for Putin; he didn't have any space to move. The last step was to launch a full-scale invasion in 2022.

I am overtired with this conflict, but I was ready for it. I heard rocket explosions in Kyiv in the morning. I saw Russians. My natural reaction as a Ukrainian military man was to go and fight. I was scared, but it was more about my understanding of the conflict. For me, it was the same war as 2014.

For the first six months, I fought on the front lines, and now I work in more of a diplomatic role to gain support for Ukraine. I have visited Washington, D.C. to meet with senators and military leaders.

How do you cope with everything you have experienced in these invasions?

It is still difficult to imagine that this is still going on in the 21st century. It is difficult to understand that a leader can decide to take down a country. But this is reality.

I do my job and do not estimate any situations emotionally. I just need armed forces, smart rockets, something sweet that I can launch onto Russian sites. Focusing on my job gives me the opportunity to cope with this successfully without going deeper into the emotions.

How are the Ukrainian people holding up?

In the first days, a lot of people fled to the west. I saw people grab their children and documents and run to their cars to leave. The majority of those people have come back.

I see that our nation has a strong will to win and protect our independence. Because of 2014, our people were partially prepared for something more that could happen.

Russian rockets and convoys do not influence our people or political and military leadership to give up. Even with electricity shortages and rockets launched onto our critical infrastructure objects, it did not bring success to Russia. It made us stronger and more united. We are trying to survive.

The rockets are inconvenient, but we have gotten used to them. Without working elevators, mothers are used to carrying their children up 24 floors. This all makes us stronger and dedicated to winning this battle.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I have lost a lot of men now, and some have been awarded gold stars as heroes. Ukraine and our allies have spent a lot of money, and that support goes straight to the military to build a corps and employ smart approaches against Russia.

I know that our strategic partners are overtired of these diplomatic issues around the world, but our partners need to know that Ukraine is still alive as a nation because of their help.

change makers

FACULTY AND ALUMNI WHO RISE ABOVE AND REACH BEYOND

Everyone knows

you do not discuss religion or politics in polite company. But at the dinner table? Politics were always on the menu in the Shrader house.

In a working-class union family in North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, just outside Pittsburgh, Shrader grew up hearing his history-teacher father frequently lead political discussions during dinner. Shrader's interest was piqued, and he credits those conversations with planting the seeds of his eventual career path.

By the time he was 15, he was involved in local politics, learning at the side of his neighbor Dick Olwell who worked with Shrader's grandfather in the steel mill. "Talk about a quintessential Pittsburgh story," Shrader laughs. Olwell was the town's Democratic chairman, and he knew Shrader was interested in politics. Olwell taught Shrader how to do voter registration drives, canvass for candidates, and deliver sample ballots. "Dick had been doing those things for years and wanted to pass that knowledge on to someone," Shrader recalls. At some point, Shrader knew politics was what he was going to do.

“Politics are all about people. I learned from my dad and neighbor that it's all about the impact decision-making has on regular people every day.”

He earned his BA in Political Science and Government from Thiel College, his MS in Political Science and Government and MSPS in American Government and Politics from Suffolk University, and his PhD in American Politics and Political Theory from Temple University. He worked on political campaigns throughout college; worked as a legislative aid for Catherine Baker Knoll, the first woman to be elected lieutenant governor in Pennsylvania; and spent three years as a legislative aid in the Virginia House of Delegates, the oldest continuously meeting legislative body in the western hemisphere.



SHRADER speaking with JILL BIDEN
NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE
2020 COLLEGE CONVENTION

Dr. Nathan Shrader
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICS
Co-Director, NEC's Center for Civic Engagement

During his third year in Virginia, Shrader began thinking about teaching because he had gained enough real-world experience to bring the theory and practice of politics together, the way his professors at Suffolk University had done for him. After earning his PhD, he landed at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. "I did not like the weather, but the people were amazing," Shrader says.

In January 2020, Shrader and four Millsaps students traveled to New Hampshire for NEC's College Convention 2020 because he was asked to be a guest speaker on ranked choice voting. "I met this guy named



SHRADER (left) with Pennsylvania Lt. Governor Catherine Baker Knoll and their pilot
2002
PENNSYLVANIA PRIMARY ELECTION

Wayne Lesperance and told him that NEC's focus on hands-on learning appealed to me," Shrader comments. The two kept in touch over the next few years, and when Shrader learned of a politics faculty opening at NEC, Dr. Lesperance encouraged him to apply. Shrader moved from Mississippi to New Hampshire in July 2022.

Is it challenging to teach politics to the next generation of voters in today's climate? Sure, but Shrader focuses on three things. First, he strives to get students off the fence. "Politics are all about people. I learned from my dad and neighbor that it's all about the impact decision making has on regular people every day." If his students understand that, they are much more likely to see the value in politics and become involved citizens. Second, he shows students that every vote counts. In 2003, Shrader worked on a campaign for Pennsylvania superior court candidate John Driscoll. In a state of 12 million people, Driscoll lost the election by a meager 28 votes. "I tell my students that one vote is unlikely to be the vote that changes anything, but I also tell them that if we all succumb to that thinking, there would never be any change in the political process or the United States." Third, he encourages students to achieve a greater level of discourse within politics. He points out that American politics have always carried a certain coarseness and negativity, but he holds out hope that the country can get back to a place where we do not treat those who share different views as enemies.

When people ask Shrader what he does for a living, he tells them that he actually gets paid to talk about politics all day, with people who share his passion and with those who are more wary. And he cannot talk about politics with a straight face; he exudes enthusiasm, smiling from ear to ear with every political fact and story he shares. If there is anyone who can inspire the next generation to get involved in politics, surely it is Nathan Shrader. ■

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MCELVEEN covering Gov. John Kasich's 2016 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Colleen McElveen

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
Co-Director, NEC's Center for Civic Engagement
Faculty Advisor—*The NewEnglander* student-run newspaper

Colleen McElveen had always loved to read and write, and she was also fascinated by various forms of media. When she learned that journalism was a career option that would combine these interests and give her the opportunity to tell people's stories, she knew it was the career path for her.

She earned her BA in Broadcast Journalism from Keene State College and her MA in Broadcast Journalism from Emerson College. After completing her master's degree, McElveen worked at WMUR in Manchester, New Hampshire, as an assignment editor—finding stories and assigning them to reporters, writing copy for anchors, and producing broadcasts. From there, she moved on to the statewide NH1 News where she covered stories out on the streets, a better fit for her storytelling nature.

Perhaps her proudest achievement from her broadcast news days is her documentary *Killer High: Crisis in the*

Granite State. McElveen produced, wrote, anchored, and edited this project that focused on solutions for the opioid crisis in New Hampshire rather than just the problem. "We saw the effects of the crisis while out covering other stories," she recalls. "It was important to shine a light on solutions so that people could get the help they needed, and I am happy to say that some did find help."

Working in television news is exciting, fast paced, and exhausting, she adds, and she reached a point where she wanted to use her love for journalism in a different way. McElveen had worked as a teacher's assistant during her undergraduate years at Keene State and had always had it in the back of her mind to return to teaching at some point. After teaching at another New Hampshire institution for a couple of years, McElveen landed at NEC in August 2021. When applying, she loved NEC's philosophy of providing hands-on learning opportunities for students so that they have that experience when they graduate. "I encourage students to pursue internships off campus. There is no better teacher than experience."

McElveen uses her journalism experiences to guide NEC students in her Communications classes and

“I advise students on how to craft stories, write concisely, and communicate a message from the perspective of having lived that process in professional settings.”



MCELVEEN reporting breaking news MANCHESTER, NH

through her faculty advisor role with *The NewEnglander*, NEC's student-run newspaper. "I advise students on how to craft stories, write concisely, and communicate a message from the perspective of having lived that process in professional settings. I love sharing my practical experiences to help students be the best communicators they can be." She pushes them to get out and about on campus to take photos, take videos, talk to people, and discover the stories they want to tell.

The NewEnglander is a student club, but it is also a class. As McElveen explains, she teaches this class like any other, but it truly is the students' newspaper. NEC strongly supports the First Amendment, and that empowers students to publish content that is important to them.

Being a reporter and native Granite Stater gives McElveen a double appreciation for the civic process. "In New Hampshire, the way we do politics gives everyone the opportunity to engage with candidates at all levels." As co-director of NEC's Center for Civic Engagement, she sees the importance of this opportunity for students, who can walk up to candidates during campus visits and ask a question that is important to them. She wants students to know that this opportunity exists at NEC and that they matter in the political process.

McElveen grew up hearing her parents and their friends have political discussions over dinner and now takes pride in facilitating those conversations through the Center for Civic Engagement. Whether it is bringing candidates to campus for town-hall meetings or helping students understand how to vote in New Hampshire, it is "exciting to bring a group of people together to talk about something that matters."

Doing work that matters, sharing stories that matter. That focus defines McElveen's career. "When I joined NEC, the pieces of my career melded together very nicely. My career really has come full circle." ■



When you come from a **strict African family** like sisters Anna and YaAdam Fye do, your parents tell you that you are going to be a doctor or an engineer or a lawyer.

"I was assigned lawyer," Anna laughs, "but it was not my passion." She completed her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and then earned her master's in Public Policy. She used her master's degree, in particular, in her work with the United Nations in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Rwanda. She and her family then relocated to Gambia in 2017, and she worked for the State Department at the U.S. Embassy in Banjul. She is now back in the U.S. and working at the USDA.



YaAdam earned her master's degree in Management and started her career in the non-profit space. "I realized that I could not save the world until I saved myself, so I moved out of the non-profit world," she says. She now works in federal procurement and has been a capture and business development manager for a federal contractor for the last 15 years.

Their father is from Gambia in West Africa, and their mother is from Tanzania in East Africa. Anna and YaAdam, along with their siblings, lived in Gambia during their formative years. The family moved to the United States in 1994. Attending NEC became a bit of



YaAdam Fye
MS—Management 2010



Anna Fye
BA—Criminal Justice 2003
MA—Public Policy 2007



a family affair; two other siblings also chose NEC for their undergraduate degrees.

Yes, Anna and YaAdam forged their career paths, but they stumbled upon their true passion in 2006. When Anna was pregnant with her first child, a daughter, she went to Barnes and Noble looking for children’s books about African princesses, but she found no stories from the Motherland.

“I started crying like the world was ending and went straight to my parents’ house to talk to my mother,” Anna recalls. Her sisters were there, and the women talked about the lack of children’s books reflecting African culture. On the spot, they decided to write their own book. They established the Princess Halima series with *Princess Halima and the Kingdom of Affia*. The series tells the story of a brave princess who travels throughout Africa highlighting the continent’s beautiful traditions, landmarks, and people. They named their new publishing endeavor the Fye Network (FyeN).

It took the sisters three years to get their book published. Once they had it in hand, they visited elementary schools to do readings and share their culture. “We wore traditional African clothes and performed African dances,” Anna says, “and we found that the African diaspora was particularly interested in our story.” They then published the second and third Princess Halima stories.

The more Anna and YaAdam shared their stories with the public, parents of young boys started to ask where the boy stories were. That interest led to the creation of *Bakary on Safari* and *Meet Samba and Batch*, two boys who are best friends and based on Anna’s son and nephew.

Anna and YaAdam realized they had discovered a niche market for African stories and use FyeN to tell real-life stories as well. Their non-fiction book, *Life as a Hyphen*, explores the life of Ismail Badjie, a young man navigating the disparate worlds of life in Gambia and life in the United States. *Taf the Builder* is a children’s book based on the life of Mustapha “Taf” Njie whose middle-class family could not afford to send him out of the country for college, so he learned the construction trade and is now a multi-millionaire committed to building one million homes across Sub-Saharan Africa by 2040. FyeN’s most recent publication is a children’s book about the life of journey of current Gambian President Adama Barrow, who grew up on a farm and attended high school on scholarship. From this humble

beginning, life circumstances helped him become president. These two children’s stories are the first and second book, respectively, in FyeN’s “Dream Big, African Child” series.

As YaAdam explains, FyeN strives to be a mirror that reflects other cultures and worlds.

“We want people, especially the next generation, to know that even though we come from different backgrounds and look a little different, we are all part of the human story.”

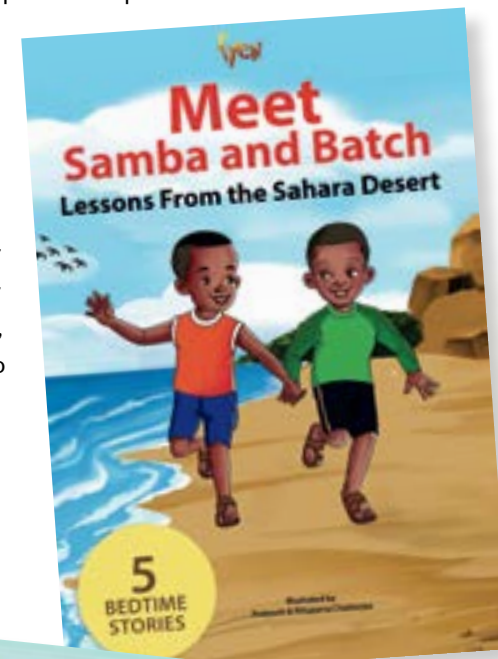
Now that the publishing arm of FyeN is established, what is next for Anna and YaAdam? In addition to working to make FyeN a full-time business instead of a side business, Anna and YaAdam are launching a production arm because they want to take their stories into the animation space.

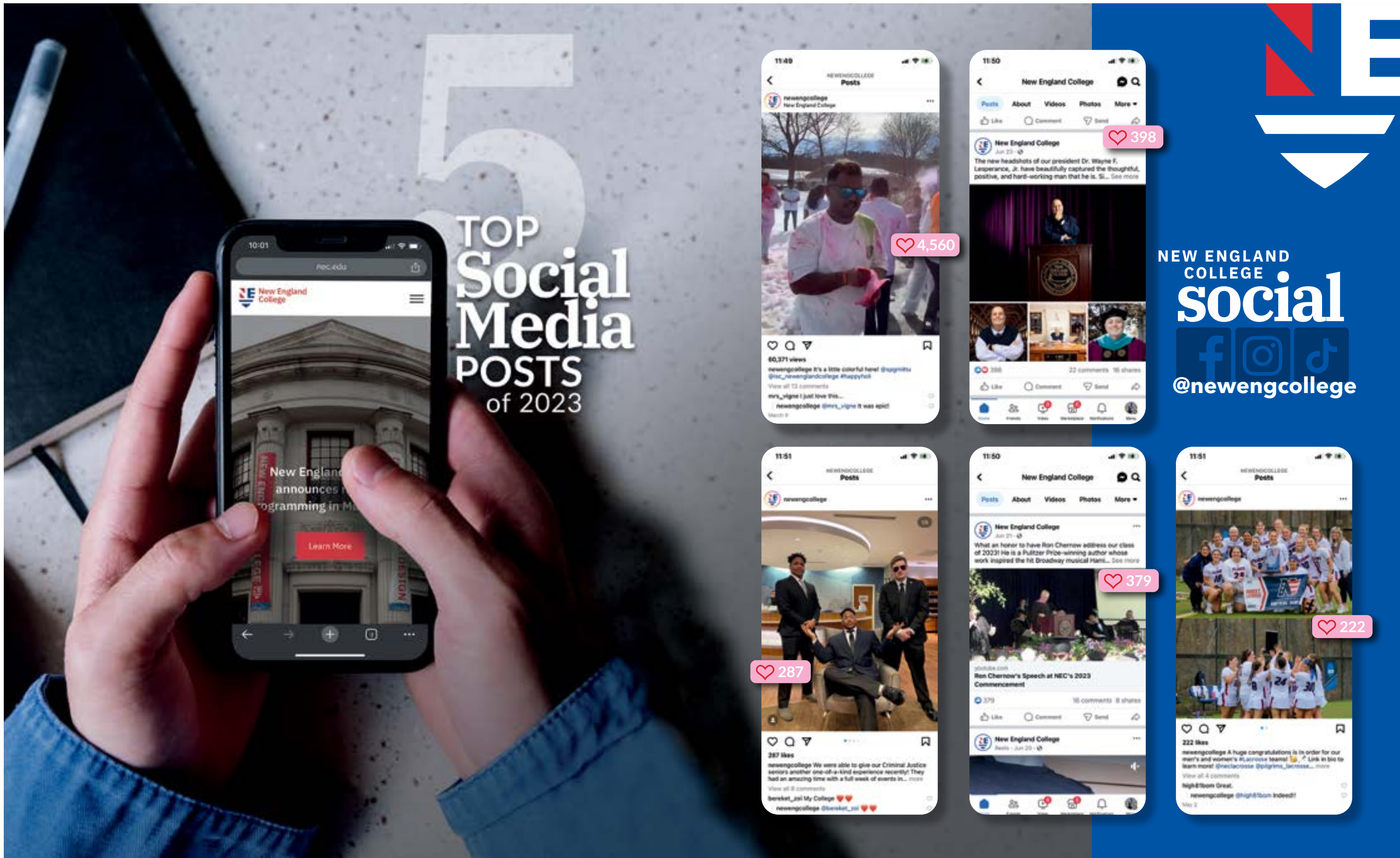
“Animation is very hard to get into, partly because it is quite expensive; we have been trying for three years,” YaAdam says. The sisters traveled to Burbank, California, last year to attend the AfroAnimation Summit featuring diverse and under-represented animators. FyeN submitted a *Bakary on Safari* short film and won third place out of 300 or so entries, which was valuable brand exposure because a lot of animation gatekeepers are white women who do not connect with characters like Princess Halima or Bakary. “It is so important for African children to see themselves reflected in the stories they read and watch,” Anna adds. “Seeing Princess Tiana in a Disney movie is great, but New Orleans is a completely different culture

than Africa.” Staying connected to African culture is very important for Anna and YaAdam. They visit Africa regularly to stay immersed in the culture, and they speak the local languages. They sponsor school supply donations and support reading campaigns in African schools and hold book drives in the United States that benefit libraries in Africa. “When you are from Africa and have lived in the United States for a long time, people tend to question your authenticity,” Anna adds. “But we are still part of the cultural fabric of Africa, and that solidifies our Africanness.”

Did Anna and YaAdam’s parents come around to the idea of their daughters not being doctors or engineers or lawyers? Their mom, Lucy, is FyeN’s biggest investor to date. ■

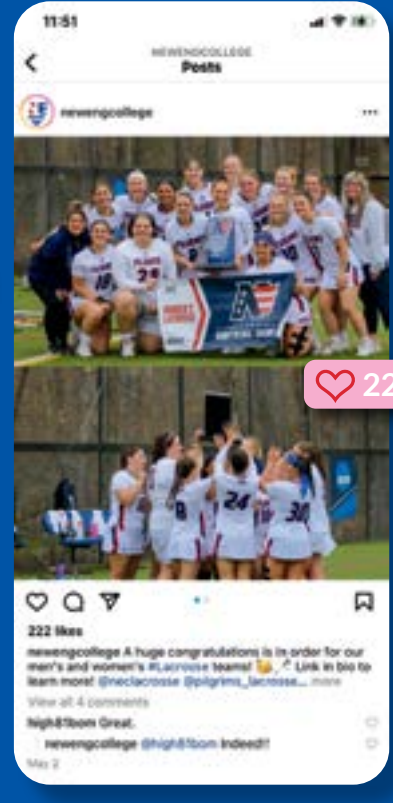
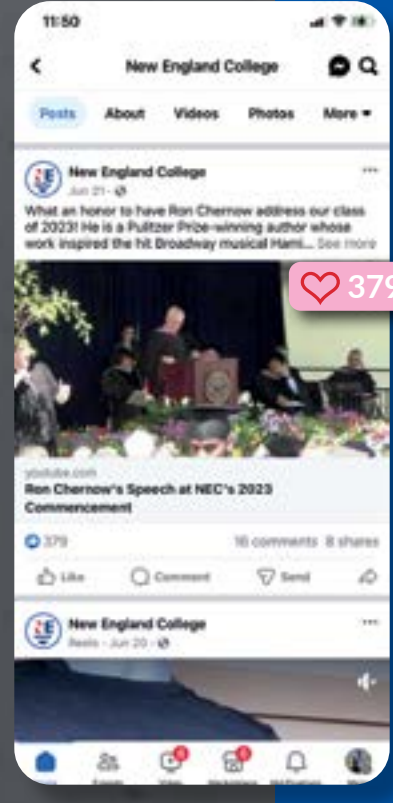
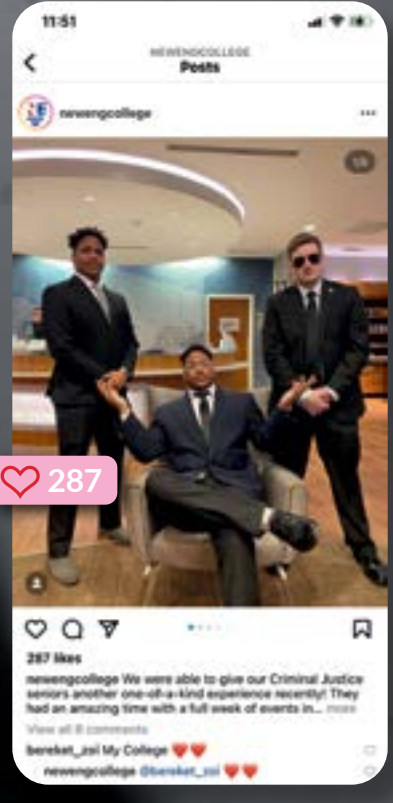
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Thomas L. Adams, Jr.

July 15, 1942–August 3, 2023

Friend of the
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Thom Adams may have taken some snapshots as a child, but he became quite interested in fine art photography later in life. He began collecting photographs when he was smitten by an Annie Leibowitz photograph of an Olympic rower taken in Hanover, New Hampshire. He then purchased a Todd Webb photograph of the influential American painter Georgia O'Keefe in Twilight Canyon. These purchases gradually led Adams to open a photographic art gallery in Portland, Maine.

After closing his gallery in 2008, Adams enrolled in the BFA in Photography program at the New Hampshire Institute of Art, now the Institute of Art and Design (IAD) at NEC, in order to pursue his love of the medium. In 2010, he made the decision to donate his extensive photography collection to the Institute.

“Thom visited a number of art schools throughout New England—Rhode Island School of Design, Monserrat College of Art—and chose the Institute because we focused on fine-art photography and because he was moved by the quality of our teaching,” explains Gary Samson, Professor Emeritus of Photography and Artist Laureate of New Hampshire (2017–2020). “He wanted his photographs to be teaching tools because he understood that not all students could get to museums.”

His generous gift established a significant collection of high-quality photographs for students, researchers, and the public to explore the medium more fully in an academic setting. In 2012, he received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the Institute, and in 2023, IAD named the exhibition gallery in French Hall in Manchester the Thom Adams Gallery.

Adams went on to establish the John Brook Archive in 2021 as a nonprofit organization that promotes the photographic legacy of John Brook, a forgotten 20th century Boston photographer. Adams worked with The Griffin Museum of Photography to exhibit Brook's work on the 50th anniversary of *Along the Riverrun*, a photography book of Brook's soft-focused romantic images. Adams's efforts resulted in Brook's photographs being exhibited in the Danforth Art

Museum's exhibit *Visionary Boston*, along with the art of Kahlil G. Gibran, Steven Trefonides, and other Boston artists from the diverse Boston expressionist movement. Adams teamed up with Samson to mount these two exhibitions and produce a limited-edition portfolio of Brook's photographs.

Adams grew up in Concord, New Hampshire, and attended the University of New Hampshire, where he majored in education. He was a teacher, NEA-NH staff member, and Executive Director of the Manchester Education Association. He also served as a member of the Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform—New Hampshire executive board.

“Thom was a very curious and intelligent person who used his camera to explore the world—a visual diary,” Samson recalls. “He accompanied our BFA students and me on six study abroad trips to Greece over the years. He did not have much family of his own, but he found a family at the Institute.”

In October, IAD introduced Art at French, a variety of arts programs for the greater Manchester community, in French Hall in Manchester. The inaugural exhibition of this new programming was *Remembering Thom Adams*, which showcased the fine-art photography collection he donated. The opening reception on October 1 also served as a memorial service for this man who was a tireless supporter of education and the arts.

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